Philo of Alexandria on divine forgiveness

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4

Philo’s views on doing evil

4.1 Introduction

In the previous chapters, I discussed Philo's view on how God can interact with creation and specifically with human beings. We saw how Philo held God and the material world to be connected through the intelligible world, and how God has given humans the ability to perceive that connection. Humans can grasp the concepts underlying the material world with their minds, reaching as it were into the mind of God, who thinks these concepts. Humans and God then think the same thing and become one, at least temporarily and for as much as is possible while humans still live in the material world. When humans think what God thinks, they are rational and share in the true and immortal being of God, fulfilling their purpose of becoming the 'image of God'.

In addition to that, we also saw how Philo considered humans as having the freedom to choose between rationality and irrationality. If humans choose irrationality, they decide in favour of being one with the material world, the world of becoming, change and decay, instead of being one with God and true existence. Philo expressed the choice between rationality or irrationality in moral terms. The choice for rationality and true being is the choice for good, the choice for irrationality and the world of becoming and decay is the choice for evil. Only humans are free to choose between these two options, which makes them the only creatures who can be praised when they choose good, and blamed when they choose evil.

To be sure, Philo's view on human responsibility for doing evil implies several difficulties. These difficulties, related to Philo's ethical views, are the topic of the current chapter.[438] The first question brought up in Chapter 1 in relation to Philo's ethics was: why would and could humans, as creatures of the supreme good God, intentionally do evil? In light of what we found in the previous chapter, that question can also be put as: how can someone *knowingly* choose to do evil?[439]

The second question related to Philo's ethical views is: what did Philo believe are the consequences of doing evil for the wrongdoer? An aspect can now be added to this question: is it fair if wrongdoers suffer the consequences of doing evil? Are humans to blame for choosing irrationality so often? Why did God

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438 In this chapter the focus will be on what Philo saw as the process of doing evil. For a more general overview of Philo's ethical outlooks see, for instance, Goodenough, *Introduction*, pp. 112–133; Sandmel, *Philo*, pp. 111–117; Williamson, *Philo*, pp. 201–305; for a general overview of ethics in ancient Greek philosophy, Alasdair MacIntyre's overview is helpful, see MacIntyre, *Ethics*, pp. 5–105.

439 Metzler (Metzler, *Verzeihens*, pp. 139–140) describes how Plato, in *Cleit*. 407D–E, ascribes a similar question to Socrates who concludes that no one would voluntarily do evil, known as the first Socratic paradox discussed in Thalberg, *Enigmas*, pp. 201–220 and Nakhnikian, 'Paradox'.

not create humans as wholly and consistently rational? If humans were not to blame, it would also not be fair to punish them for the evil that they have done. Is God then to blame for having made a mistake by creating humans with an innate potential for evil? The aspect of blame brings the main topic of this study into view: for if humans cannot be blamed for the evil they commit, there would also be no need to forgive such blame. In this chapter, I will focus on reflections Philo offers in *De Confusione Linguarum* to find an answer to these questions.

4.2 Philo's views on what leads humans to do evil and the consequences that follow

4.2.1 The relevance of De Confusione Linguarum *to this topic*

The main questions discussed in this chapter, as formulated in Chapter 1, are: what was Philo's view on why would and could humans, as creatures of the supreme good God, intentionally do evil? And: what are the consequences of committing evil for the wrongdoer and how would and could those consequences involve God to remedy them? In the introduction to this chapter, I added another question: who is to blame for the human ability to do evil?

De Confusione Linguarum is most relevant for finding answers to these questions. In the treatise, Philo describes the elements of what he calls 'the road to evil in the ability to reason' (ἡ ἐπὶ κακίαν ὁδὸς ἐν ψυχῇ λογικῇ; in *Conf.* 179). The existence of such a 'road to evil in the ability to reason' seems paradoxical: how can a road to evil exist in the ability to reason, while for Philo rationality implies goodness? I will investigate the elements of what Philo saw as the road to evil to understand this paradox. A structural analysis of the treatise will help identify the relevant sections for this investigation.

4.2.2 De Confusione Linguarum: Structure of argumentation

The treatise *De Confusione Linguarum* is, like *Quod Deus Sit Immutabilis* analysed in the previous chapters, part of a series of treatises usually named the *Allegorical Commentary*. In this series, Philo discusses aspects of Gn. 2–41.[440] In *De Confusione Linguarum* he focuses on Gn. 11:1–9, the story of the building of the tower of Babel and the confusion of languages. The central question Philo wants to answer in this treatise is: why did God bring about the confusion of languages? His answer is that the story conveys a message of hope. Through the confusion of languages God breaks the unity of evil, limiting the evil that sinners can achieve. The story of the confusion of languages provides Philo with the opportunity to elaborate on the dynamics of doing evil. He repeatedly urges his readers to avoid uniting with evil and to choose the unity with God and goodness instead.

[440] For an overview of the treatises belonging to this series see note 258.

Introduction: The story of the confusion of languages contains philosophical wisdom.
1–13: Philo begins the treatise by introducing its topic: the philosophical wisdom that can be found in the story of the confusion of languages (Gn. 11:1–9) to counter opponents who denounce this story as useless myth that cannot confer any philosophical truth. They ask: why would God want to confuse the human languages?

The meaning of 'the confusion of languages' (Gn. 11:1).
14–59: To answer his opponents' objections, Philo provides an allegorical interpretation of Gn. 11:1 to present what he sees as the wisdom contained in this story in general terms, which is that the confusion of languages means God will always destroy the collaboration of a great multitude of human evils. He explains that the most dangerous form of collaboration of evils is when humans voluntarily commit themselves to doing evil, and exhorts his readers to flee from such people who are full of strife and disharmony. Instead, his readers should ally themselves with those who seek peaceful and harmonious unity with God. Having presented his general answer to the question why God brought about the confusion of languages, Philo continues the treatise by presenting the details of his solution.

The humans mentioned in Gn. 11:1–9 are evildoers (Gn. 11:2).
60–82: Are the humans concerned in Gn. 11:1–9 oriented towards heaven and virtue, or towards the earth and vice? Philo concludes that, because these humans are evildoers, they are oriented towards the earth and the body. The movement towards the body means drowning in the flood of sensations, ending up in the great confusion of vice. Instead, souls who want to become wise renounce the body and orient themselves towards heaven – that is, towards the truly existing things.

Evildoers enslave the mind to act out evil (Gn. 11:3).
83–106: Through the orientation towards earth and body, evildoers seek to activate the sensations to maximise pleasure and realise all kinds of vices, while using sophisticated reasonings to destroy virtue and lead the mind into enslavement. Philo asks: how can the mind be released from that enslavement? His answer is: through the service of God, the truly wise and truly existent, and the orientation towards the truly existing things.

Evildoers are persistent fools (Gn. 11:4).
107–133: Why do evildoers persist in evil? Because they are fools, Philo answers. According to him, evildoers are confused fools who ignore the truth their conscience tries to show them. They are aimed at maximising pleasure and bolstered by impious religious ideas. They believe what they perceive through the senses is self-caused and all that exists. Instead, they should realise that everything owes its existence to God.

Evildoers are the opposite of those who seek truth (Gn. 11:5).
134–151: Some mockers of the biblical narrative say that Moses' addition that the 'sons of men' built the city and the tower (Gn. 11:5) is redundant: who else than humans would build cities and towers? However, careful scrutiny of this statement reveals that Moses wants to emphasise how evildoers are the complete opposite of those who search for the truth. Evildoers adhere to polytheism, they declare pleasure to be the main aim in life and obscure the truth that there is only one creator. Those who search for the truth are divided into three categories. First and best are those who know God as 'the one', they are called 'sons of God'. Second best are those who perceive the activity of the logos in the material world, called 'sons of the logos'. Third best are the 'sons of David', who learn about virtue through hearing from those who see.

Despite their persistence, evildoers can never achieve their goal; but this does not mean that they will go unpunished (Gn. 11:6).
152–167: Evildoers can never achieve their goal to harm heaven. However, the fact that the evildoers can never achieve their goal does not imply that they should go unpunished. Their punishment is that they are abandoned by God, lacking all good sense which one would normally use to consider one's actions, resulting in a life full of vice and devoid of virtue.

Evildoers are punished, but not by God directly (Gn. 11:7).
168–182: God employs his powers to inflict punishment on the evildoers, which is why Moses writes that a 'we' brought about the confusion of tongues (Gn. 11:7). God employs these powers to inflict punishment, because even though he knows that it is aimed at the betterment of humans, it is also somewhat connected to evil because of its destructiveness and the pain it causes. Philo sees a similarity to the creation of humans for which God also employed his powers, namely to create the human potential for evil. This potential cannot have been created by God directly, because God should only be associated with goodness.

Conclusion: The punishment of evildoers is 'confusion', meaning the complete destruction of the power of evil (Gn. 11:8–9).
183–198: Having discussed the separate elements of Gn. 11:2–7, Philo summarises the philosophical wisdom he finds in the story of the confusion of languages. He explains that the 'confusion of languages' cannot refer to the origin of all different languages, because Moses would then have called it the 'separation of languages'. Instead, it refers to the dissolution or complete destruction of vice, preventing it from destroying the soul. The disintegration of evil is a signal for all virtuous souls to unite.

Philo, in his argumentation in *De Confusione Linguarum*, repeatedly identifies the human body and the senses as an important cause of evil. He presents

evildoers as body-lovers, who ignore God and even actively employ their ability to reason to justify the evil they commit. How is this possible? *Conf.* 14–59 will be analysed first to gain insight into how Philo evaluates the human body and specifically the senses in terms of good and evil, to begin our exploration of who is to blame for the human ability for evil. For if God created the body and the senses, how can they then be a cause of evil? What will become apparent is that the body and the senses can be used for good, if humans seek God's wisdom to control them, whereas if they are not kept under control all kinds of evil ensue.

Whether or not humans will seek God's wisdom is a matter of choice for humans. Next, *Conf.* 60–82 will be analysed to further explore this choice. The focus of the analysis will be on what Philo held to be the ultimate good or the ultimate evil for human beings. As we have seen in the previous chapter, the potential for either rationality or irrationality allows humans to choose between the two. But how does that choice work out in terms of good and evil?

Exploring the role of the body and the senses in the human choice between good and evil prepares the way for the third and final analysis of this chapter. The specific elements active in what Philo saw as the road to evil will be explored by analysing *Conf.* 83–106. In that analysis, I will use the insights from the first two parts of this chapter and the previous chapters to see how Philo came to consider it possible that humans can intentionally do evil, and what he thought are the grave consequences of choosing evil.

4.2.3 Conf. *14–59: When the sensations drown the soul*

4.2.3.1 *Paraphrase*

In the preceding sections (*Conf.* 1–13), Philo has discussed why some people see the story of the confusion of languages in Gn. 11:1–9 as merely a myth, without any philosophical truth. Philo then presents in *Conf.* 14–59 God's destruction of the 'concord of evils' (κακῶν συμφωνία, *Conf.* 15 and 21). Philo sees this destruction of evil as the essential truth contained in this story. Next, from *Conf.* 60 onward, he presents the support for this hopeful conclusion with a verse-to-verse analysis of Gn. 11:2–7.

Philo's main conclusion from Gn. 11:1–9, drawn from his interpretation of Gn. 11:1, is that by means of the confusion of languages God destroys the 'concord of evils' (*Conf.* 14–15). He distinguishes two types of 'concord of evils'. The first is the coincidence of evils that can befall someone by chance, for example poverty, illness and melancholy. Philo sees wealth, reputation, health and fortitude as guards that protect someone's soul against such evils. However, when such involuntary evils coincide, they can overwhelm a soul (*Conf.* 16–20).

The second type of 'concord of evils' is, according to Philo, a far more dangerous one. It is when deliberate evils unite. Such a union comes into being when someone welcomes the flood of sensations originating from the body through the input from the senses. The flood of sensations leads to a flood of evil thoughts produced by the mind. The soul is then overwhelmed from two sides: from the body below and from the mind above (*Conf*. 21–29).

Wicked fools welcome the flood of sensations. The wise, in contrast, are able to withstand it. However, as Philo states, only in allying oneself to God, can a person battle against and hope to overcome the flood of sensations and evil thoughts. To ally oneself to God brings good sense and wisdom. God grants the seekers of wisdom the power to withstand and overcome the flood of evil (*Conf.* 30–32).

In this battle between good and evil, speech is used by both sides. Speech is employed by the wise to destroy evil and stimulate goodness. However, speech is also employed by the wicked to strengthen evil and destroy virtue (*Conf*. 33–39). So, Philo sums up, collaboration, unity and its accompanying speech can be aimed at either good or evil. One has to choose to which union one will ally oneself. Philo exhorts his readers to seek the beneficial union with God that leads to peace and harmony and righteousness, and to flee from the union with evil that leads to confusion and destruction (*Conf*. 40–59).

4.2.3.2 Analysis part 1: The ambivalent nature of the human senses

In the previous chapter, I discussed how Philo saw the human mind as what connects humans most directly to God. Since it is so intimately connected to God, one would expect it to be unable to produce evil. Apparently, this is not the case, as we see in *Conf*. 14–59. Philo announces in *Conf*. 21 that he wants to examine the matter of 'the concord of voluntary evils' (ἡ τῶν ἑκουσίων κακῶν συμφωνία), so he maintained that humans can do evil voluntarily. To understand how this works is important for understanding Philo's view on divine forgiveness. Philo explains that voluntary evils are the result of a collaboration of all three parts of the human soul. Before discussing what causes Philo thought could trigger the human soul to voluntarily commit evil, I want to briefly explain how Philo was not inconsistent in his presentation of the human soul.

In *Conf*. 21, Philo describes the soul as consisting of three parts: the seat of reason (νοῦς καὶ λόγος); the seat of the sensations (θυμός); and the seat of the desires (ἐπιθυμία). Such a tripartite division of the soul is rooted in an interpretation of Plato's *Timaeus*.[441] However, Philo's description of the

[441] See Dillon, *Middle Platonists*, pp. 111–112; and Tobin, *Creation*, p. 149. Nevertheless, Plato did not

human soul varies: sometimes he describes it as having two or three parts, and sometimes as having no separate parts at all, revealing influences from various philosophical traditions (Platonic, Aristotelian, Stoic).[442] Philo's ambition in general was not to formulate an exact picture of the specific parts of the soul. Most important to him was to distinguish between a rational and an irrational part, a distinction commonly made in his intellectual context.[443] Philo was aware that there was debate among intellectuals as to whether the soul could be divided into parts at all.[444] As he involves himself in this debate, he sometimes presents the soul as indivisible and sometimes as divided into two or more parts. In various contexts, he allows himself this fluctuation in light of his conviction that complete knowledge of the soul is beyond human comprehension.[445]

After this brief excursus regarding Philo's view on the human soul in general, I return to the main topic of this analysis: what causes the human soul to voluntarily commit evil? As Philo describes in *Conf.* 21, the soul can be in such a state that evil is produced by its every part, including the rational one – that is, the mind (νοῦς).[446] The evils typical to the mind are what follow from its follies (ἀφροσύναι), its cowardly evasions from correction (δειλίαι ἀκολασίαι), and its general wrongdoings (ἀδικίαι). What causes these evils? The aim of the analysis of *Conf.* 14–59 is to find an answer to this question.

The analysis of *Conf.* 14–59 will consist of three parts. In the first part, Philo's view on the senses will be discussed. Did Philo see the senses as the cause of human evil? Did he consider the senses even as intrinsically evil? If so, can humans then be blamed for the evil they do, or can they instead excuse themselves by blaming their senses? We will see in the first part of the analysis how Philo saw the senses not as intrinsically evil, but as generating evil when they are not kept under control of the mind. In the second part of the analysis, I will relate Philo's view on the senses to his intellectual context. We will see how Philo held that without God the human mind cannot control the senses. God's

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present a coherent picture of the soul, as noted in several studies on Platonic thought, see Long, 'Platonic Souls'; earlier van Peursen, *Inleiding*, pp. 39–40 and Loenen, *Nous*, p. 54.

442 For an identification of these various influences see Bréhier, *Les idées*, p. 160; Goodenough, *Introduction*, p. 113; Sandmel, *Philo*, p. 100.

443 Philo's emphasis on the distinction between the rational and irrational part of the soul is suggested by Runia and Frick (see Runia, *Timaeus*, pp. 262, 470; Frick, *Providence*, pp. 153–158). Runia describes this distinction as common in Runia, *Timaeus*, pp. 468–469, contrary to Morris, who claims this distinction as mainly Platonic (see Morris, 'Philo', p. 886).

444 See Dillon, *Middle Platonists*, p. 98 and Rist, *Stoic Philosophy*, p. 30.

445 As he writes in *Som.* I, 30–32.

446 We have already seen in the analysis of *Opif.* 69–88 how Philo considered the human mind as a place where both virtue and vice are at home (see pp. 105–111, see also Frick, *Providence*, pp. 163–164).

contribution in controlling the senses will be analysed in the third and final part of the analysis to gain further insight into what choice Philo held humans have in doing evil or avoiding it. I will begin the analysis by exploring how Philo used the metaphor of the deluge for the human mind that produces evil and what this metaphor means for his view on the role of the senses in voluntarily doing evil.[447]

In *Conf.* 23–25, Philo presents the human mind that produces evil as if it was drowned in a flood. He identifies the senses as the cause of the drowning of the mind: they overwhelm it with sensations to the point where all good reason disappears from it.[448] The mind then produces all kinds of evil thoughts. Consequently, the human soul is overwhelmed or flooded from two sides: the senses overwhelm it with sensations as if from below (from the body); the mind floods it as if from above by producing a torrent of evil thoughts.[449] The senses appear as an important cause for the human mind to produce evil. Are they then to blame? This is not the case. Philo saw the senses as neither good nor bad, as will become apparent when I explore Philo's use of the metaphor of flowing water for the process of sense-perception: he held the senses to be a potential channel for a 'downpour' of beneficial thoughts, just as much as for a 'downpour' of evil thoughts.[450]

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447 In *Conf.* 22–23 Philo describes the human mind producing evil using several metaphors: he compares the mind to a ship being wrecked through mutiny; to a city being infected by a plague; and to land being flooded by a deluge (κατακλυσμός, *Conf.* 23). I will focus on the metaphor of the deluge, in particular, to discover what, according to Philo, causes the human mind to produce all kinds of evil.

448 In *Som.* II, 109 Philo describes the body as the river of Egypt (the Nile). The body constantly floods the soul with sensations (πάθη), through the channel of the senses, over time destroying the beauty of the soul. A similar description of the senses drowning the soul with sensations appears in *Det.* 15 and *Mut.* 107. See also *QG* II, 12, 23, 37, 39; as discussed by Zeller in Zeller, 'Death of the Soul', p. 30. Winston and Dillon review how Philo uses nautical metaphors in his treatises, and supply references to similar thoughts in Plato's and Plutarch's work and in Stoic allegory (see Winston/Dillon, *Two Treatises*, pp. 241–242).

449 In *Conf.* 23, Philo writes that 'torrents of wickedness' well up not only from below (the body), but pour down also from above, from heaven. In *De Confusione Linguarum* Philo does not explicate what these torrents from above stand for. In *Fug.* 192, where the metaphor of the deluge overwhelming the soul also appears, Philo does explicate what the torrents from heaven stand for. According to Philo, they are a symbol of the intentional evil deeds (ἀδικήματα) that originate in the mind (νοῦς). These swamp the soul as if from above, whereas the senses (for which the earth is the symbol in *Fug.* 192) drown the soul with sensations, as if from below.

450 Instead of the senses causing the mind to 'pour' evil thoughts 'like rain,' for which Philo uses the verb ἐπομβρέω in *Conf.* 23, the senses can also be the channel for God to shower the mind with 'apprehension' (ἀντίληψις), as Philo describes in *Conf.* 127, using the same verb ἐπομβρέω. Philo describes this process more elaborately in *LA* I, 25–29, and explains there that he is describing the process of sense-perception, when it functions properly. He similarly uses ἐπομβρέω to describe how God provides the mind with 'apprehension' (ἀντίληψις) of what the senses perceive. 'Apprehension' (ἀντίληψις) is a multifaceted philosophical term, as, for example, illustrated in the analysis by Lenn E. Goodman and Scott Aikin of Epicurus' use of it in relation to Plato's thought and Danny M. Hutchinson's analysis of Plotinus' use (see Goodman/Aikin, 'Epicurus' and Hutchinson, 'Apprehension').

Philo can describe the process of sense-perception as water flowing back and forth between the mind and the world around it through the channel of the senses.[451] The mind and the objects of the senses are in a constant process of exchange.[452] Philo saw this process of exchange between the mind and sensory objects as beneficial, as a gift from God allowing humans apprehension (ἀντίληψις) of the world around them.[453] The senses then function as a channel for beneficial thoughts.

Although not unique, Philo's identification of 'water' as the medium which establishes the connection between the senses and what they perceive is unusual. The idea that the senses needed some medium to connect them to the objects they perceive can be regarded as a common notion in ancient philosophy, although the mediating element can vary: fire, air and water are mentioned in our sources.[454] Biblical references to 'rain' may have inspired Philo to put the focus on 'water' as the medium connecting the senses to the objects they perceive.[455] A possible further inspiration for him to present 'water' as the mediating element for sense-perception is that water also invokes positive notions, such as 'purification' or the metaphorical 'fountain of wisdom', notions I will return to when further describing Philo's view on God's involvement in someone using the senses properly.[456]

We should further realise that in Philo's description of the process of sense-perception, 'water' is connected to the element of πνεῦμα. Philo held that the senses, when properly used, can function as a gateway into the intelligible

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451 Philo puts forward his view on the process of sense-perception in *LA* I, 25–29 as his interpretation of the meaning of Gn. 2:5b–6 'for the Lord God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was no one to till the ground; but a stream would rise from the earth, and water the whole face of the ground' (NRSV). A similar interpretation of these verses can be found in *Post.* 126 and *Fug.* 182.

452 *LA* I, 29: ὥστε ἀντίδοσιν ὁ νοῦς καὶ τὸ αἰσθητὸν ἀεὶ μελετῶσι.

453 See also *Fug.* 132–139, where Philo similarly describes how God provides apprehension to the mind of what it perceives through the senses. In Sir. 17:5–7 the senses are presented as a gift from God with which – together with the mind – humans can gain insight.

454 The idea of kinship between senses and their objects in general was described by Plato in *Tht.* 156A–E and 159D, and by Sextus Empiricus as a common intellectual notion in *Adv. Math.* VII, 92–93. Plato identified 'fire' as the element which establishes a connection between the eyes and the objects they see (*Tim.* 45C–D; similarly, in *Opif.* 53, *Sacr.* 36 and *Deus* 79, Philo describes 'light' as the medium which connects the eye and the object it sees). Stoic philosophers could identify 'air' and 'water' as the elements that established the connection between the senses and what they perceive (see SVF II, 863–872, cf. Runia, *Timaeus*, p. 270; see also Epictetus *Diss.* III, 3, 20–21). For a discussion of the senses in ancient philosophy see Glenney/Silva, *Senses*, pp. 65–95, in Stoicism see Long, *Hellenistic Philosophy*, p. 126 and in Philo specifically see Runia, *Timaeus*, pp. 266–276.

455 In *LA* I, 25–29 his inspiration is the rain mentioned in Gn. 2:5b–6; in *Fug.* 137–139, it is the bread raining out of heaven in Ex. 16:4. Other biblical passages may further have inspired Philo to identify the heavenly waters with divine inspiration (see, for example, Isa. 32:15; 44:3–4; 55:10–11).

456 See the third part of my analysis of *Conf.* 14–59 (pp. 159–162).

world.[457] As discussed in Chapter 3, what happens then is that through the senses the human mind can perceive the πνεῦμα-element present in everything that exists.[458] We should bear in mind that Philo did not hold the medium connecting the senses to their objects to be plain 'water', but rather 'water' mixed with or as a transformation of πνεῦμα, an element associated with the divine realm.[459]

If Philo could see the process of sense-perception as a basically beneficial process, how can it then become so destructive? This happens if the process of sense-perception is not handled with care and runs out of control.[460] The senses then become a channel through which the soul is drowned to the point where all good sense disappears, as Philo describes in *Conf.* 23–25. The flow of water has run out of control and has turned into a flood that drowns the mind, bringing disease and destruction to every part of the soul.[461] The human mind, the element that can connect humans most intimately to God, then becomes the medium through which grave evil is generated.[462]

So, the senses form a two-way channel and their moral status depends on the use they are put to: they can be used for either good or evil.[463] Philo used the

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457 As Philo describes it in *Som.* I, 188 (see above, note 256). See also *LA* III, 97–99, although in 100–101 Philo expresses that a more perfect perception of God is when one gains knowledge from God himself, rather than by means of creation.

458 See the fourth part of my analysis of *Deus* 33–50 (pp. 124–137).

459 Note that Philo describes in *Fug.* 182 that the 'water' flowing from the mind to the senses spreads as πνεῦμα when it activates them. Similarly, with regards to the Stoic view on how the senses and the objects they perceive are connected, we should probably say that they held that the air is transformed to πνεῦμα, and the connection between the senses and their objects is established when the πνεῦμα of both meet each other – as Galen describes with regards to sight: the impact of the sun transforms the air around us into πνεῦμα, which is met by the πνεῦμα of the mind flowing through the eyes (Galen, 5.617–642 Kühn, *Plac.* IX; Annette Weissenrieder describes Galen's view on the transformation from air to πνεῦμα in Weissenrieder, 'Infusion', p. 141). Another element of the puzzle may also be Plutarch's description (in *Quaest. Nat.* II, 912A) of the special qualities of rainwater, as 'the water from heaven, airlike and mixed with spirit' (τὸ ἐκ Διὸς ὕδωρ καὶ ἀερῶδες καὶ πνεύματι μεμιγμένον) (see also Meeusen, *Plutarch*, pp. 379–380).

460 Philo emphasises the need for control of the mind over the sensations, for example, in *Sacr.* 45 and *Spec.* IV, 79.

461 Cf. *Conf.* 25: ἀλλ' οὐδὲν ἄσονον οὐδὲ ἀδιάφθαρτον αὐτῆς [i.e., the soul] κατελείπετο. Similarly, Philo describes in both *Ebr.* 12 as well as *Spec.* II, 202 the consequence of the sensations running out of control with an image of a stream of clear, smooth-flowing water turning into a flood of water, full of mud, disease and destruction. Compare *Som.* II, 150–153 where Philo describes how the soul can quench its thirst from the stream of pleasure, a stream full of evils, harming the soul and leading the irrational powers of the soul to overwhelm it – a process that Philo here compares to a herd of brute cattle running out of control of the herdsman (the mind).

462 Compare *Migr.* 204 where Philo describes how when the senses receive an abundance of input the understanding is left starving.

463 In *Conf.* 19, Philo describes the senses as guards (δορυφόροι) of the soul. In *LA* II, 8 Philo describes

metaphor of flowing water for both the beneficial and destructive use of the senses. Flowing water as a metaphor for the ambivalent nature of the senses is quite fitting: water can be life-giving as well as death-bringing. Philo ascribed a similar ambivalent nature to the senses.[464]

To sum up. The flooding of the mind as Philo describes it in *Conf.* 23–25 is the result of the senses running out of control.[465] Instead of beneficial apprehension of the world, the human mind now produces evil thoughts leading to evil actions. The previously smooth and clear flow of the mind has become wild and murky, sickening and possibly even destroying every part of the soul, including the mind. For Philo, the cause of the contamination is not so much an intrinsic evil present in the senses themselves. The sensations will have this detrimental effect on the soul only when someone allows the senses to run out of control and overwhelm it.[466]

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the senses and sensations as helpers 'friendly (οἰκεῖος) to the mind as a brother,' because they are essential for survival; however, he then continues (in *LA* II, 9–11) to explain that the sensations are described as helpers not κυρίως but καταχρηστικῶς; a distinction we also encountered above in the exploration of Philo's view on anthropomorphic descriptions of God in Chapter 2 (see pp. 85–90). Compare also *Ebr.* 70, where Philo described the senses as both friendly (οἰκεῖος) and hostile (δυσμενής) to the soul. It is because of such seeming contradictions that some authors depict Philo as a jumbled and inconsistent thinker (see references in note 107).

464 *LA* III, 67. Pleasure (ἡδονή) Philo *did* consider as bad by itself (see *LA* III, 68). Pleasure distorts the process of sense-perception, causing sensory objects to appear as desirable, instead of neutral as they are (*LA* III, 64). Although, like Aristotle and Plato, for example (as will be discussed in the second part of my analysis of *Conf.* 14–59, see pp. 155–159), Philo conceded that there are natural pleasures necessary for survival, which again must not become excessive – see *Spec.* III, 9 (as discussed in Ranocchia, 'Polemic', pp. 92–93). Philo describes the paradoxical nature of pleasure also in *Gig.* 43–44 (as noted and discussed in Winston/Dillon, *Two Treatises*, pp. 258–259). Runia (in Runia, *Timaeus*, p. 469) sees Plato's *Timaeus* as 'decisive for Philo's anthropology' and describes distinctive trademarks of Philo's moral evaluation of the senses: Philo saw the rational part of the soul as divine and immortal, which becomes weighed down by the body, which needs the irrational part of the soul, because of the sustenance of the body; this irrational part (the senses and sensations) must be kept under control. Billings describes how Philo could consider pleasure as beneficial, although he then preferred to call it joy or happiness (see Billings, *Platonism*, pp. 80–81).

465 In contrast to comparing them to a flood of water, in *LA* II, 11 Philo compares the sensations to wild beasts who can easily tear the soul apart. These wild animals are also mentioned in *Conf.* 24 as drowning in the deluge that destroys the soul as a whole; a deluge the sensations themselves instigate, apparently. Similarly, Philo compares the seat of the desires (ἐπιθυμία) to an irrational animal in *Spec.* I, 148. Dillon notes how Philo uses the comparison of the desires to wild animals frequently and traces it back to Platonic thought (for references see Winston/Dillon, *Two Treatises*, p. 255). An illustration of how Philo sees the senses can be further found in *Sacr.* 105: 'By its nature then the species of the senses can also be either wild or tame: it is wild when they refuse to obey the reins of the mind, which is like a herdsman, and they are irrationally carried away towards the external things of sense-perception; it is tame when they obediently accept the reasoning power as the ruler of the body-soul compound, and are governed and guided by it.' A similar thought of the need to control the human desires can be found in Sir. 5:2, 6:2–4 (here a lack of restraint is compared to a wild bull); 18:30–31; 21:11; 23:4–6.

466 A similar view can be found in the works of Plotinus: limitless and excessiveness (ἀμετρία) is what

How can they be kept under control, according to Philo? This question will be the topic of the following section.

*4.2.3.3 **Analysis part 2: Humans cannot control their senses without God***

What means are available for humans, according to Philo, to prevent the sensations from running out of control? Quoting Dt. 5:31, Philo describes in *Conf.* 30–32 how through God the wise can stand firm against the flood of sensations. Why does the wise depend upon God to stand firm, according to Philo? This will become clear by further exploring the intellectual context of Philo's view on the senses. I will do so by briefly exploring the views of Plato, Aristotle and Stoics like Posidonius on the human senses, and on the means they believed could aid humans to use them properly. I will begin with Plato, who also presented the senses as able to cause a deluge in the human soul.

Plato uses the metaphor of a deluge for the soul being overwhelmed by the input of the senses in *Tim.* 43B–C.[467] He uses this metaphor to describe the irrational state of the human soul at birth. Plato then describes in *Tim.* 44B–C how the right education will remedy this state of irrationality, turning someone into a rational being. In other dialogues, Plato is not entirely negative in his evaluation of the senses and desires. He describes how using the senses enables the soul to remember the original forms.[468] Regarding the desires, he writes that they can be both good and bad: if they result in strength and good health, they are good; if they result in the opposite, they are bad.[469] Plato advises, however, that a person who wants to become wise should shun the senses and desires as much as possible. He should limit their role to the bare minimum required for the sustenance of the body.[470]

The ambivalent stance of Plato towards the senses and desires is continued and developed in other philosophical traditions. Aristotle considers the sensations as in themselves neither good nor bad.[471] Their moral state depends on whether they are controlled by reason.[472]

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makes the soul evil, when it turns away from the mind and focuses on inferior things (*Enn.* I, viii, 4–5; II, ix, 9, 13) (also presented by de Vogel, *Greek Philosophy vol. 3*, pp. 420, 492–495, 506). On Philo's view that the irrational part of the soul is not evil per se, see also Winston, 'Theodicy', p. 131.

467 The metaphor for the soul being destroyed through becoming wet through indulging in pleasure appears earlier in Heraclitus, see Heraclitus F 77 DK, F 117 DK; and Aeschylus depicts the feeling of anger with a similar metaphor, namely as a black wave in *Eumenides* 832. The destruction of the soul as a consequence of doing evil will be discussed more fully on pp. 184–190.

468 *Phd.* 76A.

469 *Gorg.* 499C–D.

470 *Phd.* 64D–E; 83A.

471 *Eth. Nic.* II, 1105b 25–30.

472 *Ibidem,* I, 1102b 30–35.

Aristotle acknowledges, just as Plato, that some of the things that cause pleasure are necessary for survival.[473] To be completely without things that produce pleasure would make someone insensitive, and Aristotle considers this as something that should be avoided as much as an excess of pleasure.[474] However, Aristotle also warns against indulging in an excess of pleasure as harmful and incurable if one persists in such behaviour.[475] Aristotle describes the human condition as servile by nature, from which engaging in philosophy provides liberation.[476]

Posidonius of Apamea, a Stoic philosopher who lived less than a century before Philo, like Aristotle argues for applying moderation regarding the senses and sensations: they should neither be too weak nor too strong.[477] Posidonius compares the sensations and desires to young horses, who should be reined in by reason. They can and should be allowed to be satisfied. However, if they are allowed to run out of control, they cause a sickness of the mind.[478] Because of this risk, Posidonius concludes that evil is like a seed potentially present in every human being, that it is unavoidable, but can and should be kept under control.[479] The Stoics in general share in an ambivalent stance towards the sensations. They too argue that they are necessary for survival, but should be kept under control, to avoid that they grow into a sickness of the soul.[480] Control over the senses and sensations is established and maintained through philosophical training, which allows humans to assess them correctly.[481]

My brief overview of the views on the senses in various philosophical traditions reveals an almost overall ambivalent stance towards the desires, sensations and the senses. They are generally seen as essential for survival on the one hand, and as dangerous to the rationality of the soul on the other.[482] There is also

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473 *Ibidem,* VII, 1147b 23–29.

474 *Ibidem,* II, 1107b 4–9.

475 *Ibidem*, VII, 1150a 20–25.

476 *Met*. I, 982b 25–983a 10, see also Bos, *Soul*, p. 344.

477 Posidonius F 31D, F 158, F 166 and F 168.

478 Posidonius F 163.

479 Posidonius F 35C.

480 See, for example, Seneca, *Ep.* 75, 11; 116, 3, 8.

481 See, for example, Seneca *Ep*. 76, 3–6 and 17–18; and Epictetus' views as discussed on pp. 159–162. Cicero describes the necessity of the ratio controlling the appetites in *Off.* 1, 101. See further Rist, *Stoic Philosophy*, pp. 37–53 and Long, *Hellenistic Philosophy*, pp. 179–209.

482 This almost general agreement in ancient philosophy regarding the ambivalent nature of the senses accords well with John M. Rist's statement that the apparent conflict between the concept of μετριοπάθεια (moderation of the sensations, usually associated with the Platonists and Peripatetics) on the one hand and ἀπάθεια (complete removal of the sensations, usually associated with the Stoics) on the other, appears to be more a matter of semantics. The seeming conflict could be resolved

consensus that the senses need to be kept under control and that philosophical training brings someone such control. How does all this relate to Philo's view that the wise is dependent upon God to withstand the flood of sensations? The answer to this question is connected to the philosophical debate on whether the senses could be controlled at all.

Plato, for example, was already sceptical regarding the human ability to completely control the senses. Plato held that the mind perceives the notions of philosophical truth best when it is not bothered by the interference from the senses and desires.[483] He maintained that the confusion of the senses causes sickness of the soul, contaminates it, weighs it down, imprisons the soul and prevents it from ascending towards the divine realms of philosophical truth.[484] Students of philosophy recognise the deceptive nature of the senses and learn to shun them as much as possible.[485] However, Plato regarded the senses as unpredictably interfering in the search for truth to such an extent, that only God can completely free the soul from their disruptions through the death of the body.[486]

Where did Philo stand in the debate regarding the senses and the possible means that could aid in using them properly? We already saw in the previous section how Philo, similar to Plato, Aristotle and the Stoics, thought that the senses, because of their ambivalent nature, needed to be kept under control to function properly. What, according to Philo, could help to keep the senses under control? Like Plato and Aristotle, Philo was convinced that philosophical training helped to remedy the state of irrationality and could help make a fool wise. He describes how philosophical training helps the soul to strive

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through the insight that all three traditions generally understood the word πάθη not as referring to the (sometimes beneficial) sensations, but as a designation for the harmful and disease-like effect the sensations have on the soul. Harmful diseases cannot be moderated, rather infection needs to be avoided, or cured if one is infected. In other words: all three traditions generally agree that the harmful πάθη need to be removed (see Rist, *Stoic Philosophy*, pp. 26–27).

483 *Tht.* 185E, 186A; *Phd.* 65A–65E; *Gorg.* 523D.

484 Plato expresses such thoughts most strongly in *Phd.* 66B–C: 'So long as we have the body, and the soul is contaminated by such an evil, we shall never attain completely what we desire, that is, the truth. For the body keeps us constantly busy by reason of its need of sustenance; (66C) and moreover, if diseases come upon it, they hinder our pursuit of the truth. And the body fills us with passions and desires and fears, and all sorts of fancies and foolishness, so that, as they say, it really and truly makes it impossible for us to think at all' (translation by H.N. Fowler). On the confusing nature of the senses see also *Phd.* 79C–E, 80B, 83B–83D; the metaphor of imprisonment appears in *Phd.* 82E; *Rep.* 572E–573A; of disease in *Phd.* 115E; *Rep.* 439D; *Phil.* 45C; *Gorg.* 478E, 505A–B; of the soul being weighed down in *Gorg.* 522E; *Phd.* 81B–E; *Tim.* 42B–D, 92A–B.

485 *Phd.* 82D–83B.

486 *Phd.* 66E–67A.

towards rationality.[487] Training alone, however, was not enough for Philo. Humans ultimately depend on God to gain control over their senses and attain rationality. Why is this so?

Philo, similarly to Plato, believed that while humans live in the earthly realm, they are always at risk of the influx of sensations becoming a deluge overwhelming the soul. Philosophical training helps, but human beings are weak. Fate and chance may cause the soul to swerve and become imbalanced.[488] When this happens, one can only hope that this condition will be temporary. The risk of being overwhelmed by the sensations is always present while the human soul is in the body.[489] Therefore, Philo held that human beings are always at risk of stumbling and causing unintentional evil.[490] Because of this risk, Philo believed that truly wise men are scarcely found in the earthly realm.[491] The unpredictable nature of the senses and the risk of unintentionally doing evil mean that, according to Philo, humans can never become wise and virtuous on their own through philosophical training and practice, they can only do so through God. Philo describes God's contribution in becoming wise and virtuous in *Conf.* 49–54, and I will focus on these sections in the next part of the analysis.

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487 Practice in virtue aids the mind to withstand the attack of the irrational side of human nature (cf. *Conf.* 74). In *Opif.* 128, Philo describes how Moses reserves the seventh day of the week for philosophical study, to improve one's character, and to allow for the scrutiny of conscience to learn from past mistakes; in *Sacr.* 35–39 and 112–114, Philo describes how practice and effort is essential for progress (προκοπῆς) in the attainment of virtue (similar in *Post.* 78 and *Congr.* 106); in *Spec.* I, 148–149, Philo recommends ascetism to keep desire (which he compares to an unclean animal) at bay; philosophy is praised as the source of all things good in *Spec.* III, 186. In *Virt.* 14, he describes how spiritual health prevents the sensations from overwhelming the soul. The example of how Philo interprets the commandment to observe the Sabbath as a day for philosophical reflection, shows that, for Philo, piety and philosophical study are two sides of the same coin. Compare also Calabi, who discusses Philo's interpretation of the 'snake-fighter' as a symbol for self-control, which can be strengthened through education and good sense (see Calabi, *God's Acting*, pp. 145–147; similarly in Cohen Stuart, *Struggle*, pp. 107–110).

488 Philo describes in *Spec.* III, 5–6 how he by mere chance can become overwhelmed by all kinds of distractions blocking him from philosophical thought. And he thanks God for saving him from this type of deluge and allowing him to open his mind's eye and to pursue wisdom (see also *Mut.* 186; *Som.* II, 145–146; *Spec.* IV, 201; *QG* II, 12).

489 See also note 397 on more background for this idea of the unpredictability of the body.

490 See *Det.* 48; *Deus* 75, 130; *Ebr.* 125; *Spec.* II, 196. Billings describes how Plato presents a similar distinction between intentional and unintentional evil in *Laws* 860E (see Billings, *Platonism*, p. 71) and this distinction can also be found in Sir. 19:16–25.

491 See, for example, *LA* I, 102 and *Sacr.* 111.

To sum up. As Philo describes in *Conf.* 30–32, the sage depends upon God to stand firm against the flood of sensations. A brief review of positions on the human senses and sensations in various philosophical traditions revealed *why* Philo held humans can never keep the senses under control on their own. We saw how Philo's ambivalent stance towards the senses is in agreement with the philosophical views of Plato, Aristotle and the Stoics. We also saw how in these traditions philosophical training is promoted as a means to learn how to control the senses, a view shared by Philo. However, Philo also agreed with Plato on the unpredictable nature of the senses, which made Plato sceptical as to whether the senses could be truly controlled at all. Plato held that only death could bring a final release from their evil influences. For Philo, human weakness and the unpredictable nature of the senses were reasons for him to emphasise that humans ultimately depend upon God to gain control over the senses. In the third and final part of the analysis of *Conf.* 14–59, I will explore *how* God contributes in establishing control over the senses, according to Philo.

4.2.3.4 Analysis part 3: God's wisdom purifies the mind and gives it stability

In the preceding two parts of the analysis of *Conf*. 14–59, we saw how Philo presented the senses as leading humans to either good or evil depending on whether they are kept under the control of reason or not. We also saw how because of human weakness and the unpredictable nature of the senses, Philo maintained that control over the senses can only be established if humans rely on God. In this part of the analysis, I want to go one step further and explore Philo's view on what God's contribution in establishing control over the senses is. The elements of God's contribution can be brought into view by comparing what Philo describes in *Conf*. 49–54 as the ideal form of wisdom that humans should aspire to, to Plato's and Epictetus' description of the ideal sage.

As Philo formulates it in *Conf*. 49–54, ideal sages make correct judgements (ὄρθη γνώμη). Correct judgement requires testing (ἐλέγχω, *Conf.* 52) and carefully scrutinising (διελέγχω, *Conf.* 53) the input from the senses, and the sensations they stir up in the soul. This process of testing puts to shame (δυσωπέω, *Conf.* 52) the mass of sensations and evils they have stirred up. If so tested and scrutinised, the senses, pleasures, desires and fears are held under control and are of service. For example, the human mind can appreciate the beauty of a certain object or the pleasant taste of something edible.[492] Such sensations are essential for survival. However, if one does not question (ἀντιλέγω, *Conf.* 54) any of them and assents (συνεπινεύω) to every one of

[492] As Philo describes in *Conf.* 52–54, the senses function properly when they are ruled by reason that tests their input. Goodenough claims how, for Philo, control over the desires should be the aim of very human being (see Goodenough, *Light*, p. 400). It is possible that Philo in *LA* III, 64 even refers to Epicurean doctrine (which he generally despises), when he writes that sense-perception presents bodies purely (ἀκραιφνής) (as argued in Ranocchia, 'Polemic', pp. 100–101).

them, the sensations will eventually rule the soul, resulting in many evils and complete foolishness (ἄνοια). As Philo has explained a little earlier in *Conf.* 30, the wicked fool (φαῦλος) is the one who welcomes the flood of sensations and the evil they can cause; whereas through God the sage has the stability to withstand that flood, allowing the required testing and scrutinising of its influx.[493]

Philo's description of the ideal sage, resembles both Plato's and Epictetus' presentation of the ideal sage. As we shall see, however, there is difference in emphasis between their presentation of the sage and that of Philo, and this difference brings into view what Philo saw as God's essential contribution in becoming wise. I will begin with what light Plato's views can shed on what Philo writes in *Conf.* 49–54.

Even though Plato adhered to the view that truly becoming wise is only possible when the soul is released from the body, he also maintained that some progress towards wisdom is possible while the soul is still living in the body. Progress towards wisdom, which also increases someone's control over the irrational part of the soul, requires purification from wrong beliefs and wrong desires.[494] This purification involves cross-examination and careful consideration of one's opinions. Those who subject themselves to this scrutiny are often put to shame, because they realise their earlier mistakes. For example, Plato provides a summary of the process of gaining true knowledge in *Soph.* 230B–D, explaining that one needs to be corrected (ἐλέγχω) and brought to shame (αἰσχύνη) first in order to be freed from wavering opinions (δόξαι). Thus purified, one can begin to attain true knowledge. Another illustrative example is *Phdr.* 243D, where Socrates shamefully (αἰσχυνόμενος) admits to his interlocutor that he would like a 'drinkable insight' (πότιμος λόγος) to purify him (ἀποκλύζομαι) from the bitter taste (ἁλμυρός) of his previously wrong opinion. In Plato's dialogues the purification from wrong opinions and wrong desires is usually established through the interrogation by a fellow human.[495]

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493 Philo's exposition on the qualities of the wicked fool and the sage starts from a quote in *Conf.* 29 of Ex. 7:15, where God says to Moses: 'Behold, the king of Egypt comes to the water. But you will stand, meeting him at the edge of the river.' Philo then takes 'king of Egypt' to refer to the wicked fool (see also the analysis of *Conf.* 83–106, on pp. 169–190) and Moses to the sage. In *Conf.* 31, Philo then brings forward that 'standing' and 'meeting' seem to contradict each other, as standing implies rest and meeting movement; in *Conf.* 32–59, he solves this seeming contradiction by explaining that 'standing' refers to the stability of the mind of the sage, which allows him to meet – that is, resist, test and scrutinise the input from the senses.

494 Plato describes death as the most fundamental form of this purification in *Phd.* 65E–69D. For a comparison of Plato's views on purification to Eleusinian rites see Farrell, *Mystery Motifs*.

495 *Symp.* 199B–208B provides a good example, where Socrates is taught through interrogation by Diotema on the topic of desiring what is good; ἀντιλέγω appears in 201C, ἐλέγχω in 201E, in 204C–206A the will in relation to goodness is discussed and in 207A–208B all that belongs to the

Philo, in contrast to Plato, emphasises how God's wisdom washes away what blocks the human soul from attaining true knowledge. As Philo describes in *LA* II, 32, using words similar to those of Plato in *Phdr*. 243D, he washes shameful thoughts away with 'drinkable thoughts' (πότιμοι ἔννοιαι) sent by God, 'who,' as Philo writes, 'because of his grace, has poured a sweet stream (νᾶμα) on the soul, replacing the bitter (ἁλμυρός) one.'[496] Elsewhere, Philo presents God as sending a flood of wisdom to wash the soul clean from its contamination with evil, giving a positive interpretation of the deluge.[497]

Philo's description of the sage also closely resembles the Stoic ideal, as will become apparent in light of Epictetus' views. The theme of keeping control over the senses through the testing of what is presented to the mind, weighing whether impressions (φαντασίας) should be accepted or not, was elaborately discussed by Epictetus (a Stoic philosopher living a bit later than Philo, ca. 50–138 CE). He saw such critical testing as 'the most important task of the philosopher.'[498] Philosophers needed to have firm and stable knowledge of the truth to be able to do this testing.[499] They acquired true knowledge through a process of self-examination, purifying the mind of wrong beliefs, and replacing them with correct beliefs, constantly repeating them to set them firmly in the mind.[500]

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body and mortality (see also ibid., pp. 89, 103–134, Evans, 'Diotima' and Dinkelaar, 'Mysteries').

496 θεοῦ τῇ ἑαυτοῦ χάριτι γλυκὺ νᾶμα ἀντὶ ἁλμυροῦ ἐπεισχέαντος τῇ ψυχῇ. The similarity between *LA* II, 32 and *Phdr*. 243D is noted by Colson (see Colson/Whitaker, *Philo vol. 1*, p. 246). Philo describes sinful thoughts in *Conf*. 25–26 as bitter, and how they are destroyed by the wise man (σοφός) Abraham.

497 See *Det*. 170; *Mos.* II, 53, 263 (cf. Goodenough, *Light*, pp. 133–134, and 169–170; see also note 68). A similar presentation of God's wisdom as a beneficial stream of water can be found in Sir. 24:23–33. Wendy E. Helleman describes how, for Philo, 'the human *nous* must be purified of the deceptions of sense as they crowd in and prevent its proper functioning' (see Helleman, 'Deification', p. 63). In *Phd*. 69B–D, Plato ascribes the cleansing of the human soul to wisdom, but without explicitly naming God as the source of that wisdom; later Platonists, as, for example, Alkinoos, emphasised the role of God in this cleansing process more (see Pawłowski, 'Catharsis', pp. 68–69).

498 τοῦτο ἔργον τοῦ φιλοσόφου τὸ μέγιστον, *Diss*. I, 20, 7–8 (as cited by Rodrigo S. Braicovich in Braicovich, 'Critical Assent', p. 319, with more references to similar statements by Epictetus on the same page). As Long explains, for the Stoics an emotion that destabilises the soul is in fact a false judgement and as such precisely something belonging to the rational mind (see Long, *Epicurus to Epictetus*, pp. 379–380).

499 Cf. *Diss*. I, 27, 6; III, 10, 1–5 and others as discussed in Braicovich, 'Critical Assent', pp. 330–334.

500 Cf. *Diss.* II, 21, 15; III, 3, 19 and others as discussed in ibid., p. 329.

There are many similarities between Epictetus and Philo, but an important difference is that Epictetus held that sages can acquire true knowledge through their own training, whereas Philo emphasised that humans should always recognise the limitations of their abilities and acknowledge God as the only stable source of true knowledge if they want to make any progress on the road to wisdom.[501]

To sum up. Philo held that humans cannot attain control over their senses, necessary for them to think and act rationally and virtuously, on their own. Humans can and should learn and practise philosophy, the desire for wisdom, to learn to control their senses; but if they ignore their weaknesses and do not acknowledge God as the only source of wisdom, they will inevitably be swept away by unexpected sensations. Only God provides humans with the means to become wise. God's contribution consists of providing divine wisdom as the source of stable knowledge, and also as a means to purify the human mind from wrong and sinful thoughts that may have entered it. It is essential that humans acknowledge God as the one who provides them with the means to become wise, they should not rely only on their own abilities. Humans who aspire wisdom should orient themselves towards God to progress in wisdom, to be able to correctly judge the input from the senses, and use them in a beneficial way.

4.2.3.5 *Results from the analysis of* Conf. *14–59*

The analysis of *Conf.* 14–59 has helped to understand Philo's stance towards the role of the senses and sensations in the process of committing evil. Philo joins a long-standing intellectual tradition when he ascribes an ambivalent role to the

[501] Cf. *Conf.* 30–32, 59, 74, 81, 96–97, 106, 127, 145–149. Philo contrasts acknowledging God as the source of true and stable knowledge with those who believe the senses to be without error (*Conf.* 125), and evil people who do everything they want without giving it any thought (*Conf.* 164). Compare also *Virt.* 177, where Philo writes: 'Because to never commit any sin is characteristic only of God or perhaps of a divine human as well; turning away from sin towards a blameless life is characteristic of prudent humans who are still aware of what is for their own good' (see also 4 Ez. 7:139–140). Another example of a similar approach is provided in 4 Maccabees. The main theme of 4 Maccabees is how reason through wisdom is meant to rule the sensations (cf. 4 Macc. 1:1–20; 13:1–5; 16:1–5), what we can see as a widespread intellectual notion. In 4 Maccabees, an emphasis of acknowledging God as the source of wisdom, similar to Philo, can be seen. For example, in the prologue the author puts forward that 'inspired reason' (as R.B. Townshend translates εὐσεβὴς λογισμός in 4 Macc. 1:1) will control the passions; and in 4 Macc. 5:22–25 and 7:8 the author equates philosophy to piety (εὐσέβεια). Compare also Sap. Sal. 8:21, where wisdom is presented as a gift from God; 13:1–2, where to identify the stars as gods is denounced as foolish; and 15:3, where to know God is presented as leading to righteousness and immortality; similarly in 6:17–21 and Sir. 1:14–20. I do not mean to suggest that either Plato or Epictetus ignored God as the source of wisdom. Both evidently saw wisdom as being of divine origin. Also, as Richard T. Wallis convincingly argues referring to Euripides and the late Stoics, the emphasis on human weakness and dependence on God's wisdom are not to be seen as a particularity of Philo (see Wallis, 'Conscience', p. 208). To be sure, the difference between Philo and Epictetus is one of degree in emphasis, not of kind.

senses and the sensations that they awaken. On the one hand, they are essential for survival and can be beneficial. On the other, they are unpredictable like an uncontrollable flood and can overwhelm the human soul. Philo did not see the senses and sensations as intrinsically evil, but maintained that they do form a permanent risk for the soul as long as it resides in the body. Humans are weak and the senses are unpredictable, therefore they can easily run out of control, leading to all kinds of evil.

Philo regarded the orientation towards God essential for someone to enable or restore the control of reason over the senses. He saw God as the ultimate source of wisdom necessary for the human mind to be able to use the senses properly. Philosophical training aids being able to limit the risk of the sensations running out of control. However, if humans rely on their own abilities alone to train themselves in philosophy, they will inevitably fail in their progress to wisdom. Humans need to acknowledge their weakness and dependence upon God to attain wisdom. Relying on God as the true and stable source of wisdom is essential because of the unpredictable nature of the senses. They can unexpectedly overwhelm even a philosophically trained person. Therefore, those who aspire wisdom need to acknowledge their weakness and dependence upon God, if they want to keep the senses under the control of reason. Then they can function in a beneficial way and may even help a person perceive the divine, intelligible world to some extent.

According to Philo, someone who wants to become wise needs to acknowledge God as the source of wisdom. A similar insight was gained from the analysis of *Deus* 33–50 in Chapter 3, where we saw how Philo maintained that humans need God's light and spirit to become rational.[502] We also saw how Philo maintained that humans can choose whether they will orient themselves towards God to allow God's wisdom, described by Philo as God's light and spirit in *Deus* 33–50 and as purifying water in *Conf.* 14–59, to make them rational; or towards the earth, causing them to remain irrational. For Philo, this choice between rationality and irrationality is always a choice between good and evil, in *Deus* 33–50 as well as in *Conf.* 14–59. I will now focus on how Philo presented the choice between rationality or irrationality as a choice between good and evil, through the analysis of *Conf.* 60–82.

4.2.4 Conf. *60–82: Good or evil*

4.2.4.1 *Paraphrase*

Conf. 60–82 is the first of several parts (running up to *Conf.* 168–182) in which Philo unfolds the details of his solution to the question of why God brought

[502] See pp. 124–137.

about the confusion of languages, after having presented his answer in broad strokes in the preceding sections (*Conf.* 14–59).

In *Conf.* 60–82, Philo discusses aspects of Gn. 11:2 (quoted in *Conf.* 60), structured around an intricate interpretation of the common indication for 'the east', the plural of ἀνατολή, appearing in the biblical verse. Before formulating his main enquiry, Philo first explains (in *Conf.* 60–61) that this plural indicates two different kinds of 'rising' (ἀνατολή) in the human soul, namely that of either virtues or vices. He then refers to the story of God planting the garden of Eden in the east (κατὰ ἀνατολάς, Gn. 2:8) as an image for the growth of virtues in the soul. The source of the growth of virtues in the soul is reason, described by Philo as the incorporeal human and God's firstborn son (*Conf.* 62–63). However, vices can also grow in the soul instead of virtues. Philo presents Balaam (referring to Mesopotamia, 'Mid-river-land' as his homeland in Num. 23:7–8) as a symbol for someone with vices growing in his soul, because his ability to reason is drowned as if in a deep river so that he has become foolish (*Conf.* 64–66).

Philo can now formulate his main question (in *Conf.* 67): what is growing in the souls of the humans concerned in Gn. 11:1–9, virtues or vices? Philo explains that the growth of virtues is accompanied by moving away from the body, whereas the growth of vices implies moving towards the body. The movement towards the body will cause great confusion for the soul, leading it to forget all things good (*Conf.* 68–69).

Philo next presents the Egyptians (referring to their drowning in the sea in Ex. 14:27) as a symbol for people who orient themselves towards the body and vice. They do not flee from the stream of sensations, but rather submerge themselves in it, ending up in great confusion. In doing so, they make it impossible to progress in virtue by means of the senses (*Conf.* 70–73a). Philo presents Jacob and Isaac as examples of the opposite orientation, namely towards heaven and virtue, which allows them to progress in virtue as they perceive the truly existing things (*Conf.* 73b–74).

Philo finally concludes that the people concerned in Gn. 11:1–9 must be evildoers who orient themselves towards the world perceived by the senses and their bodies, rather than towards the world perceived by the mind and the heavenly and truly existing things. This orientation turns them into wicked fools (*Conf.* 75–76). He presents Abraham, Isaac, and Moses as positive examples of humans who instead have oriented themselves towards the world perceived by the mind to become wise and virtuous. They were strangers to the earth and the body and regarded heaven as their native land (*Conf.* 77–82). Having paraphrased *Conf.* 60–82, I will now move to the analysis of these sections.

4.2.4.2 ***Analysis***

In the previous analysis of *Conf*. 14–59, it became apparent how Philo maintained that humans need to orient themselves towards God to be able to control the input of their senses, and to think and act rationally. We also saw how Philo held that humans are free to choose whether they will orient themselves to God or not. The orientation the human soul can choose is elaborately discussed by Philo in *Conf.* 60–82 in terms of good and evil. He refers to these two orientations as the cause for either virtue or vice to rise and grow in the human soul.[503] I will now further explore how Philo describes the rise and growth of virtue and reason in the human soul, to discover what he held to be the ultimate good or the ultimate evil for human beings. This is a necessary preparation for understanding what Philo believed were the consequences of the human choice between good and evil. I will begin by exploring what Philo held to be the ultimate good for humans.

For Philo, doing what is good and thinking the truth were intimately connected. So much so that he describes (in *Conf*. 73–74) being virtuous and thinking the truth as identical to each other: whether the mind is virtuous or full of vice, depends on what it thinks.[504] The identity between the moral condition of the mind and what it thinks, is in agreement with what was shown in the previous chapter, namely that Philo saw the mind and what it thinks as one.[505] The human mind when it is oriented towards the truth and truly existing things *becomes* and, as long as it continues to do so, *remains* truly existing and fully good.[506]

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[503] Philo introduces (in *Conf*. 60) the image of virtue or vice rising and growing in the human soul, because of the words ἀπὸ ἀνατολῶν appearing in Gn. 11:2. In his interpretation he appears to be using several dimensions of meaning of ἀνατολή together. One element is the common meaning for the plural of ἀνατολή as the east, the place where the sun rises. The other element is that ἀνατολή can also be used to indicate growing, for example, in the LXX version of Jer. 23:5 ἀνατολή is used to refer to the 'growth' (i.e., offspring) of David. Philo interprets the plural of ἀνατολή to refer to 'two kinds of rising/growing throughout the soul' (διττὸν εἶδος τῆς κατὰ τὴν ψυχὴν ἀνατολῆς). He continues by stating that one kind is better (ἀμείνων), one kind is worse (χείρων). Philo connects the better kind to the virtues that can rise up like the sun and can grow up like plants in the soul (*Conf*. 60–61). He furthermore connects the better kind of rising and growing to the presence in the soul of the incorporeal human identical with the divine image – that is, reason. In the previous chapter it became apparent that the 'human after the image' can be identified with both the archetype of all human beings as well as sound reason, or as Philo also calls it 'the pure mind' (see Chapter 3, pp. 106–137).

[504] Philo writes in *Conf*. 73: 'the mind of the virtuous lays claim on the unmixed and pure idea of all things good'; and in *Conf.* 74 he uses three adjectives to emphasise the truly existing nature of these things: πράγματα ὑφεστηκότα καὶ ὄντως ὑπαρκτά.

[505] In the part of my analysis of *Deus* 33–50 concerning the 'ability to reason' (see pp. 124–137).

[506] In Chapter 3 it was also discussed how Philo uses the terms soul and mind somewhat interchangeably (see pp. 121–124). He sometimes uses the same symbol as referring to – what at first sight appears as – various things, because he held the mind and its contents to be identical. An example is how Philo interprets the garden of Eden. In *Conf.* 61, Philo interprets the garden of Eden as referring to the virtues that grow out of divine reason. Similarly, in *Cher.* 12 Philo interprets Eden as a symbol for

When does the human mind think the truth? What is true knowledge, according to Philo? He saw true knowledge as being able to identify the true nature of everything that exists.[507] Philo described the process of gaining true knowledge with terminology from the process of sense-perception. According to Philo, truly knowing the nature of facts and objects (πράγματα and σώματα) meant to be able to correctly identify their distinguishing properties (ἰδιότηται).[508] The senses, when used properly, can have a positive role in this process of identification, as we saw in the analysis of *Conf.* 14–59.

However, Philo did not consider the senses as indispensable for gaining true knowledge.[509] In fact, he thought that the human mind can gain true knowledge best when it is no longer disturbed by input from the senses.[510] The true nature of everything that exists is then revealed through the purely intellectual process of cataloguing all things through distinguishing their abstract properties.[511] For Philo, only God, as the ultimate Intellect, can fully perceive the true nature of everything that exists.[512] Humans can, to some extent, become like God in

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virtue. However, in *Post.* 32 and 128 he identifies Eden with the 'right and divine reason,' which is the root of virtue. In *Som.* II, 241–2, Philo identifies Eden also with divine reason itself, which gives water to the garden – that is, to the virtue-loving soul. In *LA* I, 54, Philo explains how 'the man after the image' is the tiller of the virtues in the garden of Eden. This 'man after the image' has virtue automatically, as Philo writes in *LA* I, 92. This example illustrates how, for Philo, divine reason, its content (virtue), the pure mind of humans, are in essence all one and the same thing, because also in essence it cannot be divided in various parts (see also note 516).

507 As put forward in my analysis of *Opif.* 69–88 (see pp. 106–111).

508 See *Conf.* 52 (similar in *Prob* 47), and, for example, *Opif.* 149, where Philo writes that clear proof for the excellent intellectual capabilities of the first human being was the ability to name all the animals by sharply distinguishing the defining properties (ἰδιότητας) of each animal; or *Agr.* 13, where Philo writes of logic as a means to sharpen the mind in the distinction of specific facts (see also note 383). Compare also the definition of knowledge that Plato gives: knowledge is the ability to identify that which distinguishes something from something else (*Tht.* 208C–D).

509 Sandbach analyses in two articles the somewhat confusing way in which the Stoics used the word φαντασία, namely Sandbach, 'Phantasia' and Sandbach, 'Ennoia'; Sandbach notes how the 'weakness of the Stoic scheme [is] that they applied the same word to what 'appeared' through the senses and to what 'appeared to the mind'' (Sandbach, 'Phantasia', p. 12). Philo appears to share in this same somewhat confusing use of φαντασία. Dillon claims that Philo, with the Stoics, saw καταληπτικη φαντασία as a source for true knowledge (see Dillon, *Middle Platonists*, p. 145). Diogenes Laertius describes the Stoic view on whether a presentation (φαντασία, defined as an imprint in the soul as if in wax) is apprehended (καταληπτικός) or not in DL VII, 1, 45–46. See also Togni, 'Soul-Book'; Shogry, 'Impressions'.

510 As Philo describes in *Conf.* 77–82. The truly wise leave the input from the senses caused by the interaction with earthly objects behind them and orient themselves to heaven – that is, the intelligible world, alone. Runia concludes that 'The 'man according to the image' is thus man as he really is, i.e., as he should and can be when the cares of the body have entirely fallen away' (cf. Runia, *Timaeus*, p. 337).

511 Compare also a statement by Plato that true knowledge is not the information from the senses, but the ability to analyse that information in abstractions in *Tht.* 186B–E.

512 Cf. *Fug.* 136. Compare also *Her.* 130, where Philo explains that God employs the λόγος to dissect the

joining the analytical process of distinguishing the true nature of everything that exists. They do so when, instead of remaining fixated on the input of the senses itself, they focus their mind on the true reality that lies behind the physical objects.[513] They then acquire more and more true knowledge and become more and more virtuous.

The connection between correct thinking, virtue and ultimate happiness can be illustrated with what Philo writes in *Opif.* 150.[514] Here, Philo describes a state of being where the human reasoning faculty works at its best and fully grasps the world around it. Philo presents this ideal state of being as part of an interpretation of the creation of man and woman described in Gn. 2:18–25. He explains in *Opif.* 151–168 that the ideal state of being exists when the human mind ('man') is alone and not yet connected to the senses ('woman').[515] In this state of solitude the mind is itself one and united with all purely intelligible beings: the intelligible world, the stars and God.[516] The human mind can, in

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σώματα and πράγματα into ever smaller elements, to distinguish the immaterial from the material. Only God can do so in full. As a consequence, Philo in *Her.* 143 presents God as the ultimate judge able to correctly divide the σώματα and πράγματα – that is, distinguish between the material and the immaterial (see also *Her.* 161); for Philo's use of the pair σώματα and πράγματα see also note 383.

513 See also Runia, 'God and Man', especially pp. 56–61 where Runia explains that Philo takes Moses' becoming God to Pharaoh to mean that Moses has wholly associated himself with true being only; and ibid., p. 73 where Runia writes that, according to Philo, νοῦς is the 'only part of man that is related to God.' Compare also Runia (in Runia, *Timaeus*, p. 542): 'The logical outcome of Philo's adoption of Greek intellectualism is the affirmation of man's potential apotheosis, that the mind can gain a place in the noetic world on the level of the divine.' Similarly, Helleman describes how, according to Philo, becoming like God means 'a cultivation of that which is highest and most godlike within the soul: φρόνησις and νοῦς' (see Helleman, 'Deification', pp. 52–53). Helleman indicates possible antecedents in Plato's dialogues: *Tht.* 176A–B; *Phdr.* 252–253; *Rep.* 500C; *Tim.* 90B–D. She summarises that, for Philo, becoming like God is a process of neutralising the senses and orientating the human νοῦς towards divine reason and 'that which is "knowable"' (see ibid., pp. 63–70).

514 Correct thinking (right reason) and virtue are also connected to knowing God and to heaven, the sphere of true existence and immortality, in *Post.* 45; *Det.* 76; *Plant.* 37, 45; *Her.* 276; *Fug.* 83.

515 As Philo writes in *Opif.* 153, it is the state where 'man' is still alone and 'woman' has not yet been formed. Philo explains in *Opif.* 165 that 'man' is a symbol for the mind and 'woman' for the senses. For a similar notion in Plato's works, see references in note 483. For a discussion of various forms of interpretations of the creation of man and woman including that of Philo, see Bremmer, 'Pandora'; van Ruiten, 'Creation'; van den Hoek, 'Endowed with Reason'.

516 Philo uses the adjective ἀκραιφνής (unmixed) for the pure state in which the mind receives the images of everything that exists (the σώματα and πράγματα, cf. note 383). The same adjective is used by Philo in *Opif.* 8 to describe the nature of the mind of the universe and in *Gig.* 8 to describe the stars. In *Opif.* 151, Philo writes about the human mind: 'As long as it was one, it was due to its singleness like to the world and to God' (μέχρι μὲν γὰρ εἷς ἦν, ὡμοιοῦτο κατὰ τὴν μόνωσιν κόσμῳ καὶ θεῷ). It is not immediately clear to which world Philo refers here. It seems that the world Philo has in mind here is the intelligible world, because of the context, the singleness and the close relation between God and this world. See also *Opif.* 15, where Philo writes about the relation between the monad and the intelligible world (see Chapter 2, pp. 72–75). Compare *Tim.* 31 where Plato employs a similar phrasing to explain the oneness of the heaven, especially *Tim.* 31B: ἵνα οὖν τόδε κατὰ τὴν μόνωσιν ὅμοιον ᾖ τῷ παντελεῖ ζώῳ.

this ideal state, accurately grasp the true nature of things. This constitutes the ultimate form of human happiness, as Philo states in *Opif.* 150:

> He (Adam) gave the exact names, receiving the images of bodies and abstracts in purest form, and focusing at best on what they revealed. As a consequence, naming and understanding their natures happened simultaneously. For the reasoning faculty was present in the soul unmixed, unencumbered by a single weakness or illness or sensation. He excelled in all things good in such a way, that he reached the limit of human happiness.[517]

Knowing what Philo held to be the ultimate good provides the necessary background for understanding what he saw as the ultimate evil. When the human mind is not oriented towards God and true knowledge, it remains fixated on the material world and the input from the senses. As we saw in Chapter 3, Philo considered the human mind to be one with what it thinks.[518] So, when it remains fixated on the world of becoming, it becomes identical with that world. This is a world far removed from truth, as Philo saw it, full of confusion and false knowledge.[519] In *Conf.* 60–82, Philo therefore characterises evildoers as having identified with the chaotic world of becoming. He describes them as submerged in a river, full of folly and devoid of right reason (*Conf.* 66); their life is in constant chaos (*Conf.* 69); they know not even the goodness of material goods, the lowest form of goodness (*Conf.* 71–72); they are unable to progress towards goodness, their sight no longer providing them with vision, their hearing no longer allowing them access to learning (*ibidem*). This evil state of confusion is the result of humans choosing to orient themselves towards earth and the body, rather than towards heaven and God.

A consequence of the orientation towards the earth and of remaining focused on the input from the senses is that the analytical process of the mind also malfunctions. The analytical process of the mind, normally used to attain true knowledge by identifying the true nature of everything, then results in wrong ideas. True knowledge brings life, according to Philo, and conversely, thinking wrong ideas brings death.[520] Philo can describe wrong ideas as lifeless (ἄψυχος)

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517 Compare to *Agr.* 1–2, where Philo contrasts the intellectual abilities of Moses to that of most other humans. The latter usually assign the wrong names to things, whereas Moses uses wholly accurate (εὐθύβολος) and indicative (ἐμφαντικός) names.

518 Cf. my discussion of Philo's view on the 'ability to reason' (see pp. 124–137).

519 See Chapter 2, especially pp. 75–79.

520 As can be illustrated by a somewhat enigmatic reference to σώματα and πράγματα appearing in *Mut.* 173. Here, Philo describes Potiphar as a symbol for a non-productive eunuch and cook in the soul who chops up living beings into dead things, 'not so much physical, but rather mental' (οὐ σώμασι μᾶλλον ἢ πράγμασι). See also the note to *Her.* 242 in Colson, *Philo vol. 4*, p. 573. The analytical process of the

doctrines. One example of such a lifeless doctrine is the thought that knowledge is the product of the human mind itself and not of God. This lifeless doctrine Philo contrasts with the living (ἔμψυχος) doctrine that God alone is the cause.[521] Philo saw thinking that the human mind itself is the source of all knowledge as a main symptom of a mind that is completely drowned.[522] He furthermore saw believing that humans are themselves the source of all knowledge as self-love, leading to all kinds of evils.[523] Humans should not rely on their own abilities to attain true knowledge and become virtuous; instead, they should rely on God alone.

4.2.4.3 Results from the analysis of Conf. *60–82*

In the previous chapter we saw how Philo regarded humans as existing in a borderland, with the ability to choose what will define their nature, namely either the true and immortal existence of the divine, or the untrustworthy and perishable nature of the material world. Now, through the analysis of *Conf.* 60–82, it has become apparent how Philo presented the choice between these two opposing natures as a choice between what constitutes ultimate happiness for human beings, and what constitutes ultimate evil. Philo regarded the human choice to turn away from God, to rely on one's own abilities alone, as the ultimate cause of human evil. If humans choose to ignore God, to orient themselves towards the earth and their bodies, instead of towards heaven and God, the result will be a myriad of evils. Why, however, would someone decide to orient themselves to the world of becoming and disintegration? What are the consequences for humans that follow from such an orientation? And, most importantly, is there a way back for humans who have made the wrong choice? These questions will be discussed in the analysis of *Conf.* 83–106.

4.2.5 Conf. 83–106: The consequences of choosing evil

4.2.5.1 Paraphrase

The passage *Conf.* 83–106 is part of Philo's detailed exposition of Gn. 11:1–9. In the preceding sections *Conf.* 60–82, Philo has discussed aspects of Gn. 11:2 and established that the humans concerned in the story of the confusion

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mind producing wrong (dead) ideas is a further illustration of the human mind producing evil as discussed above in the analysis of *Conf.* 14–59 (see pp. 149–163).

521 *LA* III, 32–35.

522 In *Conf.* 66, Philo describes the condition of Balaam as one whose διάνοια has drowned (καταποντίζω, pf.) – as if in the midmost depth of a river (see also *Post.* 175–176).

523 In *Conf.* 127–129, Philo writes that self-love leads humans to forget that God is the source of knowledge. In *Her.* 106–109, he describes the many evils this type of thinking leads to (similarly in *Post.* 52). In *Congr.* 130, he calls self-love the greatest of evils. In *Spec.* I, 333–344, Philo condemns at length the self-love of those who believe that either the human mind or the human senses can lead to true knowledge by themselves (compare *LA* III, 81).

of languages must be evildoers. In *Conf*. 83–106, Philo now discusses characteristics of these evildoers. He begins with an interpretation of Gn. 11:3 and will continue the topic of what defines evildoers in the subsequent parts of his analysis (*Conf*. 107–133, 134–151, 152–167 and 168–182). *Conf.* 83–106 has an important function. Here, Philo discusses how evildoers enslave the mind and he explores the question: how can someone be liberated from this enslavement?

Philo introduces this question with an explanation that the orientation towards earth and body leads the soul into enslavement (*Conf*. 83–93). Those who actively seek the orientation towards the body and the earth put into action the unformed potential for evil present in the human soul. They activate the senses (sight, hearing, taste, smell and touch) and awake the individual sensations (lust, fear and grief) by eagerly welcoming the unreasoning impulses (ὁρμαί). The vices (folly, intemperance, cowardice, injustice and many others) then become effective. The mind, the soul's sight – that is, reason – then suffers like a slave in the body.

How can the mind be released from this enslavement? It will be set free when it seeks to worship God, the truly existing one. He alone is stable and never changing and the source of true wisdom (*Conf*. 94–97). The orientation towards the earth and the body can never bring stability and wisdom, because everything belonging to the material world is in constant movement and change, even though to the bodily eyes they may seem to stand still. Philo illustrates this thought with the example of the heavenly bodies. The sun and moon may seem to stand still, whereas in fact they move with unimaginable speed, traversing the whole sky in one day (*Conf.* 98–100).

Philo explains that the vices that result from the orientation towards the earthly realm will always remain destructible, because, though they appear tempting and impressive, the earthly realm from which they originate is inherently unstable. Evildoers seek to strengthen their evil activities by supporting them with speech – that is, with reasonings and demonstrations (λογισμοί). They do this to protect the evil activities from being demolished by wisdom. The final result of this building process may seem stable and impressive; but, as Philo emphasises, God does not allow evil to become strong enough to fully withstand the power of virtue. Hope always remains that evil will be overcome by good (*Conf.* 101–104).

A soul living in the body can only resist evil if it uses the senses and the body properly. This can be done when they are seen in the correct light, namely seeing that mastering them helps to withstand the flood of sensations, but also that they can interfere with perceiving the true nature of things. Philo presents Moses as an example of someone who sees the senses and the body in the correct light. Moses yearns for a nature without the body. And he weeps for the

masses who adhere to false opinions, who deceive themselves by thinking that their senses, or anything in creation for that matter, could be a source of true, stable and unchanging knowledge. Only God can be the source of such true knowledge (*Conf*. 105–106). With the general thrust of Philo's argument in these sections in view, the analysis will focus on Philo's presentation in *Conf*. 83–106 of the process of doing evil.

4.2.5.2 Analysis part 1: The potential for evil in the human soul

The analysis of *Conf*. 83–106 will provide a detailed view of the road towards evil, as Philo saw it. Themes from the previous sections of analysis will reappear in the exploration of what Philo considered the elements involved in actually doing evil. These themes are: the role of the body and the senses in the process of doing evil, as discussed above in the analysis of *Conf*. 14–59; and the two orientations available to the human soul (towards either God and virtue, or towards the earth and vice), as discussed in the analysis of *Conf*. 60–82. The analysis of the road to evil is divided into three parts. First, I will investigate what Philo saw as the evil potential in the soul; then how Philo held evildoers accountable for their wrongdoings, even when he considered doing evil to be foolish; and finally what Philo presented as consequences for doing evil.

I will begin the exploration of Philo's view on the road to evil with his notion of the evil potential in the human soul. According to Philo, the human mind can be home to both good and evil. How can this be, when we have seen that Philo saw the human mind as what connects humans to God? We already saw in the analysis of *Conf.* 14–59 that the mind can be overwhelmed by the input from the senses, resulting in the production of evil. Now in *Conf.* 83–106, Philo puts forward that evildoers actively employ the faculties of the mind – reasonings and argumentations – to strengthen their evildoing and to prevent wisdom from bringing them back to true reason.[524] What, according to Philo, makes it possible for humans to use their ability for reason in evil ways?

If the human mind can be used to form argumentations for evil, this ability must be potentially present in the mind, similarly to how Philo held the ability for reason to be potentially present in the human mind.[525] What constitutes the potential for evil in the human mind? The first element of the potential for evil appears in *Conf*. 84. Here, Philo presents his view on the process of thinking. He maintains that when no thought or idea has yet been formed, the mind is in a paradoxical state. On the one hand, the mind is *actually* nothing, it is empty,

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524 See *Conf*. 86–87, 101; similarly, Philo writes in *Sacr*. 51 how those who love the sensations hate true reason.

525 The human potential for rationality is discussed in the analysis of *Deus* 33–50 (see pp. 124–137).

blank and formless, because not one particular idea can be clearly identified.[526] On the other hand, *potentially* the mind can be everything, because it is full of potential impressions.[527] 'Everything', for Philo, included good and evil ideas.[528] The wax-like human mind is 'all-receiving' (πανδεχής), able to receive both beneficial and harmful impressions.[529] How a thought, potentially present, is formed into an actual idea is described by Philo in *Conf.* 85–87.

Philo describes the process of turning the evil potentially present in the human soul into actual use with terminology comparable to how he describes the process of creation (discussed in Chapter 2).[530] As Philo saw it, the process of creation is mimicked in the human mind. The human mind – comparable at first to formless matter – creates actual evil through a process of division and cataloguing, giving actual shape to evil thoughts and deeds.[531] This process is

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526 Philo describes this state of the soul in *Conf.* 84 as 'jumbled (συμπεφορημένα) and blurry (συγκεχυμένα), without one distinct imprint (τύπος) of any one idea (εἶδος) appearing.' 'Jumbled and blurry' can more literally be translated as 'heaped up' and 'entangled'. The word 'imprint' is reminiscent of Philo's description of the wax-like nature of the soul, as discussed in Chapter 3 (see the analysis of *Opif.* 16–25 on pp. 102–105). The impressions potentially present in the wax-like soul can be envisioned as a vast heap of impressions all entangled in such a way that not one of them can be clearly discerned. In *Conf.* 85, Philo describes this state of the soul as formless (ἀειδής). At first sight this state may appear as a negative condition. However, Philo possibly considers it to be a state of mind close to the divine. The adjective 'formless' (ἀειδής) appears in Philo's works 18 times and consistently in association with the divine (see *Det.* 31, 86, 87; *Post.* 14, 15; *Gig.* 54; *Plant.* 21, 126; *Conf.* 100, 147; *Migr.* 5; *Fug.* 72; *Mut.* 7; *Som.* I, 188; *Abr.* 75, 79; *Mos.* I, 158; *Spec.* I, 20). It may be that Philo employed the words 'jumbled and blurry' on purpose, in an ironic sense: to the fool this formless state of mind may appear as a negative one. The fool hastens to form all kinds of ideas in his soul. Ideas that appear to this fool as worthy of pursuing and realising, namely those that multiply pleasure and delight, whereas in truth they destroy the soul (see *Conf.* 85–87).

527 As Philo explains in *LA* I, 100, in the soul, as in a piece of wax, every impression made into it is potentially (δυνάμει) already present. Only when an idea actually (ἐντελεχείᾳ) leaves an impression in the soul, does it take definite shape and becomes identifiable. The distinction between potential and actual is reminiscent of Aristotle's view on the process of thinking, as discussed in Chapter 3 (see pp. 124–137).

528 This becomes apparent in *LA* I, 61–62, where Philo describes the wax-like nature of the human mind and the contrast between what is potentially (δυνάμει) and actually (κατὰ τὴν οὐσίαν) present. He states that the 'wax' of the mind is 'all-receiving' (πανδεχής), meaning that it can be shaped into impressions both noble as well as base. Harold Cherniss' exploration of Plato's view on the origins of evil can shed light on Philo's outlook as well. Cherniss distinguished three causes of evil in Plato's works: 1) defective evil, meaning that material forms being a less-perfect copy of the perfect original forms, are therefore also less good; 2) the possibility of erratic and random motions in creation; 3) souls that out of ignorance or forgetfulness of what is truly good, produce evil (like sickness). God may have created the *ideas* of these evils, but the ideas of these evils are not evil by themselves. Only when they are actualised (in a material form) do they truly cause evil (see Cherniss, 'Sources of Evil', similarly in Roskam, *Virtue*, p. 207). The theme of putting the evil potential into action will be discussed on pp. 177–184.

529 *LA* I, 61, 100; *Her.* 294; *Mut.* 30–31.

530 See pp. 75–79.

531 In my analysis of *Deus* 33–50, Philo's comparison between the human mind and formless matter was

comparable to how Philo describes the way God's logos created the material world, although then, of course, the result was goodness and beauty. Philo presents the order of the created world, as the result of the logos dividing generic being into four elements and then further into every separate thing or being that exists.[532] God creates the order of the material world as ideas first, which he then uses to form the material world.

Ideas have power, according to Philo, whether the idea is an ideal form used by God to create the world, or an evil idea formed in the human mind. For Philo, ideas do not remain abstract constructs, but are active forces shaping the visible world. When an idea is formed, it is simultaneously transformed into actions that have impact on the visible world. For example, according to Philo, the fixed planets are intelligent creatures. The idea of the perfect shape of the circle is imprinted in their intellect. The imprinted idea of the circle results in the fixed course of the planets through heaven.[533] Consequently, Philo held that an idea imprinted in the human mind will influence the visible world. The idea does not remain abstract but will lead to a course of action.[534] Both good and evil ideas can take shape in the human mind, and result in good or evil consequences in the visible world. Whether good or evil ideas form in the human mind, is connected to the second element of the potential for evil present in the human soul.

The second element of how evil is potentially present in the human soul is the irrational part of the soul. This element comes into view when Philo in *Conf.* 88

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discussed (see pp. 124–137). For the analytical capacity of the human mind applied to produce evil, see also above p. 168–169.

532 Compare to how Philo describes in *Conf.* 85, the formation of each specific emotion and act of evil as a form of 'cutting out' (τέμνω) starting from a generic and abstract form of emotion and evil, which is without form or quality (ὥσπερ ἀνείδεόν τινα καὶ ἄποιον οὐσίαν). Furthermore, Philo describes in *Her.* 140, the process of creation as a series of divisions, as it were cascading from abstract substance without form or quality to the individual animals and plants: 'Just so God, having sharpened his logos the cutter of everything, separated out the formless and quality-less substance of the universe and the four elements of the world that were formed out of that substance and the living creatures and plants that were built using those elements' (see also *Mut.* 146, where Philo describes how one archetypal idea produces innumerable particulars in the visible world). Dillon discusses Philo's possible sources for this concept of the λόγος τομεύς in Dillon, *Middle Platonists*, p. 160 (see also Goodenough, *Introduction*, p. 108, Runia, *Timaeus*, pp. 392–393 and C. S. O'Brien, *Demiurge*, pp. 43–56).

533 See *Gig.* 8. Aristotle describes the stars as bound to circles in *Cael.* II, 3.

534 This process involves a classical combination of thoughts, words and actions. If these three are harmoniously aligned towards good, the result is goodness (see *Mut.* 236–238, similarly in *Som.* II, 180; *Virt.* 184; *Praem.* 80–81). The ideal of congruency between thoughts, words and actions is described in 4 Macc. 14:6 as 'hands and feet move in harmony with the promptings of the soul' (translation by R.B. Townshend). If there is disharmony between either one of them (for instance, when one's speech is incongruous with one's actions), the result is disharmonious and therefore bad. In *Post.* 84–88, Philo presents the sophists as employing beautifully crafted speech to cover up their evil choices and actions.

describes the mind that puts its evil potential into action as 'the God-opposing mind, which we say is the king of Egypt – that is, the body.'[535] 'The king of Egypt' for Philo is the ultimate symbol for someone who is 'body-loving' (φιλοσώματος) – that is, someone who welcomes the flood of the sensations instead of practising restraint.[536] As we will see, the irrational part of the soul can make it 'body-loving'; and although Philo considered it not evil in itself, the irrational part of the soul constitutes another way in which evil is potentially present in the human soul.[537]

In Chapter 3, I discussed Philo's view on the process of the irrational part being added to the human mind.[538] That process was described as the pure mind in humans becoming of a mixed nature, a mixture of the rational and the irrational part. What I want to emphasise here, is how Philo considered the irrational element an integral part of the human soul, even when it has not yet 'fallen' towards the earthly realm into an earthly body.[539] The presence of the irrational part creates the potential for the human soul to become connected to an earthly body, it prepares the human soul to interact with the senses and the body.

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535 Ὁ ἀντίθεος νοῦς, ὃν φαμεν Αἰγύπτου, τοῦ σώματος, εἶναι βασιλέα.

536 Philo identifies the wicked fool (φαῦλος) with the 'king of Egypt' in *Conf.* 29–30 (see note 493). He further describes the king of Egypt as a destroyer not only of perfection (τελειότης) but also of (moral) progress (προκοπή) towards perfection (*Conf.* 72). In *Abr.* 103, Philo states that the king of Egypt is a symbol for the body-loving mind (similarly in *Ios.* 151; compare also *Migr.* 159–162, where Philo presents the king of Egypt as the king of the body, primarily interested in promoting the sensations, see further *Ebr.* 111, 210; and *Mut.* 173–174, where Philo interprets the king of Egypt to represent the cause of the imprisonment of the mind in the body). Such an attitude is 'the cause of a loathsome and licentious life,' Philo writes in *Det.* 94–95. All this explains how Philo can present the king of Egypt as evil (κακία) in general (see *LA* III, 38, 212).

537 In *LA* I, 33, Philo claims that souls that become connected to a body are φιλοσώματος, and this he sees as a negative quality. The souls that descend into the body and do not strive to be released from it, but instead wallow in the pleasures that the body provides, are called evil angels by Philo in *Gig.* 17. See Nikiprowetzky, 'Lecture démonologique', p. 58 for argumentation as to why Philo refers to evil human beings with the term 'evil angels'. In contrast, Wolfson held that, according to Philo, the angels have a choice between good and evil similar to humans (Wolfson, *Philo vol. 1*, pp. 382–384). Dillon concurs with Nikiprowetzky's conclusion in Dillon, 'Angels', p. 205. The image of the human soul falling towards earth can be retraced to a myth recounted by Plato in *Phdr.* 246a–249d. Plato, however, is not completely clear on why the human soul at some point of time loses its wings and drops to the earth. It seems inevitable that eventually every human soul will lose its wings: if it is not because of the weakness of the charioteer, it will happen because of some chance collision. It seems that the soul itself cannot always be blamed for the fall towards earth. Plotinus presents an equally ambivalent view on the reason why some souls fall towards the earth and other do not. In *Enn.* I, i, 12, he writes that the soul cannot be blamed for its fall; whereas in *Enn.* IV, viii, 5, he writes the opposite. On the possible reasons for the soul to fall into the body, see also van Peursen, *Inleiding*, pp. 38–39 and Bos, *Soul*, pp. 52–53.

538 See pp. 124–137.

539 Somewhat similarly, Tromp discusses how the inimical principles of 'self-love' versus 'love of God' are both 'innate to the human mind,' according to Philo (see Tromp, 'Cain and Abel').

As has now become clear, Philo held that the potential for evil in the human soul consists of two elements: first the all-receiving nature of the human mind, able to form ideas both good and evil; and second the irrational part of the human soul, necessary for its ability to become connected to a human body. The potential for evil gives humans an ability they share only with God, namely the freedom to choose between good and evil. Philo regarded this freedom of choice a special prerogative of human beings, for which they should not blame God, but be grateful. I will elaborate on the theme of freedom in the next section. As the final element of the analysis of *Conf.* 83–106 in this section, I want to explore how Philo emphasised that humans have only themselves to blame for the evil they do and not God, as he brings forward that the elements constituting the potential for evil in humans were created not by God directly, but only indirectly by imposing its creation on subordinates.[540]

In *Conf.* 83–106, Philo describes the process through which humans turn the potential for evil into actual evil. Elsewhere in *De Confusione Linguarum* he discusses how God involved 'subordinate powers' (ὑπάρχοι) in the creation of human beings, referring to Gn. 1:26. As Philo writes in *Conf.* 179:[541]

> So, God fitly imposed the construction of these [i.e., humans, FJT] on his subordinate powers also, saying: 'Let us make humans,' in order that only the right actions of humans are traced to God, and the sins to others. It did not seem to God, the ruler of all, to be appropriate that the road to

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540 I briefly touched upon this theme in my analysis of *Deus* 33–50 (see in Chapter 3, pp. 124–137). In the present chapter, I explore this theme more fully to find an answer on the question of who is to blame for the evil humans commit. As various Philonic scholars show, Philo struggled with the origins of evil. If God should be acknowledged as the Creator of everything, the question can be put forward as to whether God is then also responsible for the creation of evil. Bréhier discusses how Philo puts forward that God employed the intermediary powers in the creation of humans (Bréhier, *Les idées*, p. 99) and he claims that Philo identified desire (ἐπιθυμία) as the root of all evil (ibid., p. 262); a conclusion shared by Wolfson (Wolfson, *Philo vol. 2*, pp. 232–235, see also note 83), Geert H. Cohen Stuart (Cohen Stuart, *Struggle*, p. 106) and partly by Frick (Frick, *Providence*, p. 166), although he concedes that Philo remains vague on the actual origins of evil. Runia (with reference to the works of Goodenough, Daniélou, Nikiprowetzky and Dillon) puts forward that Philo saw creation in a dualistic light, with the forces of good and evil in equal measure present in it (see Runia, *Timaeus*, p. 289, cf. also Winston/Dillon, *Two Treatises*, p. 205). In his commentary on *De Opificio Mundi*, Runia explains that for Philo 'God as creator is in no way responsible for evil,' and he adds that 'The thought is surely Biblical' (Runia, *Creation*, p. 237). I agree with Runia's statement that according to Philo God can in no way be responsible for evil; I disagree, however, with the statement that the thought is biblical. In Isa. 45:7, God is presented as the creator of both good and evil (similarly in Sir. 11:14). The thought that God can only be associated with the supreme good is rather a philosophical notion (compare the discussion of God's goodness being the reason for him to create the world as a philosophical and not a biblical thought, see note 179). Winston (in Winston, 'Theodicy', p. 128) describes – with references to Plato's works (see *Rep.* 379A–C; *Tim.* 42D, 69C–D) – how, for Plato, there can be no evil in God.

541 Similarly in *Opif.* 74–75; *Fug.* 68–72; *Mut.* 29–31.

> wickedness in the ability to reason would be created by him; which is why he left the construction of this part to his inferiors. For the construction of the voluntary part, the opposite of the involuntary, had to be undertaken to complete the whole.

Who were these 'subordinate powers' and what exactly was made by them? Philo does not explicate this in *Conf.* 179, he only writes that 'others' (ἄλλοι) created 'the road to evil in the ability to reason' (ἡ ἐπὶ κακίαν ὁδὸς ἐν ψυχῇ λογικῇ), which is 'the voluntary part' (τὸ ἑκούσιον) of humans. Philo explains who the executors of God's orders were and what they made more elaborately in *Fug.* 68–72. Here, Philo identifies them as the 'powers' (δυνάμεις) which are God's 'subjects' (ὑπηκόοι). They create the mortal part of the soul. This is an idea already present in Plato's philosophy.[542] In addition to the creation of the mortal part, similarly to what Plato describes, Philo writes that God also delegated the creation of evil thoughts (κακῶν ἔννοιαι) to the 'powers'. So, according to Philo, two elements of the human soul were created by the 'powers': one element is the mortal part of the soul, the other element is the ability to form evil ideas.[543]

The two elements created by God's 'subordinate powers' in the creation of humans form what Philo calls 'the road to evil in the ability to reason' (*Conf.* 179).[544] I want to emphasise that Philo does not judge each separate element of 'the road to evil' in itself as evil. They only constitute the *potential* for evil, allowing humans the freedom to choose between good and evil.[545] As Philo explains in *Conf.* 178, ultimately what makes true evil is whether a human being

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542 See *Tim.* 42D–43A, as discussed in Chapter 3 (see p. 127).

543 An excellent comparison between Plato's views in *Timaeus* and Philo's interpretation of the biblical phrase 'Let us make man' can be found in Runia, *Creation*, pp. 237–238. Unlike Runia, however, I do not think that the thought that God in no way can be held responsible for evil, is biblical (see already in note 540). I also disagree with Runia (and Winston, in Winston, 'Theodicy', pp. 129–130) that Philo is ambiguous with regard to *what* is exactly made by the 'subordinate powers'. As becomes clear, especially in *Fug.* 68–72, Philo is quite explicit regarding to what is made by the 'powers', namely the mortal part of the human soul and the potential for evil thoughts to arise in the human mind.

544 Philo explains in *Mut.* 29–31, also referring to the phrase 'let us create humans after our image' (Gn. 1:26), that 'I am your God' is in fact a statement not about God, but about the moral quality of the person to whom it is said. It means that this person has God alone for his maker, implying that such a person is completely virtuous.

545 To understand Philo's stance towards the moral quality (as either good or evil) of the human body, the irrational part of the soul or matter and material things in general, Dennis O'Brien's discussion of Plotinus' views on similar matters can be enlightening. Plotinus does not regard matter nor weakness of the human soul as evil in themselves. Together they are, however, elements and conditions that allow evil to ensue; see D. O'Brien, 'Plotinus on Evil' especially pp. 107–108. Compare also Sir. 17:31; 21:2; 27:10 where the author points to the risk of sin present in the body; this risk is more strongly described as evil inherently present in humans in 4 Ez. 3:20–22, 25–26; 4:30; 7:118–119 which makes sinning inevitable for human beings cf. 4 Ez. 7:48; 8:35. In Sap. Sal. 1:14, however, the whole of creation is described as good.

indeed chooses to turn the evil potential to actual use.[546] The responsibility that follows from choosing evil will be the topic of the second part of the analysis of *Conf.* 83–106.

To sum up. The first part of my analysis of *Conf.* 83–106 has clarified what Philo considered the potential for evil in the human soul. This potential for evil consists of two elements. One is the all-receiving nature of the human mind, meaning that both good as well as evil ideas can take form in it and are therefore potentially present in the human mind. The irrational part of the soul is the other element of the potential for evil. This irrational element is added to the human soul as preparation for the connection between the soul and the body. Because of this potential for evil present in the human soul, Philo held it to be logical that God employed subordinates – his powers – to create human beings. A sidestep to other sections from *De Confusione Linguarum* and from *De Fuga et Inventione* has shown how Philo held that these subordinate powers created precisely the two elements of the human potential for evil, namely the ability to form evil ideas and the irrational element necessary for the connection to the human body.

According to Philo, the reason for the inclusion of the potential for evil in the human soul was that it allows humans freedom of choice. Philo was aware that humans often choose to put the evil potential into action: their souls become connected to the body, and they then form actual evil ideas leading to evil actions. Why would humans choose evil, and can they indeed be held accountable for that choice? This is the topic of the next part of the analysis of *Conf*. 83–106.

4.2.5.3 Analysis part 2: Evil and responsibility

In the previous part of my analysis of *Conf*. 83–106, the potential for evil present in the human soul was discussed. This potential for evil allows humans the freedom to choose between good and evil. Why, however, would a human being choose to put the potential for evil into actual use? In *Conf*. 83–87, Philo

[546] This conclusion may help to understand an otherwise rather opaque statement that Philo makes at the end of *LA* I, 62. Philo writes: 'Evil neither is in the paradise-garden, nor is it not in it: it can be there in unformed being, as active potential it cannot be there' (Aristotle presents a somewhat similar thought in *Eth. Nic.* VII, 1147a 10–15 of form of knowledge where 'a man may in a sense both have it and not have it; for instance, when he is asleep, or mad, or drunk' (translation by H. Rackham)). I understand Philo to mean (in the context of the whole section) that the elements necessary for evil to become an actuality are not evil in themselves. As such, they can be said to even exist in the paradise-garden. Only when the potential is realised in an actual evil deed, by choice of a human being to put an evil idea to actual use, is true evil realised. The unformed potential can exist in the paradise-garden whereas the actual evil cannot exist in the paradise-garden. Helpful in this understanding of Philo's view on evil is Cherniss' description of Plato's ideas of evil things which are not evil as such, only when they are manifested by a soul do they become actual evil (see Cherniss, 'Sources of Evil', p. 27).

describes someone who puts the evil potential into action as a φαῦλος. The word φαῦλος as a description of persons has several dimensions, such as evil (as opposed to ἀγαθός) and foolish (as opposed to σοφός). The foolishness of doing evil is an important theme for Philo in *De Confusione Linguarum*.[547] One could ask, however, whether fools can be blamed for the evil that they do? If evil is done unwittingly, is it then truly evil or merely a mistake?[548] To find answers to these questions, I will explore Philo's views on the foolishness of evildoers.

Why is the attitude of an evildoer foolish according to Philo? Within the scope of *Conf.* 83–106, Philo does not elaborate on this question, but in the remainder of *De Confusione Linguarum* he gives three reasons for this. The first explanation for why Philo claimed it is foolish to strive for the wrong things appears in *Conf.* 119–121. Here, he puts forward that evildoers always have a notion that their deeds will eventually have grave consequences. This notion that what they are doing is evil comes from the voice of good reason.[549] If they persist in committing evil, evildoers clearly ignore the voice of good reason, which makes them fools. Although, they are not empty-headed fools. Their mind is filled with beliefs, but with the wrong beliefs, as the second explanation as to why doing evil is foolish shows.

In *Conf* 122–133, Philo gives a second explanation for why doing evil is foolish. Here, Philo writes that evildoers deny God as the true First Cause of everything that exists and deny that God cares for the world. Denying God's providential care is foolish, according to Philo, because without that care the apparent order in the visible world cannot be explained. As discussed in Chapter 2, Philo held God's providence to be essential for sustaining the integrity of the visible world.[550] Furthermore, Philo considered those foolish who deny God as the true First Cause, because they put too much faith in their own mind and senses, considering them the ultimate judge of what is true or false. As a result, evildoers confuse evil with good and their mind is filled with delusions.[551]

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547 He repeats several times in *De Confusione Linguarum* that to embrace the influx of sensations and the body in general is foolish (*Conf.* 30, 64–66 and 67–69). The fool does not wait for evil to accidentally befall him, he actively pursues it (*Conf.* 75) and actively builds it up, as Philo explains the symbol of the building of great structures in the story of the building of the Tower of Babel (in *Conf.* 83–87). According to Philo, the fool who pursues evil, can be called an ἀντίθεος νοῦς (*Conf.* 88). Such a mind believes that itself is the highest authority instead of God (*Conf.* 91). The aim of such a fool, according to Philo, is to either deny God's existence or to deny that he has any interference with the affairs of the world (*Conf.* 114).

548 Doing evil by mistake is reminiscent of the first Socratic paradox, that no one would knowingly choose to do evil (as briefly discussed in note 439).

549 The role of reason in the form of conscience will be discussed more elaborately in Chapter 5 (see pp. 214–221).

550 See my analysis of *Opif.* 6b–12 in Chapter 2 (pp. 56–68).

551 See also *LA* III, 32–35, 81; *Deus* 113; *Agr.* 130; *Conf.* 49. Taylor presents references to Plato's works

For, according to Philo, the human mind and senses can be shown to make many errors of judgement.[552] Therefore, by logical consequence, those aspiring to become truly wise must admit that the only source of really reliable judgements is God. For Philo, it is clearly foolish to not accept such a logical conclusion. Evildoers are fools whose mind is filled with confusion. Not only is their mind filled with wrong beliefs, they also use it wrongly, as the third explanation for why evildoing is foolish shows.

Philo's third and final explanation for why it is foolish to pursue evil is that it is a sign of a lack of good sense, as he writes in *Conf.* 162–167. Wise persons use good sense to very carefully consider their plans and actions. A fool, however, acts without careful consideration. Therefore, says Philo, it is foolish to believe that it is good when one accomplishes everything the mind comes up with.[553] The human mind does not produce good ideas only. In fact, many plans the mind comes up with can be inspired by wrong sources or aimed at evil results. Therefore, as Philo emphasises, plans should be carefully considered before being put into action – careful consideration that orients itself towards God's wisdom.[554] Rushing into something only to immediately accomplish what the mind designs is foolish and will result in a myriad of evils.

The three explanations for why it is foolish to do evil are, according to Philo, that someone ignores the voice of good reason; ignores or denies God as the source of knowledge and puts too much faith in the human mind and senses; and does not carefully consider the plans the mind comes up with.[555] However,

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(*Meno* 77C–78B; *Prot*. 353C–357E, 358B–D) for a similar idea that doing evil can be traced back to 'misconception or miscalculation' (see Taylor, *Pleasure*, p. 225).

552 The most positive stance towards the senses is attributed to the Epicureans. Long (Long, *Hellenistic Philosophy*, p. 21) summarises: 'The foundation of Epicurus' theory of knowledge is sense-perception.' Long provides a reconstruction of the Epicurean theory of knowledge in the subsequent pages, pp. 21–30. A high regard for the trustworthiness of the input of the human senses was criticised in several other philosophical traditions. Plato on several occasions mentions the variable – and therefore to him untrustworthy or even deceptive – nature of the information that the soul receives from the senses. In *Tht.* 157A–158A, Plato explores the untrustworthy nature of the input from the senses and puts forward how the senses can produce dreams and hallucinations of things that are not real. In the same treatise (160A), he gives as an example of the variability of the input of the senses the same wine tasting good when one is healthy, and tasting bad when one is ill. Plato presents a more negative evaluation of the senses as deceitful in *Phd.* 65B and 83A. The Sceptics are well known for their critique of the variability, and therefore untrustworthiness, of the input of the senses. See, for example, Sextus Empiricus *Adv. Math.* VIII, 356 and DL IX, 78–79 (cf. also ibid., pp. 81–86).

553 The lack of careful consideration is also discussed in *Opif.* 156 (similarly in Sir. 21:26). Compare this thought to a statement by Heraclitus that 'it is not good for men to get all they wish to get' (F 110 DK, translation by J. Burnet) and Aristotle in *Eth. Nic.* II, 1106b 29–31, that 'error is multiform (for evil is a form of the unlimited, as in the old Pythagorean imagery, and good of the limited), whereas success is possible in one way only' (translation by H. Rackham).

554 As discussed in my analysis of *Conf.* 14–59 (see especially pp. 155–162).

555 Doing evil is also described as foolish by Philo in *LA* III, 52; *Agr.* 163; *Plant.* 147; *Ebr.* 140.

for Philo, foolishness is no excuse to commit evil. As will become apparent, he considered evildoers blameworthy for their evil actions because they could and should have known better.

The conscious decision to commit evil is the essential factor for Philo in what makes something truly evil.[556] As we have seen, he held evil to be potentially present in the human soul in two forms: the irrational part of the soul that allows it to become connected to a body, and the ideas of evil potentially present in the wax-like nature of the human mind. What, according to Philo, was the extent of human freedom in choosing whether these two elements of the potential for evil become an actuality?

Did Philo regard becoming connected to a human body as something a human soul could choose? As we have seen in the previous chapter, Philo saw the human soul as being of mixed nature.[557] He describes this mixed type of soul as the 'earthly mind' (νοῦς γεώδης), the mind on the verge of entering the body. He held that while it is on the verge of entering the body the mind is morally in a neutral state, neither good nor bad.[558] The human mind in this state is like standing at a crossroads: it can turn towards the path of virtue or towards the path of vice.[559] The path the human mind will take involves a choice, a choice humans even have before their soul becomes connected to a body. Humans have this choice in contrast to the stars, as Philo describes in *Conf.* 177.[560]

Philo did not regard the stars as neutral, but as good to perfection.[561] The stars are pure, rational mind alone, lacking the irrational part that prepares the human mind for its connection to the human body. However, this also

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556 Similarly, doing evil is presented as a choice in Sir. 15:11–20; 2 Bar. 29:1, 3; 54:15, 19; 1 En. 98:4.

557 See Chapter 3 (pp. 124–137).

558 *LA* I, 95. Zeller concludes that for Philo the soul cannot be neutral: the soul is either rational and good, or irrational and full of vice (see Zeller, 'Death of the Soul', p. 22). Bréhier is somewhat more subtle in his conclusion; according to him, it is Philo's view that the soul is neutral before it enters the body, and afterwards it becomes evil, because of the body, which is imperfect due to its material nature (Bréhier, *Les idées*, p. 274).

559 See *Plant.* 43–45. Here, Philo explains how the 'moulded' (πεπλασμένον) human (i.e., the earthly mind, cf. *LA* I, 88 as discussed in Chapter 3, see p. 127) is positioned in between the garden of virtue on the one hand, and the wild beasts of the sensations and vices (which are connected to the body) on the other. God then waits for which way the earthly mind will choose. Therefore, he refers to this type of mind as the 'mind in the middle' (μέσος νοῦς).

560 Similarly in *Opif.* 73 and *Spec.* I, 66.

561 The identification of stars as divine souls exempt from evil is common to all philosophical traditions (see Colson/Whitaker, *Philo vol. 2*, p. 502 for references, similarly in Winston/Dillon, *Two Treatises*, p. 236 and 240). For example, Diogenes Laertius writes that Plato considered God to be incorporeal, as the soul, 'for only thus he exists without admitting any decay or sensation' (DL III, 77). Similarly, Sextus Empiricus contrasts the joyful state of God with that of a human being, God being incorruptible and immune to evil (*Adv. Math.* IX, 33).

means that the stars lack the choice of orienting themselves either towards the goodness of the purely intellectual life, or allowing themselves to fall towards the earthly life and becoming connected to a human body.[562] The unique quality of the human mind is that it has a choice whether to orient itself towards God and heaven and virtue, or to allow itself to fall towards earth and become connected to a human body.[563]

A passage from *De Somniis* serves to illustrate how Philo regarded it a matter of choice for the human soul whether it becomes connected to a body or not. In *Som.* I, 138, we read about the souls that populate the air:

> Of these souls, one part is descending to be bound to mortal bodies, namely those closest to the earth and body-loving; the other part ascends, separated again, in accordance with the numbers and time-periods determined by nature.[564]

The irrational part that the human soul contains is one element of the human potential for evil. The comparison to stars has shown that Philo considered humans free to choose whether this potential is put into action or not, whether they become connected to an earthly body or not. This is the first element of the choice humans have between good and evil. When the human soul has become connected to a body, the second element of the human potential for evil comes into view: the body provides the means to act out either the good or evil plans that are potentially present in the human mind. What choice do humans have, according to Philo, in what they will think and do? The answer to this question is apparent when Philo compares humans to other earthly creatures. I already discussed in Chapter 3 how humans differ from animals, but I postponed the exploration of the moral aspect of this difference to the present chapter.[565]

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562 The stars lack freedom of choice. They are completely bound to the will of God (see *Cher.* 21–24 and see also note 338).

563 Depending on its orientation, the human mind increasingly falls in danger of doing evil – either intentionally or unintentionally. The earthly mind requires prohibition, injunction and exhortation to become virtuous, whereas the 'man after the image' (pure mind) does not require any of these, see *LA* I, 92–94.

564 In the notes and appendix to *De Somniis* I, Colson refers to possible sources in Plato that may have inspired Philo's thinking; the somewhat enigmatic phrase 'the numbers and time-periods determined by nature' could refer to Plato's description of the various time-periods set for the moral development of souls in *Phdr.* 248E–249B (see Colson/Whitaker, *Philo vol. 5*, pp. 370–371 and 600) (for a similar thought in Plato's *Timaeus* see p. 128; see also note 592). Runia compares Philo's views on the descent of the soul into the body to that of Plato in Runia, *Timaeus*, pp. 264–266. Similar descriptions of human souls descending into the body can be found in *Gig.* 6–18 and *Plant.* 14. An illuminating commentary on *Gig.* 6–18 (as part of a commentary on the whole treatise of *De Gigantibus*) can be found in Winston/Dillon, *Two Treatises*, pp. 236–244. In Sap. Sal. 8:19–20, the moral quality of the soul is linked to the beauty and purity of the body it enters.

565 See the fourth part of my analysis of *Deus* 33–50 (pp. 121–124).

Humans share the ability to act out either good or evil with other creatures living on earth: animals can also be and do good or evil. The essential difference between humans and animals, however, is that animals lack the ability to reason. Lacking the ability to reason meant for Philo that animals are exempt from true evil, because without this ability they are not aware of what they are doing. By illustration: an animal cannot be blamed for killing someone. When it is put to death, this is not punishment but the removal of a risk. Only human owners (if a domestic animal is involved) may be brought to justice. They are held accountable and are liable for punishment, if they knew the animal to be aggressive and have neglected to take necessary precautions.[566]

Of all other living creatures on earth, only human beings are endowed with the ability to reason. This ability allows them to consider the consequences of their actions and to evaluate whether they are good or evil. The course of action human beings will take, begins with which ideas they allow to be formed in their minds.[567] Conscious decisions incur praise, if they result in good, and blame, if they result in evil.[568] For Philo, what makes evil truly evil, is when humans *consciously* allow and even actively pursue evil ideas to form themselves into evil actions.[569]

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566 See *Spec.* III, 144–146, where Philo discusses the injunctions described in Ex. 21:28–32.

567 Formulated in how Philo saw the process of thinking: which stamp human beings allow to make an imprint in their mind, cf. *Conf.* 84–95, and see, for example, also *Mut.* 31: 'Therefore we read [in Gn. 1:26, FJT]: 'Let us make humans after our image,' in order that, when it [i.e., the soul, FJT] admits a bad imprint (εἰ μὲν δέξεται φαῦλον τύπον), it will appear as the creation of others; and when it admits a beautiful imprint, it will appear as the creation of the Maker of all things beautiful and good.'

568 See *Conf.* 178; compare also *Opif.* 153–155; *LA* III, 52; *Deus* 49–50, 100. In *Post.* 88, Philo writes that when something good is done unknowingly it deserves no praise; in *Mut.* 48, Philo writes that for mortal beings being able to avoid sin is equally praiseworthy as actually doing good.

569 In *Conf.* 177, Philo describes evil acts as 'deliberate wrongdoings originating from the ability to reason' (τῶν ἐκ λογισμοῦ συμβαινόντων ἑκουσίων ἀδικημάτων). Philo notes on several occasions that there are two types of evil deeds: done with or without intention (ἑκούσιος or ἀκούσιος) (see, for example, *Post.* 48, *Spec.* I, 227 – where Philo also describes that there are different kinds of sacrifices related to either intentional or unintentional acts of evil – and *Spec.* II, 196). The full weight of blame lays on intentional evil deeds, as Philo writes in *Ebr.* 125; *Fug.* 78; *Ios.* 150. Aristotle similarly presents wickedness in light of voluntary action, responsibility and blame (in *Eth. Nic.* III). He presents it as a choice for doing something evil, where one should or could have known better – for example, the conscious decision of people to get drunk, where they also have the power of not getting drunk. Metzler discusses the aspect of intention in classical Greek jurisdiction (Metzler, *Verzeihens*, pp. 75–83).

According to Philo, a human being is able to determine the moral quality of the idea that is about to be formed in his mind and has the responsibility to admit good and shun evil. The human responsibility can be illustrated with what Philo writes in *Deus* 50:

> This is why this passage is written in Deuteronomy: 'Behold, I have put before you life and death, good and evil, choose life.' Doesn't he show us two things in this way: that humans were created with knowledge of good and its opposite, and that they are obliged to choose the better instead of the worse – having in themselves a reasoning power, as a sort of incorruptible judge as it were, which accepts all that right reason suggests, and rejects all that its opposite suggests?[570]

Allowing humans the freedom to consciously choose between good and evil is also the answer to the question of *why* the potential for both good and evil is present in the human soul in the first place.[571] Without the potential for both good and evil human beings would not be able to choose between them. This freedom to choose is a special gift God has granted humans by creation, a gracious gift they share only with God.[572]

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570 See also *Opif.* 155: 'Having set up these aims in the soul, he observed, like a judge, to which it would incline.' Cf. also Sir. 15:14.

571 Radice presents Philo's interpretation of the tree of knowledge of good and evil in terms of freedom of choice (see Radice, 'Freedom', pp. 156–157).

572 In *Spec.* IV, 186–187, Philo compares this freedom of choice of human beings to God's freedom. According to Philo, God's freedom implies that he is able to do both good and evil. However, God always chooses to do good and human beings, especially rulers, should follow his example. Goodenough points out that, according to Philo, of all creatures only humans know the difference between good and evil (Goodenough, *Light*, p. 67). Wolfson emphasises that, according to him, Philo is the first to introduce the role of the will and conscious decision into ethics (see Wolfson, *Philo vol. 1*, pp. 431–432, pp. 435–437 and *vol. 2*, p. 234). Winston, however, emphasises that freedom of choice is present in Greek philosophy (see Winston, 'Free Will', pp. 183–184). Runia points to the essential element of choice in Philo's philosophical outlook in Runia, *Timaeus*, p. 465. The element of choice, and that Philo's view is that humans attain ultimate happiness if they choose to orientate themselves towards God and the intelligible world, is formulated concisely by Helleman: 'Philo affirms "assimilation to god" as a legitimate and proper goal of human life. Such assimilation involves a choice based on knowledge and reason, a choice to pursue goodness, and to cultivate the virtues which are in turn imitations of divine virtues or powers. Crucial to such a process of assimilation is the kinship which exists between the human individual and the divine cosmic mind; Philo uses especially the text of Gen. 1:26 on the creation of man 'after the image of God', identifying this with the νοῦς, to establish kinship between the individual and the universal νοῦς' (Helleman, 'Deification', p. 70).

To sum up. True evil, for Philo, implies having a deliberate choice. Doing evil is foolish according to Philo. However, foolishness is no excuse, because the conscious decision to act foolishly and commit evil makes an action truly evil and blameworthy. Humans can choose whether they realise the potential for good or the potential for evil in their souls. When they choose to do good, they associate themselves with God and lead a life of virtue. Humans then become good and virtuous like the stars. In contrast to the stars, however, only humans can be praised for this because they have to make a conscious decision to lead a life of virtue and to associate themselves with God. Humans, unlike the stars and like other creatures in the material realm, are susceptible to evil. Through their ability to reason, however, humans can evaluate their plans and actions and should use that ability to avoid evil and choose good. This is what makes humans alone blameworthy for the evil that they commit: because they could and should have known better. Humans are held accountable for the evil they consciously commit and are liable for punishment. What this punishment looks like and the negative consequences doing evil has for the soul, will be explored in the following third and final part of the analysis of *Conf.* 83–106.

4.2.5.4 Analysis part 3: Consequences of doing evil for the soul

In this final part of my analysis of *Conf.* 83–106, I will consider what Philo saw as the ultimate consequences for someone who actively pursues evil. As discussed in the preceding parts of the analysis, Philo held that when the mind orients itself towards the wrong things, the evil potential in the soul becomes a reality. He considered such an orientation foolish, for various reasons discussed in the previous section. However, he also maintained that even though doing evil is clearly foolish, someone is still responsible and blameworthy for his actions, and therefore, consequences will inevitably follow from doing evil.

Philo presented such consequences, as will become apparent, as the just punishment for the decision to commit evil.[573] In Chapter 5, I will compare punishment and forgiveness to each other, and there I will discuss that, for Philo, these punishments also had a pedagogical component: he saw them as intended to provide evildoers with insight into the foolishness of their actions, helping them to turn away from evil and find the way to God's wisdom.[574] It is precisely this pedagogical, edifying intention of punishment where divine forgiveness comes into view. But we are not so far yet. Here, in the third and final part of the analysis of *Conf.* 83–106, I first need to focus on what Philo considered the ultimate consequence of choosing evil: the death of the soul.

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573 Dillon (in Dillon, 'Nature', p. 222) similarly explains how Philo interpreted biblical references to God's wrath as the 'natural consequences' of doing evil.

574 Philo describes punishment as pedagogical in *Conf.* 171 and 180–182. Punishment is described as both just and as a pedagogical measure in Sap. Sal. 11:16; 12:10–22; 19:4, 13. I will compare punishment and forgiveness in Chapter 5 (see pp. 207–212).

First, I will briefly recapitulate the process of doing evil as Philo saw it and as we have explored so far.

In the previous sections of the analysis of *Conf.* 83–106, I discussed what Philo saw as central to doing evil. Evil arises when the human mind releases all restraints regarding the bodily senses, and opens itself up completely for the pleasures the sensations provide through the channel of the senses. As a consequence, the senses and the mind become overwhelmed and are enslaved. The intellectual eye of the mind becomes the body's slave and is blurred and blocked from clearly seeing the divine truth. The mind is set to the task of forming thoughts and reasonings aimed at increasing the influx of the sensations and the amount and intensity of the vices they produce. This consolidation of the vices makes it increasingly difficult for right reason to reassert itself and regain control of the mind and the senses.[575]

Ideally, according to Philo, the mind should be in control over the senses and the body instead of being enslaved by them. The mind can control the senses and sensations when it orients itself towards God, who is the only source of true wisdom. Then goodness can ensue, also from the interaction between such a person and the material world. But when humans focus their mind on the body and the world of the senses, the sensations will take over, enslaving the mind to do their bidding, resulting in all kinds of evils.[576] The orientation of the mind towards the bodily pleasures and the material world turns everything upside down.[577]

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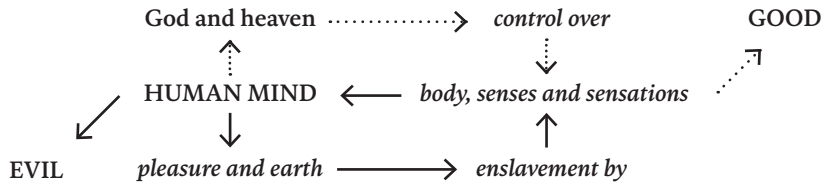
575 In *Conf.* 83–90, Philo interprets the building of the Tower of Babel and the Egyptian monuments as a metaphor for how the human soul strengthens itself in persisting in evil.

576 Philo describes in *LA* III, 198–199 the condition of someone who instead of being focused on God is focused on himself as a condition of slavery. This wrong orientation makes the mind and senses sources of evil, as Philo concludes: 'Let him also be submitted to an eternal and inevitable slavery, condemned by God, who commands that his ear be pierced in order that it will not receive words of virtue, and that he be a slave to the mind and the senses, evil and merciless masters.'

577 Philo describes in *Cher.* 13 how someone who turns away from God ends up in a state of turmoil, comparable to that of a ship in a storm; such a storm can eventually cause the mind to be wrecked and sunk, as Philo writes in *Agr.* 89; similarly, in *Som.* II, 237, he describes the state of an evil mind as being tossed about as in a flood. See also *Mos.* II, 248, where the wicked are described as inherently unstable.

Philo did not hold the material world or the irrational elements of the human soul to be evil in themselves. Whether good or evil arises, depends on the orientation the human mind chooses. This can be illustrated as follows:[578]



If the human mind chooses to be oriented towards God and heaven, it can control the senses and sensations, and is able to do good. If it chooses to orient itself towards the pleasures of the body and earth, the sensations overwhelm and enslave the mind, producing all kinds of evil.

The consequences of choosing the wrong orientation are grave. Philo warns that the longer the mind is enslaved, the more difficult it will be to become free again. The enslavement could eventually even destroy the mind. In *De Confusione Linguarum*, Philo does, nevertheless, leave hope for the eventual destruction of evil. This hope is based on Philo's conviction that God will set a limit to the amount of evil that can actually be realised.[579] Elsewhere, however, he warns against the risk of persisting in evil: returning to good may eventually become impossible. Philo here describes the process of doing evil as a sickness

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[578] The flow of the arrows in this schematic can also be seen as a representation of the water-flow metaphor that Philo uses to describe the interaction between the mind and the senses (see above, pp. 148–163). Radice concludes, based on an interpretation of *LA* II, 14–16, that: 'things in themselves, Philo is saying, are good – and so God's work is faultless – but the order of value by which God created them – which is also faultless – can be culpably altered by man: and the sin lies here' (Radice, 'Freedom', p. 165). Philo interprets in *LA* II, 14–16 the phrase from Gn. 2:19 that God brought all living creatures to Adam, 'to see what he would call them.' Philo's explanation is that Moses means that God wants to see what Adam will do with that which his senses present him with: will he limit himself to that which is necessary to survive, or will he indulge himself in excess? Here, as in my schematic, the moral status of the things that are perceived by humans depend on what they do with these impressions.

[579] John T. Conroy illustrates how both Heraclitus and Philo maintain that there is a possibility for a return to life of the soul in Heraclitus and in Philo (Conroy, *Death of the Soul*, pp. 57–69 and 130–139). As Philo sees it in *De Confusione Linguarum*, true freedom can be achieved when the soul orients itself again towards God (*Conf.* 94). In *Conf.* 103 Philo explains that hope always remains for the soul to escape from the enslavement. Evil may strive to become as solid as cement, but God does not allow it to become completely solid. The voice of reason speaks to the evildoers constantly, even though they may choose to ignore it (*Conf.* 120). As will be discussed in the next chapter, Philo held that divine reason will remain present in the soul in the form of the conscience that will constantly accuse the mind of the things it does wrong, urging it to change its ways and re-orient itself towards God (see pp. 214–221).

in the soul. When left unchecked, this sickness may become a chronic disease.[580] The disease may even become fatal and cause the 'death of the soul' (ὁ ψυχῆς θάνατος).

What does Philo mean with the 'death of the soul'?[581] How could Philo hold that an immortal soul could die? Philo saw the death of the soul as something other than a natural death. The latter is merely the separation of the soul from the body.[582] The death of the soul itself, however, is much worse.[583] It will occur when someone has constantly turned away from virtue and remains oriented towards evil.[584] As has become apparent, Philo saw a choice for evil as a choice for a life in which the soul allows itself to be overwhelmed by the input of the

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580 See, for example, *Opif.* 150 and *Spec.* IV, 82–83. The metaphor of sensations becoming a chronic disease was also discussed above on pp. 148–163.

581 Three publications have aided our understanding of what Philo meant with 'death of the soul', namely Zeller, 'Death of the Soul'; Wasserman, 'Death of the Soul' and Conroy, *Death of the Soul*. All three authors agree that the metaphor's intention is to illustrate as drastically as possible the final consequence of what will happen when the irrational faculties become dominant in the soul. Conroy, however, claims that, for Philo, the death of the soul is not *just* a metaphor. He claims that Philo envisions an irreversible ontological change in the state of the soul, transforming someone to a lower state of being, namely that of the beasts (see especially ibid., pp. 122–127). I largely agree with Conroy's conclusion (see the discussion on how Philo saw the choice for rationality or irrationality as having ontological consequences for the human soul on pp. 138–139). Although, whether this change is indeed irreversible remains to be seen (as will be further discussed in Chapter 5, see pp. 205–223) and, as Conroy also points out, Philo's claim that an unjust person is more like a beast in human form is itself a metaphor, in purpose comparable to the metaphor of the death of the soul. Emma Wasserman claims that 'no writer prior to Philo describes the irrational faculties' domination as death,' although she also points out that in intent Philo's use of the metaphor is the same as what other writers describe as the bad parts of the soul enslaving, imprisoning or conquering its good parts (see Wasserman, 'Death of the Soul', p. 808). More nuanced is Zeller's exploration of the meaning and antecedents of Philo's use of this metaphor. He presents precursors in Heraclitus, Plato, Aristotle, the Stoics and especially popular philosophy, see Zeller, 'Death of the Soul', pp. 40–49.

582 *Opif.* 164; *Agr.* 163; *Plant.* 147.

583 Philo explains the difference between natural death and the death of the soul in full in *LA.* I, 105–108. In this section, Philo uses a wordplay of σῆμα (grave) and σῶμα (body). The soul when entering the body at birth, is entombed in the body as if in a grave. This wordplay can be found in the works of Plato (*Gorg.* 493A; *Crat.* 400B) (as Colson notes in Colson/Whitaker, *Philo vol. 1*, p. 219, see also Zeller, 'Death of the Soul', p. 44). Philo considers natural death, as opposed to the death of the soul, as the return of the soul to God (*Abr.* 258) (in Sap. Sal. 3:2 a somewhat similar thought is formulated that the righteous may seem to die, when they die the natural death, but in truth live eternally). Zeller (ibid., p. 46), Wasserman (Wasserman, 'Death of the Soul', p. 808) and Conroy (Conroy, *Death of the Soul*, p. 114) raise the question of whether Philo is at risk of contradicting particularly Plato's claim (see *Rep.* 610B–611A) that the soul is immortal. At first glance one could also claim that Philo contradicts himself with raising the possibility of the death of the immortal soul. This seeming contradiction can be solved by asking *what* Philo believes to be the immortal part of the human soul. The answer to this question is: rational thought. Rationality, however, is not a necessary or permanent condition of the human soul. Philo's view can be seen as a refinement of Plato's views, not so much as a contradiction.

584 *LA.* I, 76; II, 77.

senses, a life controlled by desire and sensations.[585] For Philo, such a life is in fact no life at all, it is actually more properly called 'death'.[586]

Why Philo calls a life controlled by desire and sensations 'death', becomes clear in light of how he contrasts good and evil, mind and body or heaven and earth, as discussed in the analysis of *Conf.* 60–82. Goodness, right reason and heaven all belong to the sphere of true existence and immortality. When humans orient their mind towards God and heaven, they become one (inasmuch as possible while still in the body) with true existence and immortality. If humans choose a life controlled by the senses and the body, they connect themselves to things that by their very nature are bound for decay, because the human body and the material world, are defined by change, decay and death.[587] Their soul is then overwhelmed by sensations, leading to all kinds of evils, a state that Philo considers a punishment in itself.[588]

But Philo goes even further. When someone's connection to the material world and decay intensifies, the connection with the heavenly sphere of true existence becomes weaker and weaker. As a result, such a person becomes more and more defined by change and decay, and less and less formed by true existence and immortality. If humans persist in evil, Philo hints at the possibility that eventually divine reason might even permanently abandon their soul.[589] Such separation from divine reason will leave the soul with no hope of returning to God. The complete separation from God means that the special connection between the human soul and the divine sphere of true existence is lost. As we remember from the previous chapter, this special connection means that humans have the ability to truly become 'the image of God' and that God's spirit is then most purely present in the human soul.[590] Without that special connection, the soul is only defined by what belongs to the material world of decay, and no longer by the everlasting world of immortal reason.[591] Together

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585 *Opif.* 164; *LA*. II, 78; *Post*. 73; *Deus* 89; *Agr.* 98–101; *Her.* 52–53; *Mut*. 96.

586 *Fug.* 55: 'bad people, although they prolong their life to an extreme old age, are dead people, deprived of the life connected to virtue; while good people, even if separated from the partnership with a body, live forever, obtaining a share in immortality.' Compare *Her.* 290 and also Sir. 22:11, where the life of a fool (μωρός) is seen as worse than death.

587 *Post.* 61–62; see also my discussion of what Philo saw as ultimate evil (see pp. 165–169).

588 See *Conf*. 24, where Philo writes: 'the punishment is the flood' (ἡ δὲ τιμωρία κατακλυσμούς), as discussed also in the analysis of *Conf*. 14–59 on pp. 149–155.

589 See *Det*. 146; *Fug.* 117–118.

590 See Chapter 3, pp. 100–112 and pp. 124–137.

591 Zeller describes that, for Philo, 'immortality is not an inherent quality of the soul, but of Divine origin.' This thought is not unique to Philo, as Zeller demonstrates: 'As in Greek philosophy, there is no guarantee of final immortality' (Zeller, 'Death of the Soul', pp. 24–25). I agree with Zeller's view. Chapter 3 presented Philo's view that the human soul *becomes* immortal when it thinks rational thoughts. Conversely, it remains mortal when it is in a state of irrationality (see above pp. 124–137).

with everything material, this soul will change and eventually disappear as a recognisable entity. This is what Philo meant with the 'death of the soul'.[592]

Philo considered the 'death of the soul' both as the logical outcome of persisting in the orientation of the mind towards the earth and the body, and as the just punishment for choosing such an orientation.[593] Being a logical consequence actually makes it a very just punishment, free from any vengeful emotion: those who associate themselves fully with that which is perishable (the body and sensations) will, as a consequence, eventually perish themselves. Philo furthermore maintained that this 'death of the soul' is a process of continually dying (dying multiple deaths) that will carry on until someone repents.[594]

To sum up. Philo considered the 'death of the soul' as the inevitable consequence of, and just punishment for, choosing the orientation towards the earth and the body. This choice leads to a life full of evil which Philo already considered a form of punishment in itself. The orientation towards earth and body results in the soul becoming increasingly defined by the perishable nature of earthly things. Persisting in such an orientation will ultimately lead to the soul losing its specific connection to the divine (the ability to reason). It will then be defined by perishable nature alone, which for Philo constituted the 'death of the soul'. He wanted to confront his readers with the possibility of the 'death of the soul' as a grave warning, a strong incentive to orient themselves towards God and heaven, instead of towards the body and the earth. Bringing up the grave danger of a potential 'death of the soul' was first and foremost meant as an incentive to seek God's wisdom, which will enable readers to abandon the road to evil if they have either knowingly or accidentally gone astray.[595]

I disagree with Zeller that Philo's focus on the divine origin of the true life of humans is 'anchored in traditional Jewish piety' (ibid., p. 55). For example, Aristotle in *Metaphysica* also linked the true rational life to God (as quoted in note 406).

592 In Chapter 3, I discussed how Plato saw a series of reincarnations in ever lower life forms as the consequence and punishment for persisting in evil (see p. 128). Philo did not denounce the notion of reincarnation, as can be illustrated with the example of *Som.* I, 138 (see note 564), but the notion of the death of the soul as the ultimate consequence of persisting in evil is more prominent in his writings. Philo's views on reincarnation are discussed in Winston, *Logos*, pp. 39–40 and Sami, *Reincarnation*.

593 Throughout *De Confusione Linguarum*, Philo describes what happens to the soul both as punishment for and the logical outcome of when someone chooses the orientation towards the earth (see *Conf.* 25 and *Conf.* 161–162, compare also *LA.* I, 107: 'the penalty-death occurs when the soul dies in relation to the life defined by virtue and only lives in relation to the life defined by evil'). Similarly, in Sir. 21:27–28, the author describes how doing evil harms oneself.

594 See *LA* II, 78; *Post.* 45; *Virt.* 200; *Praem.* 72.

595 I have purposely formulated the 'death of the soul' somewhat ambivalently as a 'potential', because for Philo the important question is not whether the soul can actually die or not; rather, his main focus is to warn his readers of the grave danger they put their soul in when they persist in doing evil.

4.2.5.5 *Results from the analysis of* Conf. *83–106*

My analysis of *Conf.* 83–106 has provided us with an overview of what Philo saw as the road towards evil. The first part of the analysis showed how Philo held that there is a potential for evil in the human soul. This potential for evil consists of two elements: one is the irrational part of the soul that allows it to interact with the body and the material world; the other is the all-receiving nature of the human mind, which means that both good and evil ideas are potentially present in it. This potential for evil is necessary to allow human beings their unique characteristic compared to other created beings: their freedom to choose between good and evil. God encourages humans to choose good, but also allows them the freedom to choose evil.

The second part of the analysis showed how Philo held the choice for evil to be foolish in several ways. Evildoers are fools because they ignore their inner voice of reason, which constantly tells them that what they are doing is actually evil. It is also foolish since evildoers are confused. They mistake what is actually evil for good. This confusion ensues, because evildoers ignore or deny that God is the only source of true wisdom. And finally, evildoers are fools because they rush towards all kinds of evils, without taking the time to consider their actions – as someone with good sense would. They do themselves harm while enjoying their folly.

The foolishness of doing evil is no excuse, however, according to Philo, as was discussed in the third and final part of the analysis. Humans can and should know better than to rush into evil. Therefore, Philo warned that grave consequences follow from doing evil, consequences that he also considered to be just punishment for choosing evil. Philo saw doing evil as a sickness of the soul. This sickness, if left untreated will ultimately lead to the death of the soul. The death of the soul is not the natural death that awaits every living being at the end of life. It means instead that the soul is only defined by the perishing nature of material things, and no longer by the eternal, immortal nature of the divine. It betrays its purpose and fails to act out what it is meant to be: the human 'organ' able to recognise goodness and beauty and to communicate with God. If this happens, the human being in which such a soul dwells, loses the ability to reason, its special identity as 'image of God'.

Is this state of failure, this separation from the good permanent? Is the 'death of the soul' definite according to Philo? Can such a soul ever be restored back to life and redeemed? If the death of the soul is the punishment for choosing evil, could forgiveness present an alternative to this punishment? These questions prepare the way for the final Chapter 5, where the findings of the current and all the preceding chapters will be used to analyse Philo's view on divine forgiveness was.

4.3 Conclusions to Chapter 4

We have come a long way in this study: starting from the good God who created and cares for the world (Chapter 2), we looked at the great potential each human being has received as God's creature (Chapter 3), and learnt in this fourth chapter how badly humans can miss their purpose to truly be God's image, by misusing their freedom and their ability to reason when they choose to orient themselves away from God and towards the earth and their bodies only. The aim of this fourth chapter was to explore Philo's view on how humans, as creatures of a good God, are able to do evil; and what the consequences of doing evil for the perpetrator are.

My analysis of sections from *De Confusione Linguarum* has shown that a road to doing evil was created in the human soul to grant them freedom of choice. Humans have a potential for evil in their soul, which exists even before their souls enter into bodies. These elements are the irrational part of the soul, and the all-receiving nature of the human mind. They allow human beings to live in the material world, but they can also become the means for evil to manifest itself.

Philo did not regard these elements to be evil in themselves. They are essential for survival in the material world. The senses, if used properly, can even provide the human mind with insight into the intelligible world. More importantly, the two elements that constitute the human potential for evil allow humans the freedom to choose either good or evil. Philo saw this freedom as a gracious gift of God, that he bestowed on human beings alone. However, since God cannot and must not be associated with evil in any way, he delegated the creation of this potential for evil to his subjugated powers.

Truly blameworthy evil, according to Philo, ensues when someone deliberately turns away from God, leaves the path of choosing good and practising restraint and instead actively pursues the pleasures of the body and the material world. Without restraint, the irrational part of the human soul runs out of control, resulting in all kinds of evils to ensue, as the evil ideas potentially present in the human soul are put into action. This can be presented in an extension to an image Philo uses: instead of building waterworks to curb in and channel the irrational forces that can lead to evil, someone throws the floodgates wide open, allowing the irrational forces to overwhelm the soul and – if left unchecked – eventually destroy it. The soul dies if evil is not restrained or repulsed, as Philo warns. The death of the soul means that the soul becomes one with what is perishable and mortal only, while what connects it to the immortal class of being, namely rationality, will be completely absent. Philo warns against the grave risk for the soul when one follows the path of evil, with the death of the soul as its gravest consequence.

To be sure, the choice for good does not automatically make someone permanently immune from doing evil. The chaotic nature of the evil potential means that, as long as human beings live in the material world, they run the risk of stumbling, of unintentionally doing evil. As a consequence, human beings are meant to practise restraint when dealing with their body and interacting with the material world. Restraint alone, however, is not enough. Because of the unpredictable nature of their irrational part, humans can only hope to keep that part in check if they remain oriented towards God.

The orientation toward God is essential, according to Philo, to prevent the irrational part of the human soul from running out of control. When it does run out of control, however, the evildoer becomes more and more removed from God. Divine reason may even completely withdraw from the soul, as Philo warns. It is, therefore, unimaginable that a soul in such a state could regain control over the irrational part and restore the rule of reason by itself. According to Philo, putting too much trust in one's own capabilities and forgetting the ultimate dependence upon God is one of the main reasons why humans lose themselves in evil in the first place.

The result of Chapters 2 to 4 is a paradox: according to Philo, someone doing evil is evermore removed from good reason and therefore from God; at the same time such a person needs God's wisdom more than ever to regain control over the soul's irrational part and restore the rule of good reason. Too much trust in itself, however, prevents the soul from turning to the only source of help: God. The gap can only be bridged by God himself. Could we call such divine help 'forgiveness'? But would such a notion do justice to Philo's doctrine of God? Would it not run counter to God's immutability and justice? How should such forgiveness be accomplished and what does it practically entail? These issues will be explored in the fifth and final chapter where I will discuss the details of divine forgiveness.