Philo of Alexandria on divine forgiveness

Timmers, F.J.

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Fulco Jedidja Timmers

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Promotor:	Prof.dr. J.K. Zangenberg
Copromotor:	Dr. J. Tromp
Promotiecommissie:	Prof.dr. A.F. de Jong
	Dr. K.P.S. Janssen
	Prof.dr. D.Th.Runia (Australian Catholic University)
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Introduction

1.1 Aim of this study

1.1.1 Why divine forgiveness?

1.1.1.1 Hannah Arendt on forgiveness

What is forgiveness? The influential philosopher and political theorist Hannah Arendt reflected on this fundamental concept like few other non-theological modern authors. She recognised forgiveness as an important tool for regulating human interactions in a peaceful manner.[1] To receive forgiveness, according to Arendt, is to be released from the consequences of an act of evil that someone has committed. The alternative, but not the opposite, to forgiveness is just punishment. Both can end an otherwise endless cycle of revenge.

Revenge is the opposite to both forgiveness and punishment. Revenge is the attempt to inflict the same damage on the evildoers as they have inflicted on the victims. It is a re-enactment of the evil act, but now victim and perpetrator swap places. Revenge in this way leads to an endless cycle of damage and retaliation inflicted back and forth. Forgiveness, in contrast, breaks the endless cycle of revenge. Forgiveness transcends both the perpetrator and the victim above their roles. It establishes a new relationship between them, one that is open for the future.

Arendt described forgiveness in a secular context. She did, however, refer to the religious roots of the concept. According to Arendt, Jesus of Nazareth introduced the power of forgiveness into inter-human affairs. He instructed his followers to be forgiving, and set an example for them in his ministry. Jesus knew of forgiveness as part of his Jewish religious heritage. However, he opposed the claim of his religious peers that only God had the power to forgive. Arendt also claimed that in the non-Jewish context forgiveness played an insignificant role. According to her, the Romans were only rudimentarily aware of the possibility of forgiving, and the Greeks had no knowledge of the concept at all.

Hannah Arendt deserves much credit for highlighting the importance of forgiveness in human interactions, and for her critical reflection on the concept of forgiveness and its background in Jewish and Christian religion. According to her analysis, forgiveness in a secular context is modelled after forgiveness in a religious context. The latter implies divine forgiveness: God forgiving humans. Arendt, however, has not explored the notion of divine forgiveness.

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[1] The summary of Hannah Arendt's views on forgiveness is based on Arendt, *Human Condition*, pp. 236–247 and also on the summary of Arendt's views on forgiveness and promise as helpful tools in human interaction in Timmers-Huigens, *Geloofscommunicatie*, pp. 53–56, and Tatman, 'Tikkun Olam'.

She mentioned it as an element of the Jewish religious tradition in which the idea of inter-human forgiveness was fruitfully developed. She then focused on inter-human forgiveness alone.

Arendt presented the development of the concept of forgiveness by applying a sharp contrast between Jewish-Christian culture and Greco-Roman culture, as was usual in her time (her book *The Human Condition* first appeared in 1958). Arendt claimed that because of its antecedents in the biblical concept of divine forgiveness, forgiveness is a Jewish invention, popularised by Christianity. According to her, forgiveness was a novel concept when it came up, previously unknown in the Greco-Roman world. She presented this latter culture as being dominated by the endless cycle of revenge, because it lacked the instrument of forgiveness to break this cycle.[2]

This element of Arendt's analysis of the antecedents of the notion of forgiveness requires refinement, however. Regarding divine forgiveness, the contrast between Judaism and its Greco-Roman context was not as sharp as Arendt suggested. A brief comparison of divine forgiveness these two will bring this to light. Aspects of divine forgiveness in the Jewish religious context can be brought into view by briefly considering how it appears in the biblical tradition, and how it was further developed in various strands of early Judaism.[3] The biblical context of divine forgiveness and its further development in early Judaism will be considered first, followed by an exploration of divine forgiveness in the Greco-Roman context.[4]

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[2] Arendt's claim that forgiveness was a Jewish-Christian invention, unknown or unappreciated in Greco-Roman culture, has often been repeated (see, for example, Timmers-Huigens, *Geloofscommunicatie*, p. 79). In a volume on forgiveness in antiquity, several authors affirm Arendt's claim that forgiveness was absent from Greco-Roman culture (see Konstan, 'Assuaging Rage'; and Braund, 'Anger', especially p. 81 note 3). In other contributions in the same volume Arendt's claim is nuanced. Kathryn Gutzwiller and Zsuzsanna Várhelyi both illustrate how the notion of forgiveness is present in Greek and Roman sources (see Gutzwiller, 'Forgiveness' and Várhelyi, 'To Forgive').

[3] Divine forgiveness is an important topic in Christianity, as stated, for example, in Beyreuther, et al., *Begriffslexikon*, pp. 1739–1740: 'Das Sündersein des Menschen zerstörte dessen Verhältnis zu Gott … Die Vergebung als Erneuerung dieses Verhältnisses nimmt eine zentrale Stelle in der christl. Verkündigung ein. Sie steht als Gottes Tat gegen das sündige Tun des Menschen und ist begründet in der Gnade Gottes.' Compare also Romans 3:22–25: 'For there is no distinction, since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God; they are now justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a sacrifice of atonement by his blood, effective through faith.'; and Ephesians 1:7: 'In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace' (NRSV). However, since the focus of the present study is on Philo of Alexandria, Christian religion and theology are outside of the scope of this study.

[4] I use the terms 'Jewish' and 'Greco-Roman' to distinguish between interacting sub-cultures that existed and developed within a shared wider cultural context of the time period identified as 'Hellenistic'.

1.1.1.2 *Divine forgiveness in the biblical context and in early Judaism*

Three words are used in the Hebrew Bible associated with forgiveness: סלח, נשא and כפר; in the Septuagint these are translated into Greek using ἀνίημι, ἀφίημι, ἱλάσκομαι and ἵλεως εἰμί/γίγνομαι. Forgiveness in the biblical context can be predominantly understood as pardon granted by God to humans who have transgressed God's laws.[5] Such a transgression grieves and angers God, and will consequently be punished. God will punish the sinner, often with life-threatening measures such as illnesses or persecution by enemies. God is prepared, however, to forgive those who confess their sin, ask for forgiveness and repent – that is, commit themselves to follow God's commandments in the future.[6] Various sacrifices are prescribed to ensure the procurement of divine forgiveness.[7] Receiving forgiveness means the sinners' illness and persecution will stop and they will be restored to health and safety.[8] Prayer can be an effective medium to move God to forgiveness, even without sacrifices. Either sinners themselves may ask God for forgiveness or someone else may do this on their behalf.[9] Confession of sins, sacrifice, (intercessional) prayer and the commitment to just behaviour appear as important elements of divine forgiveness in the biblical context.

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5 As Michael Morgan puts it: 'The primary 'victim' of wrong, so to speak – the one who is wronged and the one with whom a relationship has been breached by the wrong – is God.' Morgan, 'Mercy', p. 138; and similarly in his conclusion on p. 142: 'Human sin and divine forgiveness are dominant motifs in the biblical religion. Relatively speaking, there is very little attention paid to interpersonal wrongdoing and forgiveness.' See also Konstan, *Before Forgiveness*, p. 105: 'it is for the most part God who forgives' and on pp. 121–122: 'Jesus would seem to be in accord with the conception of sin and forgiveness in the Hebrew Bible, in which repudiation of the Lord is the predominant concern.' Konstan emphasises that he does not wish to imply that the New Testament has nothing to say on the subject of interpersonal forgiveness, yet he does conclude that the primary focus in the New Testament is on God's forgiveness of human faults (see ibid., pp. 122–123 and see also Oesterley, *Jews*, pp. 172–174).

6 Cf., for example, Ps. 86:5 'For you, O Lord, are good and forgiving, abounding in steadfast love to all who call on you' (NRSV). See also Num. 14:18; Ps. 130:4; Dn. 9:9; Neh. 9:17. In the Psalms the call on God for forgiveness is regularly accompanied by the commitment to just behaviour (see, for example, Ps. 32:8–11; 85:7–12; 86:11).

7 For forgiveness in the context of sacrificial cult see: Lv. 4:20–35; 5:10–26; 10:17; Num. 15:25–28.

8 Ps. 32 offers an excellent illustration of the whole process of the sinner first being ill, then the confession of sin, and the following restoration to health through God's forgiveness. See also Ps. 85:2–4; Ps. 103:2–6; Isa. 33:24, especially for the connection between illness, forgiveness and the restoration to health.

9 In Psalm 25 and 32 the sinner himself asks God for forgiveness; Job beseeches God, why He will not forgive him (Job 7:21); Abraham pleads with God for forgiveness for the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorra (Gn. 18:24–26); Moses prays on Pharaoh's behalf, to ask God for forgiveness and to stop the plague (Ex. 10:16–17); and pleads with God for forgiveness on behalf of his people (Ex. 34:9). Also, God can be asked to *not* grant forgiveness (Isa. 2:9; Neh. 3:37).

The biblical notion of God's forgiveness was further developed in various strands of early Judaism.[10] The sacrificial cult in the Jerusalem temple functioned as an important institution to obtain divine forgiveness.[11] It seems likely that most Palestinian Jews made a pilgrimage to the temple at least once a year.[12] Jews in the diaspora were considered exempt from the biblical obligation to participate in the annual festivals in the temple. However, those who had the means are thought to have made a pilgrimage to the temple in Jerusalem at least once in their lifetime.[13] The sacrificial cult helped to make divine forgiveness more tangible for common believers.[14]

However, other elements of the biblical concept were developed into mechanisms to realise God's forgiveness as well, reducing the significance of sacrifices. Ben Sirach, for instance, presented as important requirements for God's forgiveness: just behaviour in accordance with God's law, in particular self-examination, repentance and prayer.[15] Repentance and confession of sin also appear as necessary ingredients to obtain God's forgiveness in the writings of Josephus and in various pseudepigrapha.[16] In 4 Maccabees, the biblical elements of just ethical behaviour, intercessional prayer and sacrifice were combined and developed into the notion of God forgiving the transgressions of

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10 More background on forgiveness in the biblical context can be found in Freedman, *AB Dictionary vol. 2*, pp. 831–834; for an analysis of developments regarding divine forgiveness in early Judaism see Johansson, 'Who Can Forgive'; sources for forgiveness in the intertestamental period can also be found in Lee/Hughes/Viljoen, 'Forgiveness'.

11 Support of the temple in Jerusalem is one of five elements of what Ed P. Sanders calls 'common Judaism', the other four elements being: performing regular (daily and weekly) rituals in the service of God; Sabbath observance; circumcision; and observing certain purity rules, including dietary regulations such as abstaining from eating pork (see Sanders, *Judaism*, pp. 236–237). Support that these five elements were seen as normal and often normative for most (however not all) Jews of this period can be found in Greek and Latin literary sources (see Cohen, 'Common Judaism') and also (tentatively) in archaeological data (see Meyers, 'Material Culture', with additional support and important caveats formulated by Jürgen Zangenberg in Zangenberg, 'Multidimensional').

12 Sanders, *Judaism*, p. 127.

13 Ibid.; Elias Bickerman describes how for Jews in the diaspora fasting became an important ritual for redemption as an alternative to sacrifice (see Bickerman, *Jews*, p. 138). In an article discussing the relations between Jerusalem and Jews in Egypt, Johannes Tromp describes how Jews living outside Judea contributed to and visited the Jerusalem temple out of a sense of solidarity with their ancestral city (see Tromp, 'Relations'). Benjamin Gordon describes how the temple of Jerusalem could become an important tourist attraction in the late Second Temple period (200 BCE–70 CE), especially because of Herod's grand reconstruction of the temple and the infrastructural improvements the Roman Empire provided (see Gordon, 'Sightseeing', p. 280).

14 Sanders provides a lively and informed reconstruction of how an imaginary Palestinian Jewish family may have made such a yearly pilgrimage to Jerusalem (see Sanders, *Judaism*, pp. 112–116). He describes how the acting out of the ritual 'helped create the worshippers' interior response' (p. 116).

15 Sir. 17:24–25, 18:20.

16 Josephus, *BJ* V, 415; 1 En. 5:8; Ps. Sal. 9:6–7; 4 Ez. 7:132–140; 2 Bar. 84:10–11; Pr. Man. 11–15.

the nation because of the suffering and death of a single or few righteous ones.[17] Prayer by itself (without sacrifice) was increasingly perceived as sufficient to persuade God to be merciful.[18] In the Damascus Document an eschatological element was added to divine forgiveness. It will be granted by the priestly messiah to the community as a whole.[19]

To sum up. Forgiveness in the Hebrew Bible and in early Judaism was seen as something granted mainly by God to evildoers who confess their sins and repent – that is, commit themselves to future just behaviour. Forgiveness meant that the divine punishment evildoers receive will stop; instead, they will be restored to health and safety. Prayer and sacrifice often accompanied the plea for divine forgiveness. Righteous people could intercede with God and obtain forgiveness for others, through prayer or even through sacrificing themselves. The complete restoration to health and safety of a community could become part of eschatological hope.

Aspects of divine forgiveness in the Greco-Roman context will be considered next, to refine Arendt's presentation of forgiveness as something rooted in Judaism and Christianity alone.

1.1.1.3 Divine forgiveness in the Greco-Roman context

A general inventory of Greek and Latin words related to the semantic field of forgiveness (for example in Greek: συγγνώμη, ἄφεσις, and others; or in Latin: *venia*, *ignotum*, *condonare*, and others), provides us with several examples of forgiveness appearing in both Greek and Roman sources.[20] Elements similar to the biblical field of forgiveness can be discerned in daily-life Greco-Roman religions. Confession of sins could be part of healing rituals.[21] Sacrifice and purification of evil influences could be part of the initiation rituals of certain ancient mystery cults.[22]

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17 4 Macc. 6:27–29; 18:20–22. See also M. de Jonge, 'Jesus' Death'.

18 Bickerman, *Jews*, pp. 282–283; in 1 En. 13:3–7 Enoch is asked to pray for forgiveness; in 1 QS 2:8–9 a curse is formulated asking God not to forgive and ignore attempts at intercession.

19 CD 14:18–19.

20 Various examples are provided by Gutzwiller and Várhelyi (see note 2). Metzler, *Verzeihens* provides an extensive overview of the use and development of the concept of forgiveness in Greek literary sources, including in comparison to biblical and early Jewish and Christian sources.

21 Burkert, *Cults*, p. 16.

22 Ibid., pp. 93–101; although one should heed Walter Burkert's warning against too quickly reading particularly Christian terminology into the rituals and beliefs of mystery cults (see ibid., p. 3). Moreover, some authors argue that awareness of sin, with an emphasis on one's responsibility in doing evil, was hardly present in Greek religion. They claim that doing evil was perceived instead as making a mistake (see Nilsson, *Geschichte vol. 2*, p. 698; Price, *Religions*, p. 37; Bickerman, *Jews*, pp. 268–269; Konstan, *Before Forgiveness*, p. 126).

An example of where the semantic field of forgiveness in the classical context overlaps with that of the biblical context was offered by Zsuzsanna Várhelyi.[23] Dionysius of Halicarnassus, a Greek historian living and writing in Augustan Rome, presented divine forgiveness as a moral example to his readers. Dionysius argued that humans, just like the gods, should be moved from hatred to pity towards their enemies upon receiving suppliant prayers.[24] As in the biblical context, Dionysius allowed for the gods to be moved from anger to forgiveness upon the repentance of the wrongdoer.

Such a presentation of the gods and the rituals of popular religion and cults were often denounced by ancient intellectuals. They considered them charlatanism and as obscuring the truth about the gods.[25] The notion of divine or inter-human forgiveness played a marginal part in classical and Hellenistic philosophy. Neither Plato nor Aristotle advocated forgiveness as a virtue.[26] As Várhelyi put forward, Dionysius differed significantly from the intellectuals of his time, when he suggested that the gods can become hurt and angry.[27]

It seems that Arendt projected such an intellectual lack of attention to forgiveness, or denouncement of it, on the whole of Greco-Roman culture. The examples from popular religion and from genres other than intellectual literature show, however, that the idea of divine pardon can be found in the whole Hellenistic culture, and not in Jewish or Christian religion alone.

Seeking and receiving divine pardon appears to have been mainly present in less intellectually considered expressions of ancient religion – that is, in biblical and related sources, as well as in the daily-life rituals of early Judaism and other Hellenistic religions. Here, God or the gods were presented as emotional beings, who could be hurt by evil acts of humans. The divine response to this offence was anger and punishment. Punishment could be replaced with forgiveness if evildoers placated God or the gods through ritual acts. These ritual acts consisted of sacrifices and prayer, accompanied by changes in behaviour (repentance). Such human acts led God or the gods to grant forgiveness, restoring the peaceful and beneficial relationship between God or the gods and human beings.

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23 Várhelyi, 'To Forgive', especially pp. 121–130.

24 Karin Metzler (Metzler, *Verzeihens*, p. 66) offers a similar presentation in Homer (*Il.* IX, 496–501) of the gods as a moral example for humans to be forgiving. She also writes (ibid., p. 72) that in the traditional depiction of the gods, with characteristics ascribed to them such as omniscience and magnanimity, it would have been easier for the gods to forgive someone than for humans to do so.

25 See Burkert, *Cults*, pp. 19–24.

26 Konstan, 'Assuaging Rage', pp. 19–22. Similarly in Jacobs, 'Forgiveness', p. 226.

27 Várhelyi, 'To Forgive', pp. 129–130.

The popular religious presentations of God or the gods conflicted with well-considered intellectual reflections. Philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle, for example, argued that the way the gods were viewed in every-day religious life was widely removed from the truth about the gods. Their philosophising, and that of their intellectual predecessors, contained two trends of critique against the traditional procurement of divine forgiveness. Both stemmed from their view that the divine was identified with perfection.[28] Perfection implied immutability. So, their first critique was that the divine could not be subjected to changing emotional states, such as hurt or anger. Their second point was that a perfect being could not be in want of anything. Therefore, they rejected the idea that the gods could be placated or made to change their minds through prayer and sacrifice.[29]

To sum up. A contrast emerges from the notion of divine amnesty between the presentation of God or the gods in daily-life religious expressions and that in well-considered intellectual reflections upon the nature of God or the gods.[30] It is precisely this contrast that makes the concept of divine pardon in the works of Philo of Alexandria such a fascinating topic. What did divine forgiveness, a notion more at home in popular expressions of religion, entail when it appeared in the reflections of a Hellenistic intellectual?

1.1.2 Philo of Alexandria

Philo of Alexandria was a wealthy Jewish intellectual, a member of a prosperous family, living in Alexandria in Egypt in the first half of the first century CE.[31]

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[28] Charles Griswold discusses the identification of the divine with perfect being and seeing perfection as the highest virtue in general, as the reason why forgiveness (both divine and inter-human) was little appreciated in ancient philosophy (see Griswold, *Forgiveness*, pp. 2–14, and similarly in Griswold, 'Plato'). Metzler provides an additional form of critique of forgiveness in ancient philosophy: Plato claimed that it sustains injustice instead of correcting it (see Metzler, *Verzeihens*, pp. 139–142).

[29] Plato criticises sacrifices as a means for placating the gods in *Rep*. II, 364a–366b. He presents a critique of the traditional anthropomorphic poetic presentation of the gods in *Rep.* II, 377b–383c. Here, he argues that if the gods were truly as emotionally fickle and scheming as the poets presented them, they could not be an example for virtuous human behaviour (see also Bordt, 'Zorn', pp. 147–148). Aristotle argues for the immutability of the divine in *Met*. XII, 1072b, and in *Eth. Eud.*, VIII, 1249b 12 he argues that God needs nothing. For the development of Greek natural theology and how it contrasted with traditional presentations of the divine see Jaeger, *Theology*, pp. 23, 47, 180–181. See further Long, *Hellenistic Philosophy*, pp. 41–49 for an overview of Epicurus' theology and his critique of traditional presentations of the divine.

[30] Incidentally, such an identification of God with perfection still appears as an important philosophical objection against ascribing forgiveness to God, as illustrated by examples of Minas, 'Forgiveness' and Verbin, 'Trespasses'.

[31] For introductions to Philo see: Bréhier, *Les idées*; Völker, *Fortschritt*; Wolfson, *Philo*; Daniélou, *Philon*; Goodenough, *Introduction*; Sandmel, *Philo*; Morris, 'Philo'; Williamson, *Philo*; Barclay, *Jews*; Hadas-Lebel, *Philo*; Kamesar, *Philo*; Runia, 'Philo'; Sterling/Niehoff/van den Hoek, 'Philo'; Niehoff, *Biography*.

The only anchor we have for dating Philo's life is his participation in an embassy to Emperor Gaius, which Philo described in his treatise *Legatio ad Gaium*. This embassy must have taken place sometime around 38 and 39 CE, shortly after the Jewish community in Alexandria had been in heavy conflict with their Greek neighbours.[32] The city of Alexandria in Egypt was a highly developed metropolis, a melting pot for Greek, Egyptian and Near Eastern cultures.[33] Its population was a mix of many peoples, with a long-established and substantial Jewish population.[34] Philo and his family were part of the rich and influential stratum of this Jewish population.[35] Philo was well educated.[36] He also participated in the good life of banquets, attended theatres and sporting events, and was active in politics.[37]

Philo appears to have been a socially and politically active man. In Philo's own words, however, his dearest occupation was reflecting upon questions that go beyond the mundane matters of politics, beyond the immediate demands that life puts upon a human and even beyond the visible world as such. He recounted with longing the times he enjoyed when he would soar up to the heavens and contemplate ideas, until the turmoil of 'civil cares' would pull him

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32 John Barclay dates this embassy somewhere in 38–39 CE (Barclay, *Jews*, p. 178); David Runia gives 39 CE (Runia, 'Philo', p. 851). For an extensive discussion on the dating of this embassy see Colson/Earp, *Philo vol. 10*, pp. xxvii–xxxi.

33 Sandmel, *Philo*, p. 6; Daniélou, *Philon*, p. 12.

34 Philo states that the Jewish population of Alexandria was large (*Mos*. II, 232; *Legat*. 32–45; *Flacc*. 55), and in *Flacc*. 43 he gives a figure of one million Jews living in Alexandria. Josephus (*BJ* II, 497; *BJ* VII, 369) gives a number of 50,000–60,000 Jews being killed in Alexandria in 66 CE. Victor Tcherikover underlines that we have no means to determine the number of Jews in Alexandria precisely and that the figures given by ancient authors should not be considered trustworthy. However, the repeated emphasis that the number of Jews was large, makes it a likely assumption that the number of Jews was substantial and that they could make their influence felt in public life (Tcherikover, *Civilization*, pp. 286–287). Joseph Modrzejewski estimates that the Jewish population in Alexandria in Philo's day amounted to 180,000 people, roughly one-third of the entire population of Alexandria (see Mélèze Modrzejewski, *Jews*, p. 73).

35 Goodenough, *Introduction*, p. 7. Philo's brother Gaius Julius Alexander is attested to have been a very wealthy customs official in Alexandria. Philo's nephew Tiberius Julius Alexander attained the office of Emperor Titus' chief of staff (see Runia, *Creation*, p. ix, and Sterling/Niehoff/van den Hoek, 'Philo', p. 253).

36 His erudition is obvious in his works. Also, Josephus states that Philo was well-versed in Greek philosophy (*AJ* XVIII, 259). Philo probably attended a gymnasium for his basic education in grammar, mathematics and music (*Congr.* 74–76). The form that his advanced education took is unclear. It is not certain whether Philo acquired his knowledge on his own and/or had private tutors (see Runia, 'Philo', p. 851, and Sterling/Niehoff/van den Hoek, 'Philo', pp. 254–255).

37 For sporting events see *Prob*. 26; *Prov.* II, 58; for visits to the theatre see *Ebr.* 177; *Prob.* 141; for Philo's attendance of banquets see *LA* III, 155–156; see also Goodenough, *Jurisprudence*, p. 2. For Philo's participation in political life see *Spec*. III, 4–5 and *De Legatione ad Gaium*. See also Williamson, *Philo*, p. 2.

back to earth again.[38] Philo listed a few of the fundamental questions that will occupy the mind of a person with good sense.[39] These questions are: whether there is one world or more, whether the four elements make up all things, or heaven and its contents have a special nature of their own, whether the visible world is created or uncreated, and if it is created, who the Creator is, his essence and his quality, and what his purpose in making the creation is. Like other Jewish intellectuals before him, Philo found answers to such questions in the law of Moses. Philo made it his purpose to reveal the deeper philosophical truths that lie hidden within Moses' words.[40]

1.1.3 Divine forgiveness, an intellectual challenge for Philo?

Philo can be characterised as an excellent example of an intellectual of his period. He has left us with an elaborate library of treatises. He embarked in these treatises on a journey of intellectual reflection about a wide range of topics. Seeking and receiving divine forgiveness is among these topics. All the elements of the supposedly simplistic daily-life religious approach to divine forgiveness appear in Philo's treatises: God who is insulted and enraged by human evil, who reacts with punishment, or with forgiveness if the evildoer repents.[41] His intellectual considerations did not lead Philo to simply reject

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38 *Spec*. III, 1–3.

39 *Abr*. 162–163. Half of the questions that Philo raises here could be regarded as theological questions. Ought Philo's thinking to be characterised as theology, rather than philosophy? For example, Mireille Hadas-Lebel claims: 'By placing wisdom at the service of God, and drawing on virtue from the study of the Law, Philo is quite different from the philosophers from whom he borrows' (Hadas-Lebel, *Philo*, p. 178). Was Philo indeed different from the philosophers from whom he borrows? One should bear in mind that a strict distinction between theology and philosophy is a modern phenomenon. With regard to Philo, as with any ancient author, it is unjustified to distinguish between philosophy and theology: within Philo's intellectual context all philosophy stemmed from a proper understanding of the divine. As Werner Jaeger put it, after Plato 'every system of Greek philosophy (save only the Sceptics) culminated in theology' (Jaeger, *Theology*, p. 4). According to John Dillon, for Philo philosophy and theology were one and the same thing (see Dillon, *Middle Platonists*, p. 141). Rainer Hirsch-Luipold notes, when comparing Philo and Plutarch, that in their writings theology and philosophy were intertwined and that knowledge of theology and philosophy is therefore necessary to understand these ancient authors (see Hirsch-Luipold, 'Der eine Gott', pp. 162–166). A writer such as Heraclitus, who somewhere around 100 CE presented his philosophical insights in the form of commentaries on Homer's epics, did not distinguish between philosophy and theology. He claimed that 'Homer here has given us a scientific theology in allegorical form' (see Heraclitus, *Homeric Problems* 58 [translation by Russell/Konstan]; in Russell/Konstan, *Heraclitus*, p. 97; for dating Heraclitus see ibid., p. xi). Whereas Heraclitus found the answers to his fundamental questions in Homer, Philo found his answers in the law of Moses.

40 *Spec*. III, 6

41 Divine pardon appears, for example, in *Fug*. 99; *Spec*. I, 229, 235–238. Scattered throughout Philo's works several words associated with forgiveness occur. The number of occurrences for each word is given in parentheses. These words are: the verbs ἀφίημι (63) and συγγιγνώσκω (9); the nouns ἄφεσις (20), ἀμνηστία (21), παραίτησις (4) and συγγνώμη (16); and the adjectives συγγνώμων (3) and συγγνωστός (3) (see Borgen/Fuglseth/Skarsten, *Index*). With ἀφίημι and ἄφεσις one should note that these words do not always occur with a meaning related to forgiveness.

such representations of God. Instead, he encouraged his readers to enter into self-examination through their conscience, to discover the evil they may have committed unknowingly or knowingly, to repent from that evil and ask God for forgiveness.

The elements of divine forgiveness on which one expects Philo to reflect as an intellectual can be deduced from the contrast between, on the one hand, the presentation of the divine in the Bible and in daily-life religion, and, on the other hand, the reflections on the divine in intellectual discussions. From an uncritical perspective, we find a presentation of an emotional and relational God, who interacts with the world and humans, who can be hurt and angered by human evil deeds, who dispenses punishment in reaction to evil deeds, who can be made to change his mind and be forgiving when the evildoer repents. From a well-considered intellectual perspective, we encounter a presentation of a far more detached God, who is the supreme good and everlasting, who is not an object of emotional afflictions, who does not change, let alone change his mind. This supreme being is almost the complete opposite of what human beings are considered to be. Humans are subject to change and to all kinds of emotions, humans can do either good or evil deeds, humans grow old and die.[42]

Philo's intention to find deep philosophical truths in the Bible introduces a paradox with regard to the notion of divine forgiveness. This paradox can be phrased as: What intellectually satisfying truth could Philo deduce from a notion either ignored or denounced by intellectuals? The aim of the present study is to find an answer to this question.[43] To pave the way, I will consider the

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[42] Várhelyi hints at this contrast when she formulates the following question: 'How does the stripping of the Hebrew God of his passions, including anger, in Philo's allegorical readings, shape his model role in forgiving?' (Várhelyi, 'To Forgive', p. 132). Gerhard Sellin discusses how Philo handles the differences between what he calls 'the God of the philosophers' and 'the God of the Old-Testament' in Sellin, *Allegorie*, pp. 57–72.

[43] This study focuses on divine forgiveness in Philo's works. Philo wrote about forgiveness in human affairs as well. The topic of interhuman forgiveness is not extensively discussed in the current study. Generally speaking, Philo maintained that the wise should follow God's example, in being forgiving. In *Mut.* 128–129, Philo describes Moses as representing God towards the Pharaoh, namely in being patient and beneficent, allowing the Pharaoh many chances to repent. Joseph is another illustration of a wise person following God's example in being forgiving. Joseph forgives his brothers, partly out of respect for his natural father, but mostly because of his philanthropy and his respect for God, the eternal and uncreated Father (see *Ios.* 239, 262–265). Moses also follows God's example in being gracious and forgiving. He forgives the rebellious words of his fellow Israelites and their complaining for food, for Moses understands the fickleness of a crowd (see *Mos.* I, 173, 197). In *Mos.* I, 184, Philo writes that God forgives the people for complaining. In *Mos.* II, 189, Philo writes that the merciful and kind nature of God develops similar traits in those that serve him. According to Philo, the ability of the victim to forgive the perpetrator is a sign of wisdom (see *QG* IV, 193). Reversely, according to Philo, a person is foolish and evil when he shows no mercy and is unforgiving. Philo illustrates the evil of the Egyptians chasing the Israelites, by describing them as without συγγνώμη in *Mos.* I, 37 (in line with one of the curses that Philo describes in *Praem.* 137, namely to be chased by an enemy who is without συγγνώμη). One of the evil traits of Flaccus is that he knows no ἀμνηστία (*Flacc.* 84).

current state of affairs in Philonic research regarding Philo of Alexandria's views on divine forgiveness.

1.2 *Survey of previous studies*

This survey of previous studies is divided into two larger sections. The first section offers a chronologically ordered review of studies exploring the contents of Philo's thoughts. Where have Philonic studies brought us regarding Philo's views on divine forgiveness and topics related to it, such as on God's relation to creation, specifically to human beings, and on human ethics, specifically the human ability to do evil? The second section will be dedicated to studies exploring Philo's method in developing his thoughts, to explore the insights we can gain from these studies regarding Philo's relation to his intellectual milieu and his relation to the Bible.

1.2.1 *Divine forgiveness in context of Philo's thought*

In the field of Philonic research, three studies emerged as standard works in the first half of the twentieth century. Émile Bréhier, Erwin R. Goodenough and Harry A. Wolfson all attempted to describe the complete world of ideas and concepts of Philo. Each of these authors did so from a particular perspective: Bréhier held that Philo's ambition was to present Judaism as a universal moral religion; Goodenough maintained that Philo wanted to transform Judaism into a mystery religion; and Wolfson presented Philo as the creator of a new philosophical school with divine revelation and free will as key concepts. Although each of these approaches has its shortcomings, the insights of Bréhier, Goodenough and Wolfson have greatly influenced the study of Philo.

The contributions of these authors are relevant for the present study, even though none of these authors had much to say on the specific topic of divine forgiveness in Philo's work. They do, however, present us with useful insights into matters connected to divine forgiveness – that is, insights into Philo's view on the relationship between God, creation and humans; and into Philo's ethical outlooks. These insights will be explored first. Next, I will consider contributions that address the specific topic of divine forgiveness in Philo's works. I will then evaluate what insights can be gained from these previous studies, and what remains unclear.

1.2.1.1 *Basic elements of Philo's thought: Bréhier, Goodenough, and Wolfson*

Émile Bréhier (1876–1952), one of the pioneers of modern Philonic studies, explained his view on Philo's thought in *Les idées philosophiques et religieuses de Philon d'Alexandrie* (first published in 1908). I will limit the evaluation of Bréhier's thorough and comprehensive analysis to subjects related to divine forgiveness – that is, his presentation of Philo's view on the relationship between God, creation and humans; and of Philo's ethical outlooks.

Central to Philo's theology, according to Bréhier, is the view that humans can only know *that* God exists. Knowledge of God's essence, of *who* or *what* he is, is beyond the grasp of human understanding.[44] The only knowledge humans can have regarding God's characteristics is what God reveals to them. God reveals some aspects of himself to human beings through his interaction with creation. God interacts with creation through his powers (δυνάμεις).[45] By means of these powers God provides for the world he has created. For, since God is good, he necessarily cares for what he has made.[46] These powers are all contained within the logos – that is: God's mind or divine reason.[47]

The reason for Philo to introduce the powers as the medium through which God and the world are connected was to avoid pantheism.[48] Did Philo see God and his powers as separate entities? Philo introduced a subtle shift in perspectives to avoid this conclusion. From the human perspective, divine reason and the powers appear as separate manifestations of God. From God's perspective, however, they are undivided and one. Philo emphasised that in reality God is one, and that the highest form of worship of God is to understand that this is so.[49]

The transcendent God and material humans are connected to each other through conscience. According to Bréhier, Philo saw conscience as a gift from God to humans, bridging the gap between God and humans.[50] Conscience provides someone with the knowledge of what is right and what is wrong.[51] The ideal for human beings is to listen to the wisdom of their conscience.

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44 Bréhier, *Les idées*, pp. 70, 203.

45 Ibid., pp. 75–76. According to Bréhier, Philo was inspired by the Stoic view that the powers manifest themselves as the natural order or natural law that humans can discern in the world. Philo claims that this natural law is none other than the law that Moses wrote down in the Bible (ibid., pp. 80, 95, 147–149, 170–175).

46 Bréhier considered Deutero-Isaiah as Philo's source for the view that God, because of his goodness, takes providential care of the world (ibid., p. 77).

47 Ibid., p. 141

48 Ibid., p. 136.

49 Ibid., p. 137.

50 Ibid., p. 302. According to Bréhier, the spirit of man (πνεῦμα) functions as a bridge between God and man, and the spirit can be identified with conscience, ibid.pp. 134 note 7, 135. Also, according to Bréhier, Philo was the first to introduce the concept of conscience into the intellectual discourse (ibid., pp. 31–32, 296, 301, 310). In contrast to Bréhier, Walther Völker identified antecedents for the concept of conscience in Stoic literature (as well as in the Septuagint) (Völker, *Fortschritt*, pp. 101–105). Bréhier did not claim that the concept of conscience is Philo's invention. Bréhier referred to Greek tragedies as an inspiration for Philo regarding the role of conscience in ethics (Bréhier, *Les idées*, pp. 299–300).

51 Bréhier, *Les idées*, p. 296.

It is essential that humans acknowledge God as the source of true wisdom, in order to be completely guided by right reason on the road to moral perfection.[52]

Humans are able to be and do good when they acknowledge God as the source of perfect knowledge. Doing wrong and becoming evil is caused by the reverse, namely the denial of God as the source of true wisdom. People who turn away from God will end up in confusion.[53] People who do not orient themselves towards God are more susceptible to the influences of the human body, most particularly to 'desire' (ἐπιθυμία).[54] The human body is a cause of evil, since it is made from imperfect matter.[55] Either turning towards God, in order to become good, or moving away from God and becoming evil, involves a conscious decision. For Philo, the conscious decision to do evil was what makes something truly sinful. According to Bréhier, Philo's connection of sin to the will was a novelty in the Hellenistic context.[56]

Bréhier mentions divine forgiveness as the final step of what Philo saw as the road towards reaching moral perfection.[57] Bréhier explained that for Philo

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52 Ibid., pp. 95, 121, 228. According to Bréhier (ibid., p. 95), Philo insisted, contrary to the Stoics, that humans cannot reach moral perfection on their own: they need God's help. Harry A. A. Kennedy affirmed Bréhier's conclusion that, according to Philo, God gives support to human souls to attain moral perfection, by way of the gift of conscience. As Kennedy put it: 'Conscience involves the impact of God upon the soul' (Kennedy, *Contribution*, p. 112). Kennedy compared Philo's ideas and concepts with those of Paul and concluded that there are many similarities between the two (ibid., p. 106). According to Kennedy, the identification of conscience with 'the legislative Reason within us, is one of Philo's most remarkable contributions to the content of ancient ethics' (ibid., p. 53) A human needs to realise that this ability to do good, comes from God, and is no achievement of his own. All a human being needs to do is to open up himself towards God, even though first and foremost it is God who reaches out for the human soul. According to Kennedy, this is how Philo believed that God's grace operates (ibid., pp. 149–154). Similarly, Jan N. Sevenster, in his dissertation comparing the concept of salvation of Philo with that of the synoptic gospels (Sevenster, *Verlossingsbegrip*), focused on the question of what humans contribute to their salvation, and what God contributes to their salvation. In the first chapter, he collected and analysed passages in Philo's works in support of the claim that Philo held the view that humans, with sufficient training, are able to reach the goal of being able to live a virtuous life through their own effort (ibid., p. 61). In the second chapter this claim is nuanced. Sevenster argued that Philo held that only God is truly active, and that everything created, including humans, is passive (ibid., p. 70). The virtuous life is a gift of God, not something reached by humans through practice. Actually, the greatest sin, and therefore the biggest stumbling block on the road to perfection, is self-love, the megalomania of believing that humans can reach virtue on their own (ibid., p. 79). Humans who want to reach virtue need to acknowledge their own weakness and ask God to help them (ibid., pp. 81–83). This latter part, the longing for salvation through God, is perhaps all humans can contribute to their salvation (ibid., pp. 88, 98).

53 Bréhier, *Les idées*, pp. 297–298.

54 Ibid., pp. 262–263.

55 Ibid., p. 274.

56 Ibid., p. 299.

57 Bréhier described the several steps of the process of turning away from evil and being forgiven in ibid., pp. 296–307. *Spec.* I, 235–238 can be recognised as the backbone of Bréhier's presentation of

the accusation of one's conscience is the first step in this process. Those who listen to their conscience, allow it to show them what they have done wrong. This will lead to a feeling of humility and the awareness of having inflicted damage on one's own soul, resulting in a public confession of sins and a plea for forgiveness. Someone's repentance from evil is true and definite if it is accompanied by an actual change of ways. God will then forgive a thus converted person, and grant him new life. Philo equated true conversion to a blameless life.[58] Bréhier, however, did not explore the tension between Philo's theological reflections, and the relational and emotional presentation of God that divine forgiveness implies.

To sum up. Bréhier provided several insights regarding the questions related to the concept of divine forgiveness in Philo's works. God can interact with creation through his powers. Through the activity of these powers, humans can know that God exists. Humans can never perceive the true nature of God, however. From a human perspective, God and his powers seem to be separate entities; from the divine perspective, God is one and indivisible. God is connected to humans through conscience. Conscience gives humans a share in God's moral knowledge. This allows them to decide between what is right and what is wrong. Humans do evil when they consciously decide to turn away from God. Doing so makes them susceptible to the influences of the body, specifically desire, leading to confusion and all kinds of evil. Conscience will warn someone when he or she is doing evil. It will help such a person to turn away from evil, and return to God. God will forgive someone who has repented from evil.

Bréhier's ideas provide useful building blocks of the process of divine forgiveness as Philo saw it. His insights into Philo's theology help to better understand how Philo maintained a transcendent God can interact with creation, namely through the divine powers. Philo's distinction between the human ability to know *that* God exists and the human inability to know *what* God is, has remained the undisputed centre of Philo's theology, according to Philonic scholars.[59] Philo's distinction between human and divine perspectives

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Philo's view on the road towards moral perfection.

58 According to Bréhier, Philo did this to make Judaism attractive to potential converts (ibid., p. 307). Bréhier claimed that Philo in general downplayed the nationalistic aspects of Moses' laws and highlighted the universal application of these laws as moral laws relevant for all peoples. Bréhier maintained that Philo did this to attract converts to Judaism (see ibid., pp. 9, 31–32). The idea of Jewish proselytism is convincingly disproved in Will/Orrieux, *Prosélytisme*.

59 See Kennedy, *Contribution*, p. 162; Wolfson, *Philo vol. 2*, p. 140; Daniélou, *Philon*, p. 146; Goodenough, *Light*, p. 382; Sandmel, *Philo*, pp. 90–91; Runia, *Timaeus*, p. 437; Morris, 'Philo', p. 881; Williamson, *Philo*, p. 38; Runia, 'Philo', p. 854. Bréhier described how Philo combines God being called ὁ ὤν in the Septuagint (Ex. 3:14) with Plato's concept of τὸ ὂν ὄντως (*Phdr.* 247E) (Bréhier, *Les idées*, p. 70). According to Bréhier, Philo went further than Plato in concluding from this identification of God with true being that God in his essence cannot be known. Bréhier

can be a useful tool in understanding Philo's handling of anthropomorphic presentations of God. Bréhier's work also provides useful insights regarding the connection between God and humans, in particular with regard to the role of conscience. Bréhier, however, did not fully explore Philo's concept of divine forgiveness. It remains to be seen how the building blocks he provided can fit together, to bring to light what Philo believed divine forgiveness to entail.

A whole different perspective on Philo's outlooks is presented by **Erwin R. Goodenough** (1893–1965). As a historian of religion, Goodenough drew attention to influences not only of philosophy in Philo's thought, but also of popular mystery cults that Goodenough supposed to have existed in Alexandria. He claimed that Philo considered his form of Judaism a mystery religion.[60] Goodenough developed this idea in *By Light, Light: The Mystic Gospel of Hellenistic Judaism* (first published in 1935). According to Goodenough, Philo's thinking can be best understood as aimed at mystical experience, rather than a search for philosophical truth.[61]

Goodenough drew attention to how Philo used the metaphor of light to explain how a transcendent God can interact with the material world and with humans. According to Philo, God is a source of light. Similarly to how the sun emits rays of light, God emits the logos as an intellectual light. Creation is the result of the logos falling on formless matter, like rays of light falling on objects and making them visible. When falling on formless matter, the logos imprints it with forms, giving it structure, coherence and stability. This is also how God's providence operates.[62]

The imprint of the logos is present in humans as well. It forms the reasonable part of the soul – that is, the mind. The mind is meant to rule the soul and the whole human being, enabling someone to lead a virtuous life.[63] Goodenough

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identified both the biblical views of Deutero-Isaiah as well as Scepticism as sources for Philo's view that God's essence cannot be known, and saw the unknowability of God as an invention of Philo (ibid., pp. 73, 77, 203). Several other authors also claimed the unknowability of God to be an invention of Philo (see Wolfson, *Philo vol. 2*, pp. 111–117 and Daniélou, *Philon*, p. 147). Wolfson further claimed that Plato used the term ὁ ὂν ὄντως for the ideas only, whereas Philo reserved it for God alone (Wolfson, *Philo vol. 1*, p. 210). Thomas H. Billings did not view the unknowability of God as an invention of Philo. He claimed that Plato had already identified true being with unknowability (see Billings, *Platonism*, pp. 16–17; Billings refers to *Soph.* 249E) and he noted that Plato had already emphasised the limitations of human knowledge (see ibid., p. 68).

60 Goodenough, *Light*, pp. 7–9; Goodenough, *Introduction*, p. 140.

61 Goodenough, *Introduction*, pp. 16, 140.

62 Ibid., pp. 99–109. In contrast to Bréhier who linked Philo's presentation of the logos to Stoic philosophy, Goodenough saw Egyptian influences in Philo's concept of the logos (see Goodenough, *Light*, pp. 42–44).

63 Goodenough, *Light*, pp. 383–384. Here, Goodenough also claims that Philo did not always maintain

held that for Philo ultimate bliss meant to be in full harmony with God. To achieve such harmony, the mind of a person needs to be in full control over the body, and specifically the senses and desires.[64]

Sin occurs when the senses and desires are no longer controlled by the mind. Ignorance is the ultimate cause of sin.[65] Conscience, an essential faculty of the human mind, shows wrongdoers the sins they have committed and internally accuses them.[66] They should then repent and convert – that is, turn back to God; for only God can bring full recovery. Repentance and conversion can be compared to the start of a healing process.[67] Goodenough explained that Philo employed another two metaphors for the process of restoration of control of the mind over the body. The first involves the presentation of God's grace as a purifying stream. This stream removes the bad influences of the bodily senses and desires and restores the control of reason.[68] The other metaphor is to liken the restoration of reason to the return of light and the removal of darkness. Repentance and conversion allow God's light to shine again into the soul and restore the reasonable part of the soul so that it is able to regain control.[69]

When ignorance is removed and replaced by wisdom, the mind is in control again and the soul is in harmony. Good behaviour then follows automatically.[70] Goodenough maintained that Philo agreed in this with the ethical views of Greek philosophy. Goodenough did not share Bréhier's view that Philo, in contrast to his Hellenistic context and because of his Jewish heritage, emphasised conscious disobedience as a cause of sin.[71] Goodenough did not

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a clear division between the divine mind and the human mind. The human mind is not only 'like' God's, Philo sometimes used descriptions and functions of the divine mind for the human mind.

64 Ibid., p. 400.

65 Ibid., p. 316.

66 Ibid., p. 396.

67 Ibid., p. 130.

68 Ibid., pp. 133–134.

69 Ibid., pp. 169–170.

70 Goodenough, *Introduction*, pp. 152–153.

71 According to Goodenough, Philo did not mention obedience, understood as a conscious choice to do good, as a virtue (see Goodenough, *Light*, p. 85). Völker, however, disagreed with Goodenough and sided with Bréhier. According to Völker, Philo did see ignorance as a cause of evil, but not ignorance alone. Völker claimed that the element of choice is also very important for Philo's ethical views, and that this stems from Philo's religious background (Völker, *Fortschritt*, pp. 59, 65–67, 78–79). Völker further claimed that according to Philo, ignorance and disobedience lead to different kinds of evil acts. Ignorance causes involuntary evil, and disobedience leads to voluntary evil. The task of conscience is to distinguish between these two causes (ibid., p. 100). This distinction is important, because voluntary and involuntary evil have different remedies: voluntary evil requires a religious ritual as a remedy, involuntary evil is remedied through the light of reason (ibid., p. 123). Völker held that Philo's distinction between voluntary and involuntary evil is also part of Philo's Jewish heritage

mention divine forgiveness as part of the process of restoring reason's control over the human soul.

To sum up. Goodenough explored several metaphors used by Philo to explain God's relation to creation and to humans. Philo compared the process of creation to God's logos falling like light on formless matter, imprinting it with forms. God's logos is also imprinted onto the human soul, granting it reason. Reason is meant to rule the human soul. A soul controlled by reason is in harmony with God. Ignorance is the ultimate cause of sin. Through ignorance the human soul is subjected to bodily senses and desires. Ignorance can be washed away through the purifying stream of God's logos. The light of reason, in the form of conscience, then replaces the darkness of ignorance. This process of purification and enlightenment is also a process of healing.

The benefit of Goodenough's suggestion that popular religions may have influenced Philo in developing his thought is that exploring this possible influence could lead to a better understanding of certain ideas of Philo. One of these ideas is the notion of divine pardon. As discussed above, this notion was more at home in popular religion than in an intellectual discourse.[72] Goodenough did not discuss divine forgiveness, however.

Compared to Bréhier, some more nuanced representations of Philo's ideas and some matters of debate become apparent. Goodenough refined Bréhier's presentation of how God's powers function to establish the relationship between God, creation and humans, by bringing forward the metaphor of light employed by Philo. With regard to Philo's ethics, Goodenough and Bréhier agreed on the importance Philo ascribed to conscience in aiding someone to progress morally. They disagreed, however, about their view on what Philo believed to be the cause of evil. Goodenough, contrary to Bréhier, claimed that for Philo the human body and its senses and desires are not evil in themselves. These only become a cause of sin when no longer controlled by the human mind. Furthermore, Goodenough disagreed with Bréhier regarding the importance of conscious choice in doing evil. According to Goodenough, Philo saw ignorance as the ultimate cause of evil, whereas Bréhier suggested that for Philo doing evil is not just something that befalls someone but rather involves a deliberate choice as well.

The theme of freedom of choice was further explored in **Harry A. Wolfson**'s contribution to the study of Philo. Wolfson (1887–1974) attempted, like Bréhier, to give an all-encompassing overview of Philo's ideas and concepts in *Philo:*

(ibid., pp. 89–90).

[72] See pp. 6–8.

Foundations of Religious Philosophy in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam (1947). Wolfson presented Philo as the founder of a philosophical school that greatly influenced Western philosophy up until Spinoza. The main characteristics of this philosophical school were an emphasis on free will and the claim that revelation is the only source of true philosophical knowledge.

According to Wolfson, Philo held that only God can reveal true knowledge. Wolfson pointed out that in Philo's view, human descriptions of God, such as speaking of God's providential care for the world, always fall short of truly describing God's properties. For example, when using relational descriptions of God, the relationship is to be understood as a 'quasi' relationship. The word 'relationship' between God and creation is used because of the limitations of human understanding, not because there is an actual physical link between God and the world.[73]

The logos has a central role in Philo's attempt to describe the connection between God and the world. According to Wolfson, Philo saw transcendent and immanent aspects to the logos. The logos is transcendent, because it is a synonym for the mind of God. It is the name for the place, also called the 'intelligible world' (κόσμος νοητός), where the patterns God used to create the material world with exist.[74] Philo called these creative patterns 'God's powers' (δυνάμεις), which are active in the material world defining the shape and qualities of material objects.[75] This activity brings us to what Philo saw as the immanent aspects of the logos. The logos is immanent, because it envelops the powers active in the material world. The logos furthermore immanently manifests itself in the form of the laws of nature, which maintain the order in the material world. Philo identified the immanent manifestations of the logos with God's providential care for creation, the powers active in the material world together with the laws of nature maintain the order and stability of creation.[76]

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73 Wolfson, *Philo vol. 2*, p. 138.

74 Ibid., *vol. 1*, p. 224. According to Wolfson, this intelligible world was a novel concept, that Philo developed to solve a lacuna in Plato's philosophy, namely the question of where Plato's Ideas can be said to exist.

75 Ibid., *vol. 1*, pp. 218–219. The powers receive their ability to be active in the world from God (ibid., *vol. 1*, p. 221), because Philo held God to be the source of all activity (ibid., *vol. 2*, p. 134). Wolfson saw antecedents for this presentation of logos and the powers in Aristotelian philosophy.

76 Ibid., *vol. 1*, p. 331. Similarly to Bréhier, Wolfson explained that Philo held the laws of Moses to be an expression of the logos. The laws of Moses are meant to steer human behaviour, in the way that the laws of nature are meant to control creation. Since Philo held the law of Moses to be an expression of the logos, he also maintained that the law of Moses is eternal, contrary to the philosophical views of Plato, Aristotle and the Stoics, who maintained that written laws are human products and therefore subject to change (see ibid., *vol. 2*, pp. 180–192).

With regard to Philo's ethics, Wolfson held that Philo strongly adhered to the concept of free will. God is completely free. He can interact with creation and even override the laws of nature if he so desires.[77] God has given of his free will to humans, too.[78] Philo did not believe that knowledge of what is good also automatically leads to doing good. In Philo's philosophical outlook, free will enables humans to choose to do wrong even when they have knowledge of what is good. In agreement with Bréhier, Wolfson claimed that Philo was the first to introduce the concept of will into ethics.[79]

Philo held that the free choice to do evil is what makes an evildoer guilty – that is, responsible for the evil that has been committed.[80] Wolfson identified Philo's emphasis on responsibility in doing evil as the reason why Philo evaluated repentance and conversion more positively than other philosophers. They are expressions of the correct application of free will and essential steps in reaching virtue. Repentance means acknowledging guilt and responsibility, and conversion is the conscious decision to turn away from evil.[81]

Wolfson pointed out that the extent of human freedom is limited. Philo held that humans need God's support to reach virtue. Virtuous behaviour becomes possible when someone is able to put sensations under the control of his reason.[82] However, 'desire' (ἐπιθυμία) is the only sensation where humans truly have a choice as to whether to control it or not. Control over desire is essential for doing good, but it takes struggle and effort, and therefore God's help, to

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77 Ibid., *vol. 1*, pp. 355, 367, 372 and *vol. 2*, p. 199. According to Wolfson, this is how Philo left room for miracles, individual providence and divine revelation. However, for the overall stability of the created world it is better that the integrity of those laws is maintained and that God does not act directly upon the world (ibid., *vol. 1*, p. 373).

78 Ibid., *vol. 1*, p. 446.

79 This is not to say that Wolfson was the first to draw attention to the role of free will in Philo's thought. As we have seen, had Bréhier already mentioned that the connection between sin and will is important for Philo (Bréhier, *Les idées*, p. 299), and Völker also emphasised that conscious choice is central to Philo's view on ethical behaviour (Völker, *Fortschritt*, p. 59).

80 Wolfson, *Philo vol. 1*, pp. 435–437, and *vol. 2*, p. 234. Wolfson held that Philo, in emphasising the importance of conscious choice in doing good or evil, differed from Plato. Plato, in *Tim*. 86E, writes that 'the wicked man becomes wicked by reason of some evil condition of body and unskilled nurture, and these are experiences that are hateful to everyone and involuntary' (translation by R.G. Bury).

81 Wolfson, *Philo vol. 2*, pp. 245–257. Here, Wolfson also points out that according to Philo sacrifice was to be taken together with prayer as integral parts of the confession of guilt. Sacrifice is not compensation presented to God, for Philo held that in the relationship between God and humans repentance and conversion are enough when having sinned. Only a sin committed against a fellow human requires some form of compensation.

82 Ibid., *vol. 2*, p. 275. According to Wolfson, Philo applied the idea of innocent sensations (εὐπάθεια) in a novel way, as a term describing the state where such sensations are under the control of reason, and as such not necessarily evil.

establish this control. If desire is under control, humans can do good; if not, it causes all kinds of evil.[83]

To sum up. Wolfson emphasised that Philo saw human descriptions of God and the truth as inherently flawed, because of the limitations of human knowledge. With this caveat in mind, Philo attempted to present as much of the truth about God as he could. One important aspect of God is that he and creation are connected through the logos. The logos is a name for both the mind of God and for the content of God's mind. God thinks the patterns that shape the objects in the material world. They give those objects their defining qualities. Another important aspect of God is that he is completely free. God allows humans a share in that freedom. Humans can choose whether to control the sensation of desire. When this sensation is under control, humans are able to do good. If not, they do all kinds of evil. Wolfson does not discuss divine forgiveness.

The overall benefit of Wolfson's approach is that he reconstructed how Philo developed his ideas while being fully engaged in the intellectual discourse of his time.[84] Wolfson's presentation of Philo's view on the logos, as a name for both the mind of God and for the contents of that mind, further elucidates and refines how Philo saw the connection between a transcendent God and creation. With regard to Philo's ethics, Wolfson can be seen as uniting Bréhier's and Goodenough's views. Bréhier saw the cause of human evil in the conscious decision of someone to turn away from God and surrender himself instead to the inherently evil sensation of desire. Goodenough saw the cause of evil in the human mind accidentally losing control over the sensations. Wolfson saw the cause of human evil in the conscious decision to give up control over the sensation of desire, which leaves that sensation free rein and causes other sensations to overwhelm the mind, leading to all kinds of evil deeds.

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83 Ibid., *vol. 2*, pp. 232–235. Bréhier also identified desire as what Philo saw as the root of all evil (see note 54).

84 Wolfson did not resort to a strict and artificial distinction between Greek and Jewish influences. Other Philonic scholars, such as Völker, did make such a strict distinction between Greek and Jewish elements in Philo's thought. He associated Greek influences with intellectualism, and Jewish influences with religiosity and piety. According to Völker, Jewish piety always prevailed for Philo, when these two influences resulted in conflicting ideas. Völker maintained that the Greek intellectual concepts are used by Philo to provide scientific foundations for this piety (see Völker, *Fortschritt*, pp. 51, 57). The fact that the development of early Judaism was a complex process of interaction with Hellenistic culture, that cannot be reduced to a strict distinction between either Greek or Jewish influences is discussed in Meyers, 'Hellenism'. Tessa Rajak (Rajak, *Dialogue*, p. 4) similarly emphasises the rich interaction between early Judaism and its Hellenistic context. She analyses the presentation of early Judaism of three nineteenth-century scholars, and shows that their distinction between Greek and Jewish influences was shaped primarily by the 'contemporary interests' of those scholars (see ibid., pp. 535–557).

In Wolfson's presentation, however, Philo's appreciation of the extent of human freedom remains somewhat ambivalent: are humans truly free, or ultimately dependent upon God?[85]

What can be gained from the ground-laying works of Bréhier, Goodenough and Wolfson regarding divine forgiveness in Philo? None of them has focused on this topic in particular. However, they each do provide insights into basic elements of Philo's thought related to the concept of divine forgiveness. Their work sheds light specifically on how Philo saw the relationship between God and creation, and on Philo's views on good and evil. They agreed that God's logos is important in connecting God to creation and to humans. Free will, conscience, repentance and conversion have surfaced as important elements of Philo's ethical outlook. Both Bréhier and Wolfson furthermore pointed out that Philo emphasised the limitations of human language to explain certain seemingly contradictory statements concerning the divine.

We saw that Bréhier, Goodenough and Wolfson each presented different views on two matters related to divine forgiveness, namely what did Philo see as the ultimate cause of human evil and what did he believe is the extent of human freedom? Do the few studies that focussed on the particular topic of divine forgiveness in Philo provide answers to these questions?

1.2.1.2 Philo and divine forgiveness: Thyen, Laporte, and Zeller

The second half of the twentieth century brought a new phase in Philonic study. After the ground-laying works of Bréhier, Goodenough and Wolfson, specific topics in Philo's works invited further investigation. Three authors explored the topic of divine forgiveness in Philo's works: Hartwig Thyen, Jean Laporte and Dieter Zeller. How do they illuminate Philo's view on the ultimate cause of human evil, and on the extent of human freedom of choice? Their contributions will be discussed in light of these two questions and will be presented in chronological order.

Hartwig Thyen (1927–2015) provided a pervasive study of the concept of forgiveness in the New Testament in his *Studien zur Sündenvergebung im Neuen Testament und seinen alttestamentlichen und jüdischen Voraussetzungen* (1970). He also discussed the concept of forgiveness in the works of Philo as part of his discussion on sin, grace and forgiveness in Hellenistic Judaism.[86] Thyen claimed that Philo's concept of forgiveness developed from both his Hellenistic context and his Jewish heritage. Thyen argued that some mystery cults,

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85 Wolfson, *Philo vol. 1*, pp. 446–447. See also note 52, for a summary of how Bréhier, Kennedy and Sevenster explored this ambivalence in Philo's works.

86 Thyen, *Sündenvergebung*, pp. 98–130.

especially in Egypt, contained elements related to divine forgiveness. Examples of such elements include the overwhelming power of sin, the need for divine aid in overcoming this power and the need for divine forgiveness. The presence of such themes in mystery cults shows that they were not exclusively Jewish or Christian topics.[87] Thyen emphasised that even though the notion of forgiveness of sin was alien to Greek philosophy, it was not an unknown concept in Hellenistic culture as a whole.[88]

Thyen presented an analysis of the concept of sin in the works of Philo. Thyen focused on two aspects that he considered as rooted in the Bible. First, he agreed with Bréhier that Philo saw sin as something inherent in the created world. Bréhier, however, identified this inherent evil with imperfection, whereas Thyen saw it as an active power. The power of sin causes man, as a created being, to be inherently inclined towards doing evil. Second, Thyen maintained that Philo saw man as a stranger in the created world, who is commanded by God to battle against the inclination to do evil. The power of sin should be destroyed so that the power of God can come into a person.[89]

The power of sin is broken through knowledge. God sends this knowledge; humans cannot attain it on their own. True knowledge means realising that everything good comes from God.[90] Converting from ignorance to truth is something good and therefore is also a gift from God.[91] Humans are free to choose evil; but they are ultimately dependent upon God to destroy the power of sin and choose good.

Thyen discussed Philo's view on divine forgiveness very briefly. According to Thyen, Philo only occasionally mentioned forgiveness as part of his religious heritage. Philo's main interest lay with the destruction of the power of sin, rather than with the acquittal of past trespasses.[92] Divine forgiveness meant for Philo that a new mind is given to the person, which makes it possible for God to come into the now cleansed soul.[93]

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87 Thyen followed Goodenough's lead in arguing for possible influences of popular mystery cults in Philo's work (ibid., p. 111).

88 Ibid., p. 114.

89 Ibid., pp. 109, 116–117.

90 Ibid., pp. 106–107.

91 Ibid., p. 119.

92 Thyen quotes Larson: 'Pardon of sins appears to be part of his religious heritage, but not at the centre of his own interest' (see Larson, 'Prayer', p. 198; quoted by Thyen, *Sündenvergebung*, p. 121). Before Thyen, Völker had claimed that sin and the continuous struggle against its power were central to Philo's thinking and that studying these would give the most insight into Philo's personality, piety and teachings (see Völker, *Fortschritt*, p. 48).

93 Thyen, *Sündenvergebung*, p. 119.

To sum up. Thyen claimed that Philo, because of the Bible, saw the power of sin as present in everything created. The power of sin is present in humans as an evil inclination. Thyen maintained that Philo held human freedom to choose good or evil to be limited. The ability to do good is ultimately a gift from God, and not so much something someone could choose to do. Divine forgiveness meant for Philo that God gives a new mind to someone, allowing God to enter that mind. Thyen held that Philo only mentioned divine forgiveness because it was part of his religious heritage, and that he did not give it too much thought.

Thyen claimed that the Bible presents evil as something inherently present in creation, and that Philo subscribed to this notion. This view, however, had already been contested by Goodenough and Wolfson. It can be debated whether in the Bible evil is presented as intrinsically present in creation. Moreover, one might debate whether Philo can be seen to simply accept biblical views without further thought. In any case, Philo's view on the cause of human evil requires further exploration.

Furthermore, it appears that the context in which Thyen presented Philo's view on divine forgiveness coloured this presentation. The focus on the destruction of the power of sin and a new mind being given to someone, seems more native to Paul than to Philo. Because Thyen presented the ideas of Philo on forgiveness in the wider context of the concept in the New Testament, he had little room for fully discussing Philo's own theological and anthropological ideas. Thyen's study leaves room for an exploration of Philo's own view on divine forgiveness, less coloured by New Testamentical notions. This brings us to the contributions of Laporte and Zeller.

Jean Laporte (1924–2006) intimately connected Philo's view on divine forgiveness to his thoughts on sacrifice. Laporte investigated Philo's view on sacrifice in relation to forgiveness in two complementary articles.[94] His exploration of the connection between sacrifice and forgiveness sheds light on Philo's view on the extent of human freedom in avoiding evil and doing good.

Laporte concluded in the first article, 'Sacrifice and Forgiveness in Philo of Alexandria' (1989), that, according to Philo, God's initiative is essential for human beings to attain forgiveness. God has given the ritual of sacrifices to humans, in order for them to be forgiven.[95] What Philo meant when he wrote

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94 Laporte, 'Sacrifice'; Laporte, 'High Priest'. And Laporte more elaborately investigated Philo's concept of sacrifice in particular in Laporte, *Doctrine*.

95 Laporte, 'Sacrifice', p. 42: '[P]eople cannot by themselves acquire forgiveness; it belongs to God to grant forgiveness and peace. The ritual of sacrifices has been given for that purpose.' See also ibid., p. 38, where Laporte writes: 'But the ritual of expiation seems to correspond to the gift of forgiveness and peace, which is an act of God.'

that God grants forgiveness, Laporte explored in the second article, 'The High Priest in Philo of Alexandria' (1991). Here, Laporte explained that, according to Philo, forgiveness is a form of healing of the soul.[96] This spiritual healing happens through enlightenment of the mind by the divine logos. This healing and enlightenment help the growth of virtue. God is the one who brings the spiritual healing. Sacrifice is an important element in this process of spiritual healing. Bringing a sacrifice in itself, however, does not heal the soul. Rather, it is a symbol of the spiritual state of the person who offers it.[97] It means in particular that one acknowledges how one's soul is God's true possession, and that one renounces false opinions and the influence of the passions. This is the only thing humans can contribute to the process of spiritual healing. The end result of the spiritual healing is a mystical union with God.[98]

To sum up. Laporte directed us towards a meaningful interpretation of seeking and receiving divine forgiveness in Philo's works. For Philo, divine forgiveness stood for the purification and healing of the human soul through enlightenment by the divine logos, leading to a union with God. The human contribution to this process is to acknowledge God as the true possessor of one's soul. Sacrifice is a symbol of that acknowledgement.

Elements of previous authors can be recognised in Laporte's work, especially Goodenough, who focused on themes such as purification, healing, enlightenment and the union with God.[99] However, some ambivalence regarding the extent of human choice and freedom remains: how far do humans choose *on their own* to acknowledge God as the source of everything? Does God help in reaching this acknowledgement as well? Laporte presented his interpretation of divine forgiveness in Philo in two relatively short articles. This left him with little room to fully investigate these matters, and also with little room to connect Philo's view on forgiveness with other elements of his thought, such as his theology and anthropology. Dieter Zeller, the third author who discussed Philo's view on forgiveness, does attempt to present this view within the framework of Philo's other ideas and concepts.

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96 Laporte, 'High Priest', p. 82, the soul is cured 'from vice and the passions.'

97 Philo interpreted all sacrifices as an expression of εὐχαριστία, of thankfulness to God (see Laporte, 'Sacrifice', p. 41). By offering a sacrifice one acknowledges how all good things ultimately come from God and how everything is God's true possession (see Laporte, *Doctrine*, pp. 214–215, 238).

98 Laporte, 'High Priest', pp. 75–76. The mystical union 'ends with a kind of equality of the human worshipper with the divine Logos himself.'

99 Laporte also mentioned the role of conscience in the process of forgiveness, in agreement with the views of Bréhier and Völker (see ibid., p. 79).

Dieter Zeller (1939–2014) presented Philo's concept of forgiveness in *Charis bei Philon und Paulus* (1990), where he compared Paul's concept of grace with that of Philo. According to Zeller, Philo saw forgiveness as a manifestation of God's grace. God's grace again is a manifestation of one of two main powers (δυνάμεις) that Philo discerned in God, namely the creative power. The other main power is the judicial one.[100] Zeller connected Philo's view on grace to that of the Stoa and Plato's *Timaeus*. Grace flows from God's goodness. Goodness is the reason for creation to exist in the first place, and it is also the reason why God sustains creation.[101]

According to Zeller, Philo held creation to be inherently evil.[102] Philo held this view as an empirical fact, inspired by Platonic and Stoic ideas on God and creation.[103] If God judged creation by the standards of judicial power alone, his judgement would be to not allow creation to remain. Philo held that God's grace, however, overrules God's judgement in three ways. In the first place, grace softens God's judgement; secondly, it also delays it by giving humans time for repentance; and thirdly, through forgiveness grace makes judgement unnecessary.[104]

According to Zeller, Philo saw ungratefulness as the root of human sin. This ungratefulness follows from ignorance, namely not realising that God is the source of everything good, and therefore not acknowledging and thanking God for that which is good.[105] Zeller did not believe that Philo claimed humans to share in God's free will in the way that Wolfson presented it. According to Zeller, Philo saw human free will as an illusion of the uneducated. Those who understand the truth about God realise that ultimately only God is free, and humans are not.[106]

To sum up. Zeller presented divine forgiveness as an expression of God's grace, which again is a manifestation of God's creative power. God's creative power, by being graceful and forgiving, overrules as it were God's other main power, the judicial one. Grace tempers the strict judgement of the judicial power, allowing

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[100] Zeller, *Charis*, pp. 53–55; cf. Wolfson who pointed out that according to Philo the logos includes the merciful power of God with the name Theos and the judicial power with the name Kurios, which also administers punishment (Wolfson, *Philo vol. 1*, p. 226).

[101] Zeller, *Charis*, pp. 42–43.

[102] Zeller argued that for Philo, evil in creation is an empirical fact simply due to its createdness, in contrast to Paul who holds mankind responsible for the state of decay that creation is in (ibid., p. 51).

[103] Ibid., pp. 44–45.

[104] Ibid., pp. 55–59.

[105] Ibid., pp. 119–126. See also Zeller, *Studien*, pp. 43–48 where Zeller describes how for Philo this ungratefulness expressed itself mainly in the forms of polytheism and idolatry.

[106] Zeller, *Charis*, pp. 70–72.

creation to remain. Humans because they are created beings are bound to do evil. Human evil grows from ignorance, namely ignoring God as the source of all things good. This ignorance also results in ungratefulness, because God is not acknowledged as the source of goodness. Humans can also be ignorant regarding the extent of their freedom. Only the truly educated realise that human freedom is nothing more than an illusion.

Zeller agreed with authors such as Bréhier and Thyen, that Philo saw creation as inherently evil. Zeller did not elaborate on why Philo held this view. Zeller's presentation suggests that Philo may have been inspired by Platonic and Stoic ideas. Zeller disagreed with authors who held that Philo saw disobedience as the root of sin. Zeller rather saw ignorance and ungratefulness as the causes of human evil. Zeller in this regard agreed with Goodenough and Laporte. As for Philo's view on the extent of human freedom, Zeller presented us with a view strongly opposed to Wolfson's claims, by presenting human freedom as an illusion. Zeller mentioned divine forgiveness as an expression of one of God's powers. What Zeller did not explore in his study, however, is what Philo believed happens when God forgives.

1.2.1.3 Results from the first part of the survey of previous studies

The survey of Bréhier, Goodenough and Wolfson provided a possible answer to the question of how Philo saw the connection between a transcendent God and the material world. All three agree that for Philo, the logos establishes this connection. With the term 'logos' Philo named the collective powers or ideas that exist in God's mind and sustain the whole of creation. The logos establishes the connection between God and humans, not only in the form of the human mind but also in the form of conscience, which informs someone that he or she has done wrong.

However, the investigation of the basic elements of Philo's thought as presented by Bréhier, Goodenough and Wolfson left us with two questions: what did Philo see as the cause of human evil and to what extent did Philo believe humans are free? How far have Thyen, Laporte and Zeller, who have explored the concept of forgiveness in Philo's works, brought us regarding these questions?

One benefit of Thyen's approach is that he, in agreement with Goodenough, pointed out that the idea of forgiveness of sin, was present in Hellenistic culture as a whole. This insight should make us careful when assuming that a particular notion appearing in Philo's works is exclusively rooted in his Jewish heritage. This caveat is further deepened by Zeller's study in which he presented connections between Philo's thinking and philosophical traditions, regarding the concept of grace. Zeller's suggestion that Philo saw forgiveness as a manifestation of God's graceful power can be fruitful. However, Zeller did not explore what Philo believed forgiveness to entail.

Laporte is the only one of the three authors examined in this section who offered some suggestions as to what Philo meant when he wrote that God forgives someone. Divine forgiveness is a healing of the soul brought about by God. Laporte pointed out that forgiveness is connected to sacrifice and explores Philo's view on the meaning of sacrifices. According to Laporte, sacrifice was, for Philo, a symbol of the sacrificer's acknowledgement that God is the true source of everything that exists. This acknowledgement initiates a spiritual healing, resulting in a mystical union with God. Laporte offered some suggestions regarding a meaningful interpretation of Philo's view on divine forgiveness. However, he presented these suggestions without connecting them to other views of Philo, specifically regarding the source of human evil and the extent of human freedom. These latter questions were more extensively explored by Thyen and Zeller.

Zeller agreed with Laporte that the acknowledgement of God as the source of everything that exists and gratefulness to God will lead humans to goodness. Contrary to Wolfson, Zeller did not maintain that Philo saw humans as truly free to choose to either acknowledge God as the creator or not. Zeller suggested that Philo saw human freedom ultimately as an illusion. If this is so, the matter of what Philo meant when he wrote that God forgives someone becomes all the more urgent. Why would God blame and then forgive someone, if the evil they have committed is not done out of free choice?

Thyen and Zeller furthermore presented us with different views as to what Philo saw as the root of human evil. They both claimed that Philo saw evil as an inherent part of creation. According to Thyen, Philo's view of creation as inherently evil is biblical. Zeller, on the other hand, seemed to point to philosophical antecedents for Philo's view on evil. Thyen furthermore held that forgiveness is simply part of Philo's religious heritage and saw this as a reason not to give too much thought to what Philo might have meant when he wrote about divine forgiveness.

Both matters, the possible source of Philo's moral evaluation of creation and whether Philo only mentioned forgiveness because he encountered it in the Bible, raise the question of what Philo's relation to the Bible actually was. Did he find himself compelled by his source to see creation as inherently evil? Did he mention divine forgiveness without giving it too much thought? Philo's relation to the Bible is one of two questions connected to his method in developing his ideas. The survey of Bréhier, Goodenough and Wolfson brings up the second question related to Philo's method. All of these three authors explored possible philosophical sources that could have inspired Philo. However, each of them pointed in different directions regarding these sources. Bréhier could be seen to point in the direction of Platonic or Stoic philosophy, Goodenough towards Egyptian traditions and Wolfson towards Aristotelian philosophy. How is this

possible, and what does this mean? Should Philo be seen as an indiscriminate eclectic? Did Philo have a method? How did he work?

1.2.2 *Philo's method*

The second section of the survey of previous studies will be dedicated to the advances in Philonic research regarding Philo's method in developing his thought – that is, his intellectual milieu and his treatment of the Bible. I will explore Philo's method by addressing two modern ways of interpretation that ultimately regard the issue of divine forgiveness as irrelevant for Philo's intellectual considerations. The first way is when Philo is considered an inconsistent thinker.[107] The intellectual challenges of divine forgiveness are, then, seen as examples of Philo's habitual inconsistency, which require no further consideration. The second way is when Philo is thought to mention divine forgiveness only because it appears in his source, the Bible, but with little regard for the intellectual challenges the notion implies.[108]

In order to evaluate whether these claims do justice to Philo, we need to explore his method. First, to explore whether Philo was indeed an inconsistent thinker, I will describe the intellectual milieu in which Philo was active. John M. Dillon's and David T. Runia's contributions will lead the way into Philo's intellectual milieu. Philo's reception of the Bible will be explored next, to see whether he occasionally mentioned notions mainly because he found them in the Septuagint, while being largely inattentive to the intellectual challenges they implied. Here, Maren R. Niehoff's and Adam Kamesar's contributions will lead the way.

1.2.2.1 *Philo's intellectual milieu: Dillon, Runia*

In the past, scholars have assigned Philo to several philosophical schools, such as the Stoa or Platonism.[109] Ideas and concepts stemming from different philosophical traditions can indeed be identified in Philo's works.[110] What has

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[107] See Heinemann, *Bildung*, pp. 515–523, and also Tobin, *Creation*, p. 4, note 13 where Thomas H. Tobin refers in agreement to the work of Valentin Nikiprowetzky, who wrote 'C'est lorsque l'on fait d'un thème techniquement philosophique le centre de la recherche que l'on se heurte surtout à un éclectisme décourageant et à d'inextricables contradictions' (see Nikiprowetzky, *Commentaire*, p. 237 and also references in Runia, *Timaeus*, p. 366, note 2 and p. 512, note 200).

[108] This approach is how a Philonic scholar like Völker solved the problem with the concept of God's transcendence in Philo's works. Völker noted that the concept of God's graceful providence is difficult to combine with Philo's statements on God's transcendence (Völker, *Fortschritt*, p. 54). However, according to Völker, the tension should not be stressed too much. He maintained that the concept of God's providence belongs to Philo's Jewish piety, which is always at the forefront of Philo's thought, and the concept of God's transcendence simply takes a secondary position.

[109] See Roskam, *Virtue*, p. 148 for an overview of the different stances towards Philo's philosophical position that have been taken throughout the history of Philonic study.

[110] The various philosophical ideas and concepts appearing in Philo's works have been catalogued by

frustrated scholars, however, is that it turns out to be rather difficult to assign Philo to any one of these schools exclusively. Philo used different concepts of different philosophical schools next to each other, apparently without noting any conflict between them.[111] Such eclecticism has led some scholars to present Philo as a thinker who used philosophical concepts as he saw fit without any concern for consistency.[112]

As was shown by **John M. Dillon** (*1939), however, Philo's Alexandrian intellectual context provided him with a philosophical vocabulary in which the boundaries between various philosophical schools had already become blurred. Dillon showed how shortly before Philo's time, Alexandrian intellectuals had attempted to harmonise the vocabulary of varying philosophical traditions. As an example, Dillon put forward Eudorus of Alexandria (fl. 60 BCE). Eudorus devised a philosophical-historical framework that provided him with the possibility to incorporate ideas from various philosophical schools into one philosophical framework. Eudorus claimed that Pythagoras was the principal source for all subsequent philosophy. As a result, discrepancies between schools became less pronounced and important. Eudorus characterised those discrepancies as having arisen when schools took divergent historical paths. He presented philosophical concepts as in principle compatible, since he considered them to have grown from the same source.[113]

Dillon therefore emphasised that, as a consequence of this harmonising trend, the appearance of a particular word or concept in a given text cannot lead to the conclusion that its author must belong to a certain philosophical school. Even less does the occurrence of a certain concept exclude the usage of another

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scholars such as Bréhier, Isaak Heinemann and Wolfson. A recent example of cataloguing various sources of Philo's thought can be found in Hadas-Lebel, *Philo*, pp. 164–175. See also above (pp. 12–22) for the various positions Bréhier, Goodenough and Wolfson took towards Philo's philosophical sources.

111 An almost classical example is Philo's use of μετριοπάθεια and ἀπάθεια alongside each other. Μετριοπάθεια, the ideal of controlling the passions and maintaining a balance between two extremes, is catalogued as an Aristotelian ideal. Ἀπάθεια, the ideal of completely cancelling out the influence of the passions, is catalogued in the history of philosophy as a Stoic ideal. It would appear that the one ideal cannot coexist with the other: either the passions are destroyed, or they are controlled. In *LA* III, 129–132 Philo mentions both as different stages on the road to moral perfection (Aaron practising μετριοπάθεια; Moses ἀπάθεια); in *Abr.* 257 Philo seems to slightly prefer μετριοπάθεια over ἀπάθεια.

112 See note 107.

113 Dillon, *Middle Platonists*, p. 120. Dillon presents as another example Antiochus of Ascalon (c. 120–68 BCE). He attempted to build a bridge between the philosophy of the Academy and the Stoa. Antiochus advocated the ideal of ἀπάθεια, usually associated with the Stoa. He harmonised this with the concept of μετριοπάθεια, usually associated with the Academy. Antiochus reasoned that controlling the passions (the ideal of μετριοπάθεια) is essentially the same as eliminating the effect of the passions (the ideal of ἀπάθεια). He argued that a πάθος under control is essentially not a πάθος anymore (see ibid., pp. 77–78).

concept, or prove authors inconsistent if they used them alongside each other.[114] Dillon claimed that Philo's works are the main evidence of this phenomenon, and presented Plutarch and Numenius as other examples of the same trend.[115] Dillon convincingly showed how Philo was part of an Alexandrian intellectual milieu where differences between philosophical traditions had become less pronounced. Dillon also demonstrated that the occurrence, within the works of one author, of what in earlier times might have been conflicting philosophical concepts should not be considered a sign of an incoherent and philosophically opportunistic mind. Philo used an integrated philosophical vocabulary that was no more than common in his Alexandrian context.

Somewhat problematic is Dillon's presentation of this trend to harmonise ideas and concepts of various philosophical traditions in one shared vocabulary as a hallmark of 'Middle Platonism'. Such a label invites to transform a general intellectual milieu into a clearly demarcated philosophical school. **David T. Runia** (*1951) presented what he considered the main principles of the Middle Platonists: they considered themselves followers of Plato and the Platonic school of thought; they had a dogmatic view on Plato and claimed that they presented the authentic Plato; they were loyal to the writings of Plato, albeit to a limited set in particular (*Phaedo, Republic, Phaedrus, Symposium, Timaeus*); their main method was to explain Plato from Plato and through this method to systematise his ideas; their view on the history of philosophy was that Plato was a student of Pythagoras and that Aristotle and the Stoa had learned from Plato.[116] Runia then argued that Philo did not conform to these main principles of 'Middle Platonism': for Philo, Moses was his main teacher, not Plato; the Books of Moses were his main authoritative source; Philo did not aim at systematisation; Philo sometimes even disagreed with Plato. Because of this, Runia called Philo a 'philosophical opportunist', not loyal to one philosophical school alone.[117]

Did Philo belong to the school of 'Middle Platonism' or not? This question, however, arises from the same mistake as when scholars before Dillon had

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114 Ibid., p. 122. Before Dillon, Marie E. Isaacs had already shown that the usage of terminology usually associated with Stoics in *Wisdom of Solomon* 'is indicative of no more than the fact that such philosophical terms were part of common parlance' (see Isaacs, *Spirit*, p. 24). Geert Roskam describes how for the philosophical milieu of Philo different philosophical ideas could easily be used together, and the problem of consistency is something modern scholars force upon Philo's thinking (see Roskam, *Virtue*, p. 150).

115 Dillon, *Middle Platonists*, pp. 182–183. Or as Heinrich Dörrie put it: 'Philo vermag seine Gedanken biblisch, stoisch und platonisch auszudrücken; er kultiviert eine solche πολυφωνία, um hervorzuheben, daß alle derartigen ‹ Sprachen › auf die gleiche Wahrheit führen' (see Dörrie, 'Platonismus', p. 24, note 3).

116 Runia, *Timaeus*, pp. 51–52.

117 Ibid., pp. 270, 508.

claimed that Philo was a 'Platonist', or a 'Stoic'. Dillon's contributions show that it is impossible to delineate strict boundaries between philosophical traditions with regard to Philo's intellectual context. As a result, it is ill advised to attempt to clearly demarcate the boundaries of 'Middle Platonism' and assign Philo to it. Rather, I will avoid using the label 'Middle Platonism' altogether. Using the label suggests more than it can actually provide. It indicates a certain time-period and describes a shared method of philosophical authors. However, it provides little indication regarding the contents of an author's thoughts. Claiming Philo either for 'Middle Platonism' or not does not bring much further understanding of the content of his thought.[118] What seems true, however, and nowadays hardly any scholar denies this, is that Philo used a method comparable to that of other contemporaneous philosophers like Eudorus or Plutarch.

Eudorus and Plutarch followed the same philosophical-historical framework that Runia presented as the principal basis for 'Middle Platonism', namely that Plato was a student of Pythagoras and in turn that Aristotle and the Stoa had learned from Plato. Philo, however, followed his own variant of this framework. When writing about Moses' education in *Mos*. I, 21–24, he tells us how Moses was taught by teachers from both Egypt and the neighbouring countries, as well as from Greece. As an important difference, however, Philo claims that Moses soon surpassed the capabilities of all his teachers and embarked on his own quest for truth.[119] Philo believed that ultimately all philosophy and wisdom grew out from the teachings of Moses. Philo limited this wisdom not to Greek philosophy alone. As stated above, according to Philo, Moses' teachers were not

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118 When revisiting the matter of whether Philo was a Middle Platonist both Runia and Dillon clarified their opinions. The result is that both, in the fifth volume of *The Studia Philonica Annual*, profess their view to be 'that Philo is a Platonizing expositor of scripture, showing a marked preference for using Middle Platonist doctrines in his exegesis' (Runia, 'Difficult Question', p. 126 and Dillon, 'Response', p. 151). In the same volume, other scholars, such as Gregory E. Sterling and Tobin, maintain that Philo can be called a Middle Platonist (Sterling, 'Platonizing Moses', p. 111 and Tobin, 'Suggestions', p. 150). In his afterword to the revised edition of his study of the Middle Platonists, Dillon emphasises that he does not want to identify Philo as a Middle Platonist; rather, according to him, Philo only 'constitutes good evidence for prevailing trends in contemporary Platonism' (Dillon, *Middle Platonists*, p. 439). Moreover, Dillon explains at the beginning of his afterword that his intention is to use 'Middle Platonism' as a term to identify a time-period (roughly 88 BCE–250 CE) and 'a movement held together by certain ideological principles' (ibid., p. 422). However, attempts to demarcate these ideological principles can quickly become too dogmatic and lead scholars to jump to conclusions. An example is Troels Engberg-Pedersen, who sees Philo's view on πνεῦμα as irrelevant for illuminating Paul's thoughts on the spirit, because Engberg-Pedersen identifies Philo as belonging to the Middle Platonist school of thought, and 'a Middle Platonic, immaterial understanding [of πνεῦμα] does not fit the facts [of Paul's materialistic view of πνεῦμα]' (see Engberg-Pedersen, *Cosmology*, p. 39). Such a rather rash disqualification of Philo's possible relevance for understanding Paul's views is regrettable. Philo's thoughts on πνεῦμα can shed light on aspects of Paul's thinking, as several contributions to a volume dedicated to the concept of the holy Spirit – including my own – show (see Timmers, 'Πνεῦμα' and Rabens, '*Pneuma*').

119 Cf. *Mos.* I, 21–24 and also *LA* II, 15; *Prob.* 57; *Aet*. 19.

only Greek philosophers, but also wise men of Egypt and other neighbouring countries. It is unclear whether Egyptian traditions did influence Philo's works, although when defending the custom of circumcision Philo referred to the practice of this custom among the Egyptians, and then praised their antiquity and philosophical achievements.[120]

To sum up. Philo should not be considered an inconsistent thinker. He applied a method similar to those of his immediate intellectual context, allowing him to use various concepts not only from Greek sources, but from other sources as well, side by side. This should not necessarily be taken as indication of an inconsistent mind.[121] Philo's approach was based on the view that Moses surpassed all other philosophers in knowledge, which left him with the possibility of concluding that if there was any truth in any philosophical tradition, this truth can be traced back to the ideas of Moses.[122] Philo's philosophical views might be imagined as an alloy. In chemistry, an alloy is a mixture of different metals. Each component metal can be identified and adds to the properties of the alloy. The alloy, however, is more than the simple sum of its separate elements; it has properties unique to itself. When analysing Philo's

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[120] Goodenough argued for influences of mystical traditions in Philo's thought, which led him to conclude that Philo aimed to create a Jewish mystery cult (see Goodenough, *Introduction*, p. 140, and more elaborately in Goodenough, *Light*). Bréhier signalled the mystical character of Philo's allegory and suggested possible precursors in Egyptian mystery-cults for various concepts in Philo's works. He also signalled important differences between Philo and the mystery cults (Bréhier, *Les idées*, pp. 40–41, 204, 239–249). Wolfson accepted that Philo may use mystical language, however Wolfson also pointed out that Philo is opposed to the actual mystery cults themselves (Wolfson, *Philo vol. 1*, pp. 37, 49, 52). Samuel Sandmel held that Goodenough pushes his theory too far, yet he stressed that the aspect of the mystery-cults was an important aspect in Philo's works (Sandmel, *Philo*, p. 147). Ronald Williamson also signalled that Philo's language evidently has a mystical character (Williamson, *Philo*, p. 71). See *Spec.* I, 2 for Philo's defence of circumcision.

[121] Niehoff illustrates well how fully Philo participated in the intellectual discourse both in Alexandria and in Rome, and how his interactions within these various contexts shaped the development of his thinking (see Niehoff, *Biography*, pp. 199–200, 242). A great benefit of Niehoff's approach for Philonic scholars is to become aware of different stages in the development of Philo's thinking, instead of too quickly concluding that he was an inconsistent thinker (see ibid., p. 226). However, the contrast she presents between Alexandria as a centre for Platonism and Rome as a centre for Stoicism (ibid., pp. 14–15) again suggests a demarcation between philosophical schools sharper than it existed in Philo's time. The example of Eudorus (see note 113 above) shows that this particular philosopher integrated concepts usually associated with Plato and the Stoa. Niehoff extends this contrast between Alexandria and Rome to a contrast between an 'early' more Platonic and a 'later' more Stoic Philo (see ibid., pp. 72–74, 103, 215). If this contrast was truly as strong as Niehoff suggests, it seems strange that Philo prefers the ideal of μετριοπάθεια (usually associated with Aristotelian philosophy) over ἀπάθεια (usually attributed to the Stoics) in a treatise she assigns to the 'later,' allegedly more Stoic Philo (namely in *Abr.* 257; see also note 111). She also seems to overlook (in ibid., pp. 96–102) Philo's critique of Stoic immanence in *Opif.* 6b–12 (as discussed below, see pp. 61–67).

[122] Philo himself claims that he belongs to the 'school of Moses' (see *Mut.* 223). As will be discussed below (see pp. 34–42), this statement should also not be taken as a sharp demarcation of the contents of Philo's thought.

thinking, we should constantly bear in mind that the whole of Philo's view is a blend, an alloy of different philosophical outlooks, with characteristics of its own.[123]

With this character of Philo's philosophy in mind, we can investigate a notion such as divine forgiveness as part of a wider coherent philosophical framework.[124] We are encouraged to carefully look at the relevant passages themselves and analyse their structure, terminology and meaning, expecting these to reflect a coherent pattern of thought, no matter how traditional philosophical schools would have understood the issues under discussion. But before we enter into the discussion of specific passages, a second matter regarding Philo's method needs to be addressed, namely his reception of the Bible. Is it possible that Philo believed it necessary to mention divine pardon because he found it in the Bible, without giving much thought to the complications this notion implied in relation to his overall rationale?

1.2.2.2 Philo's reception of the Bible: Nikiprowetzky, Niehoff, Kamesar

Several recent studies focused in particular on how Philo related to the Bible. Philo held the Bible, which he only knew in its Greek translation, in high regard as the culmination and source of all wisdom. Especially important to Philo was the Pentateuch, which he considered to be the 'oracles of Moses'.[125] This

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[123] Similarly in Timmers, 'Πνεῦμα', p. 268. Incidentally, Philo himself described a medicine as a mixture with properties of its own, exceeding the properties of the elements it consists of (see *Conf*. 187).

[124] As Runia put it: 'There is clearly a consistent rationale behind his procedure. It resembles the procedure of the Middle Platonists, but is not wholly the same' (Runia, *Timaeus*, p. 519). And as Sterling, Runia, Niehoff and Annewies van den Hoek put it, although Philo 'did not work out a systematic presentation' of his philosophical ideas, 'this does not mean that he did not have a comprehensive understanding of the cosmos' (Sterling/Niehoff/van den Hoek, 'Philo', p. 282). Kamesar writes: 'What is striking about [Philo's] allegory is its systematic structure as it emerges in Philo's works, for Philo employs recurring allegorical equivalencies to put together a more or less systematic elucidation of the Pentateuch as a whole, not just individual episodes' (Kamesar, *Philo*, p. 86).

[125] Philo speaks of the 'oracles' (χρησμοί or λογιοί) of Moses in *Mut.* 196; *Abr.* 166; *Praem.* 1. In *Dec.* 48, he describes God as the source of these revelations. More than once Philo writes how excellently (παγκᾶλως) Moses put something into words (*Opif.* 148; *LA*. III, 46–47; *Det*. 129; *Post*. 111; *Deus* 85; *Agr*. 54, 84, 144, 179; *Conf.* 99; *Migr.* 14, 135, 152, 206; *Her.* 10, 61, 86, 196, 213, 263; *Dec.* 48, 100; *Spec.* I, 104; II, 239; III, 153; IV, 53, 131; *Virt.* 163, 171, 183, 185; *Praem.* 111; *QG* II, 11, 62; IV, 33; *QE* II, 20), and especially excellent according to Philo is the logical order that Moses recognised (*Opif.* 65; *Spec*. I, 195; IV, 39), or the fact that Moses begins his oracles with the story of the creation of the world (*Opif.* 2; *Praem*. 1). Philo presents Moses as a philosopher (*Opif*. 2; *Abr*. 13) and claims that philosophy sowed excellent ideas into Moses' mind, wherefore the ordinances that Moses gives are excellent and wise (φιλόσοφος) (*Mos.* II, 36, 66). As regards Philo's focus on the Pentateuch, Kamesar writes: 'As far as canon is concerned, Philo's Bible is essentially the Torah, or Pentateuch. He comments on the Pentateuch books only, and even his citations of books from other parts of the conventional canon are proportionately few' (Kamesar, *Philo*, p. 72). However, Philo had no access to the Hebrew Bible, his 'Bible' was the LXX (see Niehoff, *Biography*, p. 4; similarly in Dillon, *Middle Platonists*, p. 141, and Winston, *Logos*, p. 13). Therefore, biblical quotes in this study will be from the LXX, unless otherwise specified.

approach of Philo to the Bible was not unique. Already before Philo, Jewish intellectuals in Alexandria had used the Pentateuch as the essential source of wisdom and as the work of a single author, namely Moses.[126] In the *Letter of Aristeas* (usually dated to the mid-second century BCE), Moses is presented as a wise man, who 'drew up his laws with such exceeding care. All these ordinances were made for the sake of righteousness to aid the quest for virtue and the perfecting of character' (*Ep. Arist.*, 144–145).[127]

Such high regard for an ancient literary source, perceived as the work of one author, presented Philo and his predecessors with an intellectual challenge. Alexandrian Jewish scholars wanted to maintain the authority of the Bible and, at the same time, give serious attention to the scientific insights of their time. The Bible, however, could present them with statements that conflicted with such insights. In Philo's works we find various examples of different responses to this intellectual dilemma. Philo's nephew Tiberius Julius Alexander, for example, fully gave up on the authority of the Bible.[128] Others adhered to a literal reading of the Bible and rejected the scientific insights of their time.[129] Finally, there were those who dismissed the literal reading of the Bible and attempted to save the Bible's authority by following an allegorical reading.[130] Philo positioned himself somewhere in the middle between the latter two extremes. He declined to dismiss the literal reading altogether, while he resorted to allegory to find the 'deeper meaning' of a scriptural passage, when its literal reading might lead to absurdities.

On the basis of such an approach, various scholars were inclined to stress Philo's role as an exegete and expositor of scripture, rather than as philosopher. Some even claimed that Philo occasionally felt the need to mention certain ideas because he found them in the Bible and adhered to them without

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126 Cf. Niehoff, *Exegesis*, p. 39. In ibid., pp. 62–63, Niehoff also provides examples of Jewish authors in Alexandria prior to Philo, such as Pseudo-Aristeas and Aristobulus (also mid-second century BCE), who used passages from one book of the Pentateuch to explain passages from another book, since they considered Moses to be the author of all five books of the Pentateuch. Pseudo-Aristeas alludes to Jacob's dream in Bethel (in Gn. 28) when explaining the meaning of the commandments concerning clean and unclean animals (in Dt. 14) (see *Ep. Arist.*, 160–161). Aristobulus used passages from Deuteronomy (Dt. 4:11; 5:23; 9:15) to clarify multiple statements in Exodus (Ex. 19:16–25; 20:18–21; 24:15–18) of God descending to the mountain (see Aristobulus, fragment 2 in Holladay, *Fragments vol. 3*, p. 142. Cf. also Pucci Ben Zeev, 'Jews', p. 371).

127 Translation by H.T. Andrews (see also *Ep. Arist.*, 139).

128 Most assume that Philo's opponent in the treatise *De Providentia* is his nephew Tiberius Julius Alexander (see Colson, *Philo vol. 9*, p. 447, and also Sterling/Niehoff/van den Hoek, 'Philo', pp. 276–277), who, according to Josephus, gave up on his Jewish religion (*AJ* XX, 100).

129 On occasion Philo points out that a solely literal reading of a certain passage would lead to absurdities (see, for instance, *LA* II, 19–21).

130 An approach Philo opposes in *Migr.* 89.

considering whether they were consistent with his overall rationale.[131] **Valentin Nikiprowetzky** (1919–1983), for example, rejected a philosophical systematisation of Philo's thoughts as an inappropriate endeavour, because Philo's philosophical reflections are inspired and limited by the scriptural passage he was trying to explain. He called this limitation Philo's 'exegetical constraint'.[132] With regard to the idea of divine amnesty, this approach would lead to the conclusion that Philo only mentioned it because he found it in the Bible, without giving it much further thought. Does such an approach do justice to Philo's method of developing his thought?

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[131] According to Völker, Philo always remained bound to the scriptural passage and his interpretations were limited by that passage (Völker, *Fortschritt*, p. 9). This explains Philo's eclecticism and excludes any systematisation of Philo's thoughts (ibid., p. 7). However, this did not prevent Völker from developing his own thoroughly systematic view on Philo. Without arguing his case he dismissed certain passages from Philo as not belonging to Philo's main thoughts, where it seems that the only reason for Völker to dismiss these passages was that they did not fit with his view on Philo. See, for example, ibid., pp. 71–77, where he dismissed certain passages in Philo that seem to indicate some form of inherent sinfulness in creation as not belonging to Philo's main thinking. Völker's approach was criticised in Goodenough, *Introduction*, p. 15, and Thyen, *Sündenvergebung*, p. 105. Wolfson claimed that Philo always considered the message of the Bible superior to any philosophical beliefs: the Bible provides Philo with the truth to which philosophy needs to adapt (Wolfson, *Philo vol. 1*, pp. 27 and 164).

[132] Nikiprowetzky, *Études*, pp. 125–127. Runia largely agreed with Nikiprowetzky's view that Philo should be considered foremost an exegete, not a systematic philosopher (Runia, *Timaeus*, p. 20). As a consequence, Philo could leave certain questions unanswered and was philosophically opportunistic, not bound to one particular school (ibid., pp. 508–512). Runia later added nuance to the debate as to whether Philo should be considered either an exegete or a philosopher. In defence of Nikiprowetzky, Runia stresses that the latter scholar's position, as much as his own, should not be understood as viewing Philo as an exegete rather than a philosopher, as if the two labels were mutually exclusive. Nikiprowetzky's position can, according to Runia, be defined as follows: 'Philo is an eclectic philosophical expositor of scripture, who appropriates various school doctrines as it suits his exegetical purposes' (Runia, 'Difficult Question', p. 126). Runia qualified Philo as a 'philosophically orientated exegete,' thereby giving primacy to the aspect of exegesis over the aspect of philosophy in Philo's work (ibid., p. 123; see also Runia, 'Philo', p. 854). When writing that Philo follows a procedure similar to the Middle Platonists, Runia claimed that the difference between Philo and the Middle Platonists is that Philo is not loyal to Plato, but to Moses (Runia, 'Difficult Question', pp. 121–123, 131). Roberto Radice called Nikiprowetzky's concept of exegetical constraint a 'felicitous phrase' (see Radice, 'Freedom', p. 150). In a similar vein, Hadas-Lebel wrote in her introduction to Philo: 'When the scriptural text calls for a philosophical interpretation, Philo borrows elements from the most appropriate doctrine for the occasion' and: 'Philosophy must be subordinate to Scripture, which means for Philo subordinating reason to faith' (Hadas-Lebel, *Philo*, pp. 175, 178). Similarly, Jaap Mansfeld, when discussing Philo's position concerning the creation of the world, stated that 'Philo, naturally, sides with Moses.' He also writes that 'the demands of scriptural exegesis seem often to be decisive in respect to the [philosophical] option chosen' (Mansfeld, 'Strategies', pp. 79, 84). In her introduction to Philo in the revised edition of Schürer's work, Jenny Morris professed that Philo presented us nowhere with a systematic overview of his philosophical outlook, because he took his lead from the 'the absolute authority of the Mosaic Law.' Referring to Nikiprowetzky, Jenny Morris also stated that 'it might be profitable to regard him [Philo] as an exegete rather than as a philosopher' (Morris, 'Philo', pp. 875, 880).

As it is, it remains unclear what a phrase like 'exegetical constraint' exactly means. What criteria would Philo have used to decide which philosophical doctrine is most appropriate to interpret a biblical passage and which not? Would authors who suggest that Philo should be seen as primarily an exegete suggest that there is some inner meaning present in a biblical passage that determines Philo's choices? The question can be posed in general as to how Philo's interaction with the source he considered authoritative would have been different from other contemporary authors who developed their thinking through exegesis of ancient sources they considered authoritative. Recent developments in Philonic study show that Philo's exegetical approach to the Bible is not very different from the approach of other ancient authors to their culturally relevant source.

Ancient authors in general valued authors and literary sources from the past.[133] They considered them a valuable source for wisdom, seasoned by time. Some of them they even believed to have been written down during humanity's 'Golden Age'. This 'Golden Age' was thought to be the time of the first humans, who outclassed all humans that came after them, because younger generations were believed to suffer from a process of degeneration.[134] Ancient authors who held antique sources contained superior knowledge were presented with a challenge, however. They were confronted with internally inconsistent passages in their sources (problems of contradiction) or with statements that conflicted with contemporary understanding of reality (problems of verisimilitude). To solve that dilemma, ancient authors developed the method of allegory to solve such problems and maintain the authority of their source.

To be sure, 'problem-solving' does not fully reflect the sophisticated assumptions underpinning the allegorical method. On the one hand, allegorists assumed that the divine truth can never be completely and adequately expressed in language, regardless of form or genre, be it a philosophical treatise

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133 James Kugel discusses the background of the phenomenon where ancient texts become valued as significant sources of wisdom, in: Kugel, 'Early Jewish Biblical Interpretation', especially pp. 152–153 and 165–166. He describes how this phenomenon is not unique to Judaism and names the examples of the Vedas in Hinduism, Confucius' writings in Chinese culture and others. He presents four assumptions that ancient interpreters of the Bible shared: 1) they assumed that the texts were cryptic, often meaning something different to what the plain text says; 2) they assumed that the texts, although written centuries ago, were relevant to their present day; 3) they assumed that the diverse writings of the Bible contained one unitary message; and 4) they assumed that every word of the Bible came from God.

134 See Lovejoy/Boas/Albright, *Primitivism*, pp. 1–22; Holleman/Hollander, 'Death, Sin, and Law', pp. 284–286. A somewhat comparable example of the degeneration of humanity through the generations can be recognised in Gn. 11:10–26 where the age humans reach is presented as declining through the generations, from 500 years for Shem to 119 years for Nahor. Aristotle accepts in *Met.* XII, 1074b 1–14 that myths can contain remnants of ancient knowledge, which have become distorted in later generations (cf. Most, 'Hellenistic Allegory', p. 26).

or a poetic myth.[135] On the other hand, they assumed that the divine truth permeated everything, including ancient texts.[136] With these two assumptions together they supported the main premise of the allegorical method, which was that transcendent truth lies hidden beneath the surface of words. Allegorists developed various methods to disclose this hidden truth.[137]

Recently, **Maren R. Niehoff** (*1963) drew attention to how Philo's approach to the Bible fits in well with a longstanding tradition of Jewish exegesis in Alexandria. That tradition was developed in intensive interaction with Homeric scholarship, for which Alexandria had become (in the third and second centuries BCE) an important centre in the Hellenistic world.[138] The goal of this Homeric scholarship was to maintain the authority of Homer's epics as a source for philosophical wisdom, defending them against the criticism of being inconsistent and unreliable.[139] Niehoff presents examples of how Aristotle and other commentators on Homer's epics countered this criticism and, using allegory, tried to solve problems of internal contradictions and verisimilitude.[140]

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135 See Struck, *Symbol*, pp. 170–175. Peter T. Struck's book has as an epigraph a quote from Plato (*Crat*. 425D) expressing amazement at the limitations of written texts. Struck (while presenting an overview of Plotinus' main tenets in Struck, 'Allegory and Ascent', p. 59) points out that allegorists claim to 'render the transcendent in the concrete, and use language to express what is beyond language.'

136 See Struck, *Symbol*, pp. 188–191; similarly in Most, 'Hellenistic Allegory', p. 28. Glenn W. Most (ibid.) adds that this approach also made it possible to provide a more universal meaning to originally local texts and practices.

137 For an overview of the development of the method of allegory see Sellin, *Allegorie*, pp. 9–56, which contains an exploration of Philo's allegorical method and its background in both Jewish and Greco-Roman antecedents, see ibid., pp. 29–56; see also Sandmel, *Philo*, pp. 17–28. Sellin explains that the hidden nature of what is perceived to be the actual meaning is what sets allegory apart from metaphors and symbols (Sellin, *Allegorie*, p. 17). Rita Copeland and Struck describe allegory as 'a hermeneutic aimed at the transcendent truths concealed in language' (Copeland/Struck, *Allegory*, p. 3). Philo describes allegory as a method that reveals the hidden meaning of a literal text (*Cont.* 28); he compares this hidden truth to the invisible soul of a text, where the literal words form the visible body (*Cont.* 78). Philo describes in *Cont*. 29 how hymns and psalms can be composed as the vice-versa movement of this process of interpretation: new words are sought and found to express the transcending truth. Most describes this as a wider trend of allegorists in Most, 'Hellenistic Allegory', pp. 33–38.

138 Most describes the development of allegorical interpretation of Homer's (and also other Greek poets') works, beginning with Zeno, then moving to his successors Cleanthes and Chrysippus and being consolidated in Alexandria by 'a group of philologists' under the first Ptolemies (third and second centuries BCE) (see Most, 'Hellenistic Allegory', pp. 29–30).

139 These Homeric scholars respond to 'widely known criticism of the epics, especially Plato's dismissal of Homer as an unphilosophical and thus misleading writer' (Niehoff, *Exegesis*, p. 9).

140 See ibid., pp. 38–57. She gives as an example from Homer's epics of internal contradiction, the difference between *Il.* XXI, 17 where Achilles is said to lay aside his spear and *Il.* XXI, 67 where Achilles uses his spear to attack his foes. Nowhere in the intermediate lines, however, is it mentioned how Achilles retrieves his spear. Underlying the perceived contradiction was the assumption that all of Homer's epics were indeed the accomplishment of one author, and therefore should be more or less homogeneous. The problem of verisimilitude is where a statement in Homer's epics conflicts

These examples allow Niehoff to highlight the similarity between this type of Homeric scholarship and the way that Philo, and other Alexandrian Jewish intellectuals before him, attempted to solve stumbling blocks of contradiction and verisimilitude in the Pentateuch.[141]

The anonymous author of the Letter to Aristeas can, for example, be seen to address a problem of verisimilitude in *Ep. Arist*., 128–171. He attempted to provide an answer to the question of why in Mosaic Law some animals are considered unclean, and others clean. Some critics considered the distinction between clean and unclean animals rather arbitrary and unscientific, lacking a clear basis in the properties of the animals involved. Pseudo-Aristeas, however, held that 'nothing has been enacted in the Scripture thoughtlessly or without due reason.'[142] Pseudo-Aristeas then argues how unclean birds are of a ferocious nature and therefore should be avoided lest our character becomes contaminated with their ferociousness.

Philo's exegesis, however, is not aimed at solving problems of contradiction or verisimilitude alone. **Adam Kamesar** (*1956) who has recently also addressed Philo's allegorical method identified a distinctive difference between Philo's exegesis of the Pentateuch and that of Homeric scholars. It is Philo's conviction that there are no superfluous passages in the Pentateuch, whereas Homeric scholars held that some passages of Homer's epics were included for aesthetic purposes alone, without deeper meaning. To Philo, every bit of the Pentateuch is meaningful.[143]

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with the contemporary scientific insights of the interpreter. Niehoff gives an example of this type of problem in *Il.* XXI, 538–9, where Apollo is described as flinging wide the gates of Troy, thereby illuminating the whole city. This appears to be an absurd statement, as if the gates of Troy would be the only place where light could fall into the city.

141 Another example is Demetrius, also an Alexandrian predecessor of Philo, who at the end of the second century BCE wrote a commentary on the Bible in the form of questions and answers (for a plausible dating of Demetrius, see ibid., p. 55). One of the questions that Demetrius attempted to answer is a problem of contradiction in Exodus. Demetrius asks how the Israelites armed themselves for the battle with Amalek in Ex. 17:8–9, since in Ex. 5:3 it is stated that they left Egypt unarmed. His solution is to assume that the Israelites armed themselves with the weapons of the Egyptians who drowned in the Red Sea (see Demetrius, fragment 5 in Holladay, *Fragments vol. 1*, p. 76). The examples of Pseudo-Aristeas and Demetrius are presented and discussed in Niehoff, *Exegesis*, pp. 39–40; the example of Demetrius is also discussed in Niehoff, *Biography*, pp. 174–175.

142 *Ep. Arist*., 168 (translation by H.T. Andrews).

143 As Kamesar put it: 'What is important to emphasize in the present context is that even the "didacticists", that is, those who believed that instruction was the primary aim of literature, for the most part allowed for the fact that even in Homer, the "educator of Greece", there were "psychagogic" elements. In other words, they were not all-inclusivists in their didacticism and, allowing for "psychagogic" intentions on the part of Homer, they did not feel compelled to find a didactic purpose in every line of the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey*. In contrast, Philo explicitly denies that Moses aimed at *psychagōgia* "without benefit" (Mos. 2.48)' (Kamesar, *Philo*, p. 81). Niehoff describes how this insistence on meaningfulness of every element of the Pentateuch creates a creative springboard for

He made it his purpose to reveal the deeper truths that he believed lie hidden behind Moses' 'oracles'.

Philo's favourite method of developing his insights is by means of commenting on various biblical passages. The main bulk of Philo's extant work consists of commentaries on passages from biblical books, mostly from Genesis and Exodus.[144] This is not to say that Philo only wrote exegetical works. There are also several treatises transmitted to us where Philo investigates one specific topic, such as the meaning of freedom for the wise, or whether the world exists eternally, whether animals can be rational, and if providence exists.[145] We do, however, lack a work in which Philo systematically presents us with his philosophical outlook and method.

Philo's approach is not unique. For example, it resembles that of some Stoic philosophers who chose to expound their tenets by allegorically explaining the works of Homer.[146] Another example is Chaeremon of Alexandria who presented his philosophical ideas in the form of commentaries on Egyptian myths. Furthermore, some of the philosophical ideas of Plutarch are transmitted to us in the form of commentaries on the myth of Isis and Osiris. Yet another example is Numenius of Apamea, who presented his philosophical outlook by commenting on oriental traditions.[147] None of the aforementioned philosophers, however, is considered primarily an exegete of Homer or the myths to which he connected his philosophical outlooks. No one suggests that the myths or poems they expounded were forcing ideas or 'exegetical constraints' upon them, so why should we treat Philo differently?

Philo can be considered, like the Stoics, Chaeremon, Plutarch or Numenius, to be interested in the truth, truth that according to these authors reveals itself through careful scrutiny of an authoritative ancient source.[148] Philo's main *aim*

Philo to embark on elaborate allegoric explorations, which she sees as a novelty of Philo compared to both his Jewish and Stoic predecessors (see Niehoff, *Biography*, pp. 178–181).

144 For an overview of Philo's works see Sterling/Niehoff/van den Hoek, 'Philo', pp. 256–257.

145 *Quod Omnis Probus Liber Sit*, *De Aeternitate Mundi*, *De Animalibus* and *De Providentia*. Niehoff connects Philo's explicitly philosophical treatises to his stay in Rome. The treatises where he presents his readers with a close reading and interpretation of biblical passages she associates with Alexandria (see Niehoff, *Biography*, pp. 245–246).

146 Dillon, *Middle Platonists*, p. 142. See also Sandmel, *Philo*, p. 19.

147 Sterling/Niehoff/van den Hoek, 'Philo', p. 282.

148 David Winston (in an article exploring Philo's concept of free will) concluded that Philo belongs to 'the ranks of those whose philosophical convictions run considerably deeper than their adhesion to religious dogma' (Winston, 'Free Will', p. 186; see also references in note 16 of that article). Throughout the present study several instances are indicated where ideas of Philo are characterised as biblical, when rather they should be considered as stemming from Philo's philosophical convictions (see note 180, 280, 422).

was to find and share what he considered truth.[149] His main *method* of finding and presenting this truth is by means of exegetical expositions of the source he considered most valuable, namely the Pentateuch, written by the only truly wise man, Moses. For Philo, there was no real difference between exegetical and philosophical exposition.[150] He considered the study and exposition of Mosaic Law the highest form of philosophy.[151] The suggestion that Philo would only mention something because he found it in the Bible, without giving it much further consideration, does neither do justice to Philo's intention nor his method. He cared deeply for the truth contained in every bit of Moses' writings. We can ask, therefore, what deeper truth Philo claimed was hidden in the biblical statement that God forgives an evildoer.

To sum up. Like Chaeremon of Alexandria, Plutarch or Numenius of Apamea, Philo was in search for truth. Like those non-Jewish thinkers Philo used the method of scrutinising ancient authoritative sources to extract the truth hidden in them. All these authors held such sources in high regard, because they believed them to contain original and non-diluted wisdom. Furthermore, they were convinced that transcendent truth lay hidden beneath the surface of the literal words of these texts. As modern, critical readers we see these authors sometimes struggle to reconcile their contemporary intellectual insights with statements or passages they encounter in their sources. From our modern-day perspective they might even be guilty of reading novel ideas into their ancient texts, committing *eis*-egesis instead of *ex*-egesis. From their own perspective, however, these authors were convinced that through their exegetical methods of allegory they were able to bring the truth to light from their sources, originally contained in them.

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[149] As discussed in note 39 for Philo, similarly to other ancient authors, theology and philosophy were one and the same.

[150] As is stated in Sterling/Niehoff/van den Hoek, 'Philo', p. 273, the matter of whether the philosophical or the exegetical aspects were more dominant in Philo's writing has been debated at length by Philonic scholars, and to stress a contrast between philosophy and exegesis in Philo's works is to oversimplify the matter. They conclude: 'Both aspects are important to Philo, but most of his treatises are allegorical commentaries on the Pentateuch, which may be considered the basis of his interests.' I, however, ask *why* this allegorical commentary on the Pentateuch is considered so interesting by Philo. My answer to this question is that it is because of the philosophical truths that Philo finds in his analysis of the Pentateuch. This approach prevents us from considering Philo's treatises on specific philosophical topics to be strangers or stepchildren in the Philonic corpus. This approach also means that instead of considering only Philo's purely philosophical treatises to be able 'to provide valuable insight into the contemporary culture and the study of ancient philosophy in the first century' (as is stated in ibid., p. 274), the whole of Philo's work can be considered to provide such valuable insights.

[151] Runia, *Timaeus*, p. 540. In *Spec*. III, 6 Philo clearly states that the objective of his examination of the books of Moses is to lay bare their deeper philosophical truths.

Philo can be considered to apply the same methods as other ancient intellectuals. The only difference is which ancient text each of these thinkers referred to as source for wisdom and truth, be it Homer's epics, Egyptian myths or Moses' Pentateuch. So, if Philo wrote about divine forgiveness in his treatises, we cannot simply discard that by claiming he did so merely because he found forgiveness in his biblical source, without giving much further attention to it. Instead, we can and should ask what he meant when writing about divine forgiveness.

1.2.2.3 Results from the second part of the survey of previous studies

It was shown that both the depiction of Philo as an inconsistent thinker and the claim that he mentioned certain biblical topics without much further thought, do little justice to the way in which Philo developed his thinking. In Philo's conviction, he presented his readers with the wisdom that was once revealed to Moses and was then written down in the Bible, especially in the Pentateuch. Philo presented what he considered the philosophical truths of Moses mostly – but not exclusively – as expositions of passages from the Pentateuch. Long before Philo, this allegorical method had been adapted by Jewish intellectuals from other Alexandrine intellectuals who, instead of the Hebrew Bible, regarded Homer's epics or Egyptian myths as their authoritative source of wisdom.

With regard to the development of Philo's thought, it was discussed how the Alexandrian intellectual milieu presented Philo with the opportunity to integrate insights from various philosophical traditions into what he believed were originally Moses' philosophical truths. I have used the metaphor of an alloy to characterise Philo's thought. His ideas consist of elements that can be traced back to various philosophical traditions. Comparing them to other sources of these philosophical traditions can shed light on how Philo understood them. At the same time, Philo's blend of philosophical outlooks has characteristics of its own, like an alloy, rising above the sum of its constituent elements. Assigning Philo to one particular philosophical tradition does not do justice to the richness of his ideas, nor to the rich intellectual interactions of his time.

This chapter began with Hannah Arendt, a twentieth-century intellectual who gave forgiveness a well-considered place in her philosophical thinking. She did this under the assumption, common in her time, that the concept of forgiveness was little known or appreciated in the Greco-Roman subculture of the Hellenistic period. We have refined that statement in the sense that forgiveness, and specifically divine forgiveness, is attested to in not only the Jewish subculture of the Hellenistic period but also in other sub-cultures of the same period, particularly in everyday religious life. However, divine forgiveness was little appreciated in intellectual circles in the Hellenistic period, but it does appear in the works of a typical Hellenistic intellectual, Philo of Alexandria. What does this mean?

The survey of previous studies has provided us with insights into basic elements of Philo's thought and into his method of developing his ideas. The discussion of Philo's method allows us to ask what deeper truth Philo thought seeking divine pardon contained. The discussion of elements of Philo's thought has presented us with possibilities, but also unresolved difficulties, in obtaining a clear view of how the element of divine forgiveness fits in the whole alloy of Philo's philosophical outlook.

On the basis of previous research, we now turn to the texts themselves, because only they can give us access to Philo's complex way of thinking. A preliminary reading of *Spec.* I, 235–238 will help us identify the questions that need to be addressed, in order to give us an idea of the various implications of what Philo meant when he wrote that God forgives someone. With these questions in view, I will then describe the method used in this study to answer them.

1.3 *The problem of divine forgiveness in Philo's thinking*

Philo uses three words we usually associate with forgiveness (συγγνώμη, ἀμνηστία and ἄφεσις) in *Spec.* I, 235–238.[152] Here, Philo describes the various steps leading toward divine pardon being granted to someone. For this reason, this section is particularly suited to bringing into view the aspects that, at first glance, appear to conflict with other fundamental elements of his thinking. We shall take that first glance at what Philo writes about forgiveness in these sections and preliminarily compare this to aspects of his doctrine of God, his views on human beings and his ethical outlooks.

In *Spec.* I, 235–238, Philo elaborates on the prescriptions that are given in Mosaic Law on what is required from someone who intentionally sinned against someone else.[153] Philo takes the example of theft. If people steal something, several actions are required from the perpetrators for their sin to be forgiven. First, they have to acknowledge the accusation and conviction by their conscience, even when they have escaped human accusers. There is no escape from these internal accusations, however, other than to openly confess the wrongful actions. The culprits must then ask for pardon (συγγνώμη). Philo notes how Moses prescribes that amnesty (ἀμνηστία) will be extended to the wrongdoers if several conditions are met. A confession alone will not be enough, the offenders need to manifest their repentance with actions. First, the wrongdoers need to compensate the injured party by repaying what they have stolen, plus a fifth of the value added as a penalty for the offence. Secondly, they have to go to the temple and ask for remission (ἄφεσις) of sins, bringing with

[152] See note 41 for further references to places where forgiveness appears in Philo's treatises.

[153] The context of this passage will be fully discussed in Chapter 5 (see pp. 193–226).

them a ram as sacrifice. When these conditions are met, they will be forgiven, and the guilt of the sin will no longer weigh upon them.

How does what Philo writes about forgiveness compare to other elements of his thought? To begin with, in light of several statements Philo makes about God throughout his treatises, it is puzzling why evildoers should go to the temple and bring a sacrifice, involving God as it were in the process of achieving remission of sins. First of all, the idea that God could either be insulted by the offence or appeased by the sacrifice is at odds with Philo's view that God is immutable and cannot change from one state to another. Secondly, God is not to be considered as subjected to any emotions, which rules out the possibility that he could either feel pain or anger. Thirdly, the role of sacrifice itself is complicated. It cannot be regarded as a compensation to God, comparable to the compensation given to the human victim, because the idea that God would need anything from his creatures is blasphemous to Philo.[154] Finally, the possibility of interaction between God and his creatures is complicated by the transcendence of God which Philo continuously emphasises.[155]

The aforementioned issues relating to Philo's doctrine of God outline the theological problems involved in understanding what divine forgiveness means in the works of Philo. However, the apparent ability of humans to commit evil in the first place is puzzling as well. Philo maintained that humans were created by the good God.[156] Can this good God then be the source of evil in human beings?

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154 In *Opif*. 170–172, Philo lists the philosophical truths that he believes Moses' account of the creation of the world teaches. Philo brings to the fore the following principles concerning God: first, that God exists; second, that he is one, not many; and lastly, that God takes providential care of the world. In addition to these statements in *Opif*. 170–172, Philo maintains that the Deity is the active cause (*Opif*. 7–8), that he does not change and has no such fickleness as humans (*Deus* 22, 28; *Spec*. I, 300), that God knows no repentance (*Deus* 33, 72), that he does not move nor can he be moved (*Opif*. 100), that he is self-sufficient and needs nothing from his creation (*Dec*. 8; *Spec*. I, 271, 277), that he is free from emotions (*QG* I, 95; *Abr*. 202) and consequently knows no anger (*Deus* 71) and that he does not punish. God leaves punishment to other powers, because it is somehow associated with evil (*Conf*. 182) and in God there is no evil (*Fug*. 79).

155 In regard to creation, Philo presents the following views in *Opif*. 170–172: that the world is indeed created and has a beginning; that there is only one world, not many. To these statements in *Opif*. 170–172 can be added that Philo holds that the creation is formed in two parts: the invisible world of ideas, and the visible world of matter that is created based on the higher ideas (*Opif*. 19); that in created matter the force of change is ever present, which implies the risk of ill (*Opif*. 151; *Congr*. 84); and that there is a gap, a distance between the heavenly world of eternal ideas and the visible world of changing and perishable matter (*Fug*. 103–104).

156 See, for example, *Opif*. 65–66.

This is impossible according to Philo, and again a very blasphemous thought.[157] How, then, does the possibility of doing evil become a part of human life according to Philo? And even more: how is it possible that humans commit evil not only by mistake but intentionally? Philo presented humans as capable of rationality, and purposely doing evil is not only the complete opposite of rationality, it means applying reason to an evil intent by devising an evil deed and then doing it. So, what is going on in Philo's opinion when a human being commits evil, and in what way does that relate to forgiveness?[158]

With these aspects in view, I can propose several sub-questions that need to be addressed in order to establish the meaning of divine forgiveness in Philo's thinking:[159]

- Forgiveness implies a relationship, but how can the transcendent God relate to and interact with creation at all?
- Does divine pardon imply that human actions can hurt and anger God and that God can be made to change his mind?
- How can humans interact with and relate to the transcendent God?
- Why would and could humans, as creatures of the supreme good God, intentionally do evil?
- What are the consequences of doing evil for the wrongdoer and how would and could those consequences involve God to remedy them?

If we get a better view on Philo's reflections on these matters, we can understand what he meant when he writes that someone receives divine amnesty and is remitted from sins. Several possible answers to these questions were found in the survey of previous studies. We learnt about the important role that Philo assigned to the logos as an intermediary between God, creation and human beings. God's logos manifests itself as powers interacting with creation. Divine forgiveness could be understood as a manifestation of one of these powers. Furthermore, we also saw that the phrase 'God forgives' could be understood as indicating a change not on God's part but on the part of the human that received forgiveness. Finally, we have seen that the human ability to do evil is in some way connected to human freedom.

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157 *Fug.* 84.

158 God must have left the creation of the earthly man to lower powers, since in humans there exists the potential for both good and evil (*Opif.* 73–75); the Deity therefore can never be claimed to be the cause of evil (*Fug.* 80; see also *Opif.* 75, 149).

159 These questions are an extension of the question Várhelyi poses in the conclusions of her contribution to a volume on forgiveness in antiquity (see note 42); there she also claims that Philo 'without parallel in the Hellenistic philosophical tradition … [introduces] the notion of human sinfulness and adds the virtue of repentance to those already in the Stoic canon' (Várhelyi, 'To Forgive', p. 133). One of the ambitions of the present study is to investigate whether these notions of Philo are indeed without parallel in the Hellenistic philosophical tradition.

Nevertheless, this survey also left us with several unanswered questions, specifically regarding Philo's view on the source of evil in creation and on the extent of human freedom. Also, there has not yet been a study that connects the several elements of Philo's thought to the notion of divine forgiveness, with a view to understanding what Philo meant when he wrote that God forgives someone.

The five above-mentioned sub-questions will be addressed in the subsequent chapters of this study. In the final chapter, the results of these chapters will be applied to *Spec.* I, 235–236 for a detailed, concluding analysis of Philo's statements. My overall approach in the following chapters will be to remain as close as possible to Philo's own words. I present the method I believe aids us best in this approach in the next section.

1.4 *Method and structure*

The aim of this study is to explore what Philo meant when he wrote that God forgives someone. How did he reflect intellectually on the possibility of divine pardon? What philosophical truth did he associate with it? This is a fascinating question, because Philo introduced a concept from daily-life religion into an intellectual environment. However, he has not reflected explicitly upon divine forgiveness. Also, he has not presented a concise overview of the framework of his ideas. Nevertheless, the conclusion from the survey of Philo's method was that we may assume a coherent rationale in the way Philo developed his thinking. So, the question can be asked as to how seeking and receiving divine pardon fits into Philo's overall intellectual outlook. How can we find an answer to this question?

1.4.1 *Integral approach*

I will follow Goodenough's proposal for an integral approach to explore Philo's thoughts. Goodenough already criticised approaching Philo by quoting passages from his treatises almost at random to illustrate a point someone wishes to make. Instead of using Philo as quarry, Goodenough emphasised that it is important to have a grasp of the place a certain passage has within a treatise, and what place that treatise has in the whole of Philo's oeuvre, to understand what Philo writes about.[160] Goodenough further presented Philo as

[160] Goodenough, *Introduction*, p. 20. This approach is comparable to what Runia describes as 'the contextual approach' in Runia, 'Naming and Knowing', pp. 69–72. Runia distinguishes roughly three approaches towards the description of Philo's theology. These are: first, the systematic approach, where scholars 'attempt to put together, on Philo's behalf, the systematic presentation of his doctrine of God, which he never managed (or dared) to publish'; second, the historical approach, where Philo's theology is mainly described and explained by linking and comparing his ideas and concepts to those of other authors, such as Posidonius and Plotinus; and third, the contextual approach, where Philo is considered first and foremost an exegete, and where the starting point is taken with the analysis of

someone fully integrated and interacting with his cultural surroundings, both on an intellectual and on a more popular level. Goodenough did not consider Philo's Jewishness as something separated from this cultural background.[161] Goodenough therefore avoided classifying Philo's ideas as either belonging to his Jewish or his Hellenistic background and education.

It took quite some time for these views to take hold in Philonic research.[162] Although picking through Philo's works to illustrate a certain point still occurs occasionally, strictly differentiating between Greek or Jewish elements in Philo's thinking is hardly done anymore.[163] However, one could consider attributing a special character to Philo's interaction with the Bible, setting him apart from contemporary intellectuals who explored other authoritative ancient sources, a rudimentary trace of this approach. Still, the current state of affairs in Philonic research in general is that Philo is considered a Jewish thinker fully engaged and interacting with his intellectual, cultural and political environment, and that it is necessary to consider the full context of a passage to interpret what he is writing about.

1.4.2 *Close reading*

A close reading of Philo's texts will achieve such an integral approach to how Philo developed his ideas. The preliminary reading of *Spec.* I, 235–238 has produced five sub-questions that need to be answered to understand the meaning of divine forgiveness in Philo's works. These questions all involve themes on which Philo reflects explicitly in his extant works. The approach of the present study will be to analyse sections from Philo's treatises in which he engages these sub-questions, to ensure we remain as close as possible to

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Philo's treatises themselves. Runia advocates the third approach. Although I find the label 'exegete' not very informative, I will follow an approach like Runia's. A somewhat similar approach is followed by Williamson in his introduction to Philo (see Williamson, *Philo*).

161 Goodenough, *Introduction*, pp. 9, 122.

162 See note 84.

163 Morris proposed two views that can be taken on the issue of the relation between 'Greek' and 'Jewish' elements in Philo's thought. The first view is that Philo has consciously made an effort to synthesise Judaism with Greek intellectualism. This approach assumes a bipolar view regarding the relation between Judaism and Greek philosophy. The second view takes the 'sharp differentiation between Judaism and Hellenism as a construct of modern historians rather than as part of Philo's own outlook.' Morris made it clear that she belongs to the second class of Philonic scholars (see Morris, 'Philo', pp. 813 and 879, nt. 25). Runia took a similar position: '[Philo's] Ergebnis ist eine Gedankenwelt, die wie eine Synthese aus griechischem und biblischem Gedankengut anmutet, obwohl dies von Philo sicherlich nicht beabsichtigt war' (Runia, 'Philo', pp. 853–854). Barclay went as far as suggesting that there is 'no hint of tension between 'Greek' and 'Jewish' values,' (Barclay, *Jews*, p. 161). I agree with Morris' position, and would not go as far as Barclay. Contrary to his view that there is no hint of tension between values in Philo, for example, Philo finds it necessary to defend the custom of circumcision against ridicule (see *Spec.* I, 2), and he denounces the frivolity of banquets, as celebrated by Xenophon and Plato, in *Cont.* 57–63 (see also Winston, 'Hidden Tensions').

the way Philo himself develops his thoughts. Crucial to this analysis will be to recognise the place the relevant passages have within the context of the whole treatise.

To identify the place of a passage within the whole of a treatise, each treatise will be subjected to a structural analysis. The structural analysis makes use of the way Philo himself, by using textual signals, structured the argumentation of the treatise. Similarly to the rhetorical style of other ancient authors, Philo used Greek keywords to, for example, highlight a conclusion or to signal that he will engage a new topic. The reconstruction of Philo's argumentation based upon these keywords is supported by developments in Philonic research regarding Philo's rhetorical abilities. These developments help to identify and appreciate how Philo structured his argument.[164] The approach of close reading, identifying when Philo signalled conclusions or statements he thought important for his readers, differs from analysing the structure of a treatise on the basis of the perceived content of the treatise alone. The latter approach bears the risk of modern readers setting the agenda according to their own preferences, possibly overlooking what Philo himself saw and marked as the key points of his discourse.

A structural analysis of Philo's introduction to *De Opificio Mundi* (*Opif.* 1–12) serves as example to illustrate the benefits of this method.[165] At first glance, these sections may look like a collection of somewhat disconnected statements.[166] A structural analysis, however, reveals Philo's artful composition and identifies the main points Philo wanted to bring forward. The first of these appears in *Opif.* 4, where the combination of μέν and οὖν occurs. Here, Philo writes that he can only present the highlights of Moses' account of creation, because the ideas contained in that account are too numerous to be expressed in full. The second occurrence of οὖν, in *Opif.* 12, signals the conclusion of Philo's introduction to the treatise, with another main point he wants to highlight: the great Moses has correctly apprehended that the world perceived by the senses must be created.

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164 See Conley, 'Philo'. Thomas M. Conley writes (ibid., p. 695): 'While [Philo] is, to be sure, not the simplest of writers, Philo is usually more in control of what he is doing than he is given credit for, and in fact does what he does very well' (see also Alexandre, 'Argumentation'). For an example of reconstructing the structure of one of Philo's treatises based on the rhetorical techniques Philo employed, see Alexandre, 'Texture'.

165 A full structural analysis of *De Opificio Mundi* is presented in Chapter 2 (see pp. 54–56).

166 In the analytical introduction to the translation of *De Opificio Mundi*, George H. Whitaker claims that in *Opif.* 1–20, Philo wants to bring to the fore 'two salient points' that he attributes to Moses, namely that the Creator of the world has no origin and that he cares for his creation (Colson/Whitaker, *Philo vol. 1*, p. 2). Whitaker then continues his summary of Philo's discourse with a list of somewhat disconnected statements.

Before reaching that conclusion, Philo has put forward two arguments why that world must indeed be created. He has placed one (in *Opif.* 6–9) before and one (in *Opif.* 12) after his main objection against the world was not created. This main objection, introduced in *Opif.* 10–11 with the combination of μέν and γάρ, is that if the world was not created, there would be no divine providence and therefore no sustained order in creation. Obviously *Opif.* 1–12 contain more than just these highlights. However, these brief structural observations show that the additional elements of this passage should be considered subsidiary arguments, put forward by Philo in support of the conclusions most important to him.

These structural observations allow us to discover the flow of Philo's discourse, and to distinguish between main points and side issues. This again aids us in reconstructing key elements of the overall rationale implicitly present in the way Philo develops his thinking.

1.4.3 Chapters

The aim of this study is to answer this question: what meaning did divine forgiveness have in the thought of Philo of Alexandria? To answer this question, the five sub-questions formulated above based on the preliminary exploration of *Spec.* I, 235–238 (see pp. 43–46) will have to be answered. These sub-questions will be addressed in the subsequent chapters of this study by means of analysis of one or more relevant passages from Philo's works. The sub-questions will be presented in relation to Philo's doctrine of God, his view on humans and his ethical outlooks, shaping the focus of each following chapter:

Chapter 2 is devoted to the questions that arise from Philo's presentation of divine forgiveness in relation to his doctrine of God, namely:

- Forgiveness implies a relationship, but how can the transcendent God relate to and interact with creation at all?
- Does divine pardon imply that human actions can hurt and anger God and that God can be made to change his mind?

Chapter 3 is devoted to the question that arises from Philo's presentation of divine forgiveness in relation to his view on human beings, namely:

- How can humans interact with and relate to the transcendent God?

Chapter 4 is devoted to the questions that arise Philo's presentation of divine forgiveness in relation to his ethical outlooks, namely:

- Why would and could humans, as creatures of the supreme good God, intentionally do evil?
- What are the consequences of committing evil for the wrongdoer and how would and could those consequences involve God to remedy them?

Finally, in Chapter 5 I will return to *Spec.* I, 235–238 to integrate the results of Chapters 2–4 and answer my main question: what was Philo's view on divine forgiveness?

In each chapter, the approach will be to provide a close reading and analysis of one or more relevant passages from Philo's treatises. Philo did not discuss divine forgiveness in a systematic way. Nevertheless, analysing key passages and illuminating interconnections enable us to grasp what he meant when he wrote about it.

2

Philo's doctrine of God

2.1 *Introduction*

As discussed in Chapter 1, divine pardon in Philo's thought is a fascinating topic. With it, Philo introduced a notion into his reflections that is well at home in everyday religion, but not so much in intellectual discourse. In everyday religion, seeking divine pardon is something related to action and experience rather than to intellectual reflection. People who have done something wrong may experience the relief of divine forgiveness after performing certain ritual acts, through which they hope to have appeased God or the gods and turned divine anger into mercy. However, the presentation of God or the gods involved in divine forgiveness posed several serious challenges to intellectuals reflecting on the nature of the divine. These difficulties were identified in the conclusion to Chapter 1.[167] Given that the reflection on who God is stands at the core of Philo's (as any other ancient intellectual's) contemplations, it is therefore most appropriate to begin our investigation of divine pardon in Philo's thought with the two difficulties that it raises in light of his doctrine of God.[168]

The first difficulty is that forgiveness implies a relationship between the forgiven and the forgiver. This raises the following question: did Philo consider interaction between a transcendent God and creation possible and, if so, how was this connection and interaction established?[169]

The second difficulty is that if God is said to forgive, this statement implies ascribing human traits to God – that is, different emotional states (such as anger or mercy) and changing one's mind (replacing punishment with forgiveness). Such an anthropomorphic presentation of God does not appear to cohere with Philo's presentation of the divine. Therefore, the second matter of enquiry will be: how did Philo reflect on the emotional presentation of God, including the suggestion that God changes?

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167 See pp. 43–46.

168 As Peter Frick notes: 'Philo's thought is theocentric to the extent that every other facet of his thought must be correlated with the concept of God' (Frick, *Providence*, p. 4). Goodenough provided a schematic overview of Philo's doctrine of God in Goodenough, *Light*, p. 29. Other useful summaries include: Morris, 'Philo', pp. 880–889, and Calabi, *God's Acting*, p. 16. Runia lists the following as antecedents for Philo's doctrine of God: 1) from the Stoa: the idea that God contains everything, although Philo rejected Stoic pantheism; 2) from Aristotle: a) God as the first cause; b) God as the unmoved mover; c) God as fully active; 3) from Plato: a) God as creator; b) God as τὸ ὄντως ὄν; 4) from the Old Academy and Neopythagorism: identification of God with the monad (see Runia, *Timaeus*, pp. 434–436). Further overviews of Philo's doctrine of God can be found in every introduction on Philo. For a discussion of how for ancient authors like Philo, theology and philosophy were always intertwined, see note 39.

169 Zeller explores how Philo adopted Platonic and Stoic concepts to address the tension between transcendent and immanent conceptions of God, see Zeller, *Studien*, pp. 22–25; see also Bréhier, *Les idées*, pp. 79–80.

The first part of this chapter will be dedicated to finding an answer to the first question. The approach will be to establish Philo's position in the philosophical debate of his time regarding the possibility of a relationship between the divine and the world. An important element of this debate was the matter of divine providence. Philosophers discussed whether it was appropriate to maintain that the gods involved themselves with events in the world. The various solutions to this question as they existed in Philo's intellectual context can be presented as a spectrum with two extremes. At one end of the spectrum, the divine and the world were regarded to be separate entities, not at all involved with each other.[170] At the other end of the spectrum, the divine and the world were regarded to be connected so much to each other that they were perceived as one entity.[171]

The analysis of a section from the treatise *De Opificio Mundi*, in which Philo describes the creation of the world, is expected to shed light on his view regarding the relationship between the divine and the world. The analysis will be focused on the reasons why Philo on the one hand saw God and creation as two fundamentally different natures and on the other hand maintained that God takes providential care of creation. The analysis of a second section from *De Opificio Mundi* will be focused on the details of how Philo held that the providential connection between God and creation is established. The analysis will lead to the conclusion that Philo can be seen to present God's providential care, a notion that brings to mind emotional and affectionate overtones, in such a way that it appears as an impersonal and emotionless process.

This conclusion paves the way for the second question of this chapter: how did Philo interpret the attribution of human characteristics to God, especially emotional traits that belong to the sphere of forgiveness, such as hurt, anger and mercy? This question will be the topic of the second part of this chapter. An analysis of a section from *Quod Deus Sit Immutabilis* will bring the answer into view. First, however, I will consider Philo's view on the relationship between God and creation.

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170 Epicurus is an example of this view. According to him, the blissful existence the gods enjoyed meant that they were not involved with taking care of the world (see Nilsson, *Geschichte vol. 2*, p. 239 and Long, *Hellenistic Philosophy*, p. 42, see also notes 184 and 185).

171 Zeno is an example of this view. He held that the gods were an integral part of the world (see Nilsson, *Geschichte vol. 2*, p. 247). The modern term for such a view is 'pantheism'; Stoicism in general is described as 'pantheistic' (ibid., p. 246, see also note 192). Caveats regarding the attribution of such a modern label to ancient philosophical traditions as well as a critical philosophical examination of the term 'pantheism' can be found in Mander, 'Pantheism'.

2.2 *Philo's view on how the transcendent God can relate to and interact with creation*

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

The first main question of this chapter is: what was Philo's view on how the transcendent God can relate to and interact with creation? Philo engaged this topic in *De Opificio Mundi*, a treatise dedicated to his interpretation of the biblical creation account. A structural analysis of the treatise will help identify the relevant sections to be investigated.

2.2.2 De Opificio Mundi: *Structure of argumentation*

The treatise *De Opificio Mundi* is the first in a larger body of treatises, commonly known as the Exposition of the Laws.[172] In *De Opificio Mundi*, Philo presents an interpretation of elements of Gn. 1:1–3:19, the biblical account of the creation of the world, the lives of the first human beings and their succumbing to vice. Philo's main aim in this treatise is to show that Moses' laws and the laws of nature are interconnected.[173] As Philo saw it, God did not only provide a law for the behaviour of people. Philo believed that God is the source of order and structure in the whole of creation. He also held that to perceive God as the source of order in creation is essential for living a life of virtue. Philo's argumentation in *De Opificio Mundi* is structured as follows.

Introduction: Moses provided the best account of the world's creation. 1–12: Philo introduces the topic of the treatise, the creation of the world as described by Moses in Genesis, with two preliminary considerations. The first is a remark that he will only present the highlights of Moses' all-embracing

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[172] The Exposition of the Laws includes (from the extant works of Philo) *De Opificio Mundi*, *De Abrahamo*, *De Josepho*, *De Vita Mosis* books I and II, *De Decalogo*, *De Specialibus Legibus* books I, II, III and IV, *De Virtutibus*, and *De Praemiis et Poenis*. There is some debate amongst Philonic scholars concerning whether *De Opificio Mundi* and/or *De Vita Mosis* should be counted as part of the Exposition of the Laws. In *Praem.* 1–3 Philo provides a summary of 'the oracles delivered through the prophet Moses' (as F.H. Colson translates), which agrees with the inclusion of both *Opif.* and *Mos.* I and II (see also Colson, *Philo vol. 6*, pp. ix–xviii and Rogers, 'Universalization', p. 86). Runia provides strong arguments (internal evidence, manuscript evidence and evidence of the indirect tradition) for the inclusion of *Opif.* in the Exposition of the Laws in Runia, *Creation*, pp. 2–4.

[173] Philo begins *Opif.* with the claim that 'Moses … has made a most beautiful and most impressive beginning of the laws. … The beginning – like I have said – is most amazing, since it consists of the creation of the world, because the world is in agreement with the law, and the law with the world' (*Opif.* 2–3). Before proceeding to the actual laws, Philo first retells the lives of various patriarchs, because according to him, Moses 'wants to show, that the recorded commands are in harmony with nature' (*Abr.* 5). In *Mos.* I, 36 and 44, Philo expresses the belief that 'the whole human race will profit, when they apply wise and most beautiful commands for the betterment of life,' and that each nation should abandon its own peculiar ways and start honouring Moses' laws. Having presented the patriarchs of the Jewish people and Moses himself as sages who lived according to the unwritten laws within them and he then moves to the written laws, beginning with the Ten Commandments (see *Dec.* 1) (see also Rogers, 'Universalization', pp. 85–86).

account of creation. The second is an argumentation to convince his readers that the world is indeed created. His central argument is that to suppose the world was uncreated would exclude divine providence, which would imply that the world was without order.

Day one: Creation of the intelligible world, the fundamental order of the world.
13–36a: Philo wants to involve his reader in the beautiful order of creation. He uses the numbers appearing in Genesis to expound on that order. He explains that the fundament of everything that exists is created on day one, because the number 'one' or 'the monad' (μονάς) is the basis of all other numbers. This fundament of creation is the intelligible world – that is, the world of ideas (also called powers) that exists in divine reason.

Days two to six: The creation of the material world.
36b–68: Philo describes what was created on the subsequent days of creation. The dimension of space comes into being with the creation of the material heaven on day two. Then the earth is organised on day three, complete with fruit-bearing trees, to prepare for the creation of living creatures. On day four, heavenly bodies are created and heaven is arranged further. On days five and six, living creatures, including humans, are added.

The reason why humans are created last.
69–88: Humans are created last and surpass all other living creatures, because they are created after the image of God. With the creation of humans, the world is complete. Their creation closes the circle, because through their minds, humans are connected to the intelligible world created on day one.

Day seven: The special qualities of the number 'seven'.
89–133: Day seven of creation prompts Philo to discuss several of the many special qualities of the number 'seven'.[174] He provides examples in both the intellectual and material realm. Philo then makes a few summarising statements, before he discusses detailed aspects of the first earthly man.

The qualities of the first earthly human.
134–170a: Philo discusses the creation of the first earthly human, who lived in a borderland between mortal and immortal existence, because his body is mortal and his mind is immortal. He was perfect both in body and soul and his descendants retain only faint elements of the original perfection. The first human, because his reason was still pure, could perceive the true nature

[174] A modern reader can easily be deterred by the many numerological aspects that Philo elaborates on in these sections. They were very important to Philo, however, as discussed in note 236.

of everything that exists. This brought him ultimate happiness. The senses, however, distracted the first earthly man and caused him to be disobedient, resulting in a life full of toil.

Conclusions in five important lessons.
170b–172: Philo concludes the treatise with five lessons: namely that God exists; that he is one; that he has created the world; that the world is also one; and that God cares for the world through his providence. Learning these lessons will lead to a virtuous life.

Through analysing sections from *De Opificio Mundi* I intend to find an answer to the question: what was Philo's view on how the transcendent God can relate to and interact with creation? In the introduction to the treatise (*Opif*. 1–12), Philo's central argument for the createdness of the world is in fact that God and creation must be connected to each other, because God cares for the world like a father for his offspring. He presents this particular argument in *Opif*. 6b–12, therefore I will analyse this passage first. As the analysis of these sections will show, Philo adhered to two seemingly incompatible ideas regarding God and creation. He emphasised that God and the physical world are fundamentally different in nature. At the same time, Philo wanted to maintain that God takes providential care of that world. Why were these two ideas essential for Philo? Furthermore, how did Philo combine these seemingly contradictory ideas? My analysis of Philo's description of the intelligible world in *Opif*. 13–36a will present the specifics of Philo's solution to this problem.

My exploration of these matters will further result in an in-depth understanding of Philo's view on the nature of God, the nature of creation and how the two are related to each other.

2.2.3 Opif. *6b–12: God is the creator and upholder of the world*

2.2.3.1 *Paraphrase*

Opif. 6b–12 is part of Philo's introduction to the treatise. In the preceding sections (*Opif*. 1–6a) he draws attention to the fact that Moses began his exposition of laws with an account of the creation of the world. Moses did so, as Philo explains, to emphasise that the laws he was about to give were in complete accordance with the governing order of everything that exists. As this governing order embraces everything in existence, Philo understandably emphasises that he can only present a few highlights of the creation of this all-embracing order. He does so from *Opif*. 13 onwards. First, however, he needs to address an important issue (as he states in *Opif.* 6b).

This issue is some people's opinion that the world is without beginning or end and instead is everlasting and not created (*Opif.* 7a). If the world were indeed uncreated, Moses' creation story would be rather pointless. Thus, this fundamental issue needs to be addressed first. Philo's central argument (brought forward in *Opif.* 10–11) against the claim that the world is uncreated illustrates why he sees this as a fundamental issue. Philo argues that if such a view were true, there could be no governing order in creation. The world would be a chaotic place, ruled by anarchy. As Philo sees it, only God can maintain the order of the world and he can only do so if he is the father and maker of the world, caring for what he has made. The world therefore has to be created.

Philo surrounds his central argument with two supporting arguments why the world must be created. His first argument (*Opif.* 7b–9) is that everything that exists, can only exist because of the impact of an active cause on a passive object. Philo argues that the world needs a creator as its active cause in order to come into existence. Philo's second argument (*Opif.* 12) is that the world can be seen to be constantly changing; it is in a constant process of becoming. He then argues that this process of becoming must have a starting-point, an origin. This is why it is appropriate that Moses described the origin of the world.

2.2.3.2 Analysis part 1: Why God takes providential care of his creation

In the following pages I will present an analysis of *Opif.* 6b–12, focused on discovering Philo's view on the relationship between God and creation, because divine forgiveness implies interaction between God and creation. The analysis is divided into three parts. The first is dedicated to Philo's main concern regarding the opinion that the world was not created. He maintained that such a view implies that God does not care for the world.[175] Philo structured *Opif.* 6b–12 in such a way that his strong support for God's providential care is placed at the centre of his argument, in *Opif.* 10–11. Therefore, this central argument will be analysed first. In the second and third parts of the analysis, Philo's two arguments in support of the created nature of the material world will be explored. What will become apparent is that for Philo it was essential to maintain that even though God and creation are of completely different natures, God still cares for his creation.

Why was it so important for Philo to maintain that God takes care of his creation? Several observations come to the fore. Philo saw God's providential care as a law of nature connected to God's goodness, he argued that God created the world out of goodness and goodness automatically leads to care.[176] Some

[175] The world under discussion in *Opif.* 6b–12 is the world experienced through the senses – the material world – as becomes clear in *Opif.* 12.

[176] In *Opif.* 10, Philo writes that it is reasonable and logical that the father and maker of the material world also takes care of this world. In *Praem.* 42, he calls care for one's creation a natural law.

scholars maintain that Philo did so because he found these ideas in the Bible.[177] In the Bible, however, God's reasons for creating the world are not explored, nor is his providential care considered a law of nature. Philosophical arguments, particularly those of Plato, provide a better background for a notion that Philo apparently took for granted. A paraphrase of Plato's deliberations will shed light on what Philo believed was at stake when the created nature of the world and God's providential care for that world were denied.

In *Laws,* X 893B–903D, Plato carefully deliberates on whether there is a spirit that guides the created world and whether it is good or evil. Here, Plato contemplates whether there is proof for the belief that the gods exist and that they are good. He observes that the movement of the stars and other heavenly objects is orderly and harmonic. He deduces from this harmony that the souls steering them, commonly called the gods, must be rational and good.[178] Plato further reasons that if the gods were not to care for the world, they would be either unknowing or cruel. Given that he shows that the gods are rational and good, it follows that they take providential care of the world.[179] According to Plato, the care of the gods does not simply stop at a general level of providing order for the created world, but extends even to the minute details of human affairs as well. Plato compares the divine providential care for the world to the care of a good physician. The latter does not stop at curing the most visible symptoms of a disease either; rather, he carefully considers all the details, knowing that to miss one single detail could leave a patient ill.[180]

In *Opif.* 21, Philo presents goodness as God's motive for creating the world.

177 Bréhier identified Deutero-Isaiah as Philo's source for the view that God, because of his goodness, takes providential care of the world (Bréhier, *Les idées*, pp. 76–77) (cf. above note 46). Runia presents a similar view when he maintains that Philo combines in his theological views Plato's understanding of goodness as a metaphysic category of 'excellence of being' with a biblical understanding of goodness as a more relational category of compassion and care. Runia further maintains that in Philo's concept of God as Father, a Greek philosophical notion of God as the creative cause of creation and a biblical notion of God as a loving, caring father are combined (Runia, *Timaeus*, p. 442) (compare also Frick, *Providence*, p. 63). Williamson quotes multiple passages from Philo stating that goodness was God's motive for creating the world (Williamson, *Philo*, p. 35), without mentioning a specific source for this thought. In the Bible, however, no motive for God creating the world is articulated, whereas Plato explicitly described goodness as the motive for God to create and care for the world (*Tim.* 29E). Therefore, it seems more plausible that philosophy rather than the Bible was a source for this thought.

178 The first element in Plato's evidence is his observation that there is movement. Plato distinguishes ten types of movement, of which he finds the self-moving motion (that which moves itself and sets other things in motion) to be the first and the best. Plato identifies the self-moving motion with the soul, which leads him to conclude that everything that moves, is moved by a soul. According to Plato, the stars and the universe itself must be moved by a soul as well.

179 As Plato reasons in *Tim.* 29E, the goodness of the creator is the reason why there was creation to begin with, an argumentation that Philo adopted (see, for example, *Opif.* 21 and *LA* III, 73; see also note 177).

180 Wolfson states that 'there is no individual providence in the philosophy of Plato' (Wolfson, *Philo vol. 1*,

To sum up. For Philo the goodness of the Creator and his care for creation were undisputed facts, a law of nature. I considered Plato's rationale for something Philo saw as necessarily logical to reveal what was at stake for Philo if the created nature of the world were to be denied, namely the harmonious order of creation. Philo argued that without a creator, there can be no providence, and without providence there can be no order in creation. In line with Plato, Philo held that God's providential care enveloped the good and harmonious order governing the whole of creation from the vast scale of the planetary movements to the minute scale of human affairs. Without it, as Philo saw it, there could only be chaos and anarchy, and human affairs would be left without a judge or arbitrator, ultimately leading to an evil world. That the elimination of divine providence was his main concern is affirmed in the analysis of the two arguments he presented in support of the created nature of the world.

2.2.3.3 Analysis part 2: God is not completely detached from creation

We saw in the previous section that Philo's main problem with the people who held the material world to be uncreated was that they eliminated God's providence. To understand Philo's arguments in support of the createdness of the world, we need to know the following: who were the people of whom Philo thought? Several scholars have proposed that Philo refuted the Aristotelian position in *Opif.* 6b–12.[181] Others have come to the conclusion that Philo had the Stoics in mind.[182] However, Philo appears to address two kinds of opponents instead of just one, for he offers two clues regarding the people he wants to counter. The first clue is that they allegedly underestimate God, presenting him as inactive; the second is that they overestimate the world, assigning to it more splendour than it deserves.[183]

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p. 434) and according to him, both Plato and the Stoics held that God's freedom is limited because he is bound to the laws of nature, which excludes individual providence (ibid., *vol. 2*, p. 283). However, as the paraphrase of sections from the *Laws* shows, Plato intended to prove that the gods are good and held care on both a general and an individual level to be an essential element of that goodness.

[181] Ibid., *vol. 1*, p. 295; Dillon, *Middle Platonists*, p. 157; Runia, *Timaeus*, p. 100. A consequence is then that Philo's statements in *De Opificio Mundi* appear to contradict those in *De Aeternitate Mundi*, in which Philo writes that Aristotle's claim that the world is ἀγένητον καὶ ἄφθαρτον is a testament of his piety (*Aet.* 10). The relation between *De Opificio Mundi* and *De Aeternitate Mundi* will be discussed in note 218.

[182] Abraham P. Bos suggests that Philo does not refute the Aristotelian position in *Opif.* 6b–12, but 'the pure immanentist philosophy of the Chaldeans' (see Bos, 'Philo', p. 70). Runia has adopted Bos' conclusion, with several critical remarks (see Runia, *Creation*, pp. 121–122). Robert W. Sharples discusses the various arguments that Philo brings forward in *De Aeternitate Mundi* and their possible backgrounds in Sharples, 'Peripatetics'.

[183] Cf. *Opif.* 7. See also Frick, *Providence*, pp. 98, 126, where he identifies the two claims (a world governed by unreasoning automatic processes on the one hand, and God and the world being one on the other hand) that Philo resists. Somewhat similar positions appear in *LA* III, 7. Here, Philo presents 'the leper' as someone who identifies God with creation. 'The gonorrhoeic' he interprets as a symbol for someone who claims that the material world is not created by God, but consists of an

Philo seems to warn against two undesirable extremes regarding the relationship between God and the material world. One extreme is to overrate the created world. This extreme leads us to think of the Stoics, who identified the world and the divine as one. The other extreme is to present God as inactive. I propose that Philo's second opponents were atomists who held the gods to be inactive and not at all involved with the world. Philo's objection against them will be explored first.

For atomists, the inactivity of the gods cohered with how they viewed the gods and the nature of the world. Epicurus, for instance, held that if the gods live in bliss, they must be in complete rest, and that the gods can only rest if they are completely detached from the world and not occupied with managing it. The gods were also deemed to be inactive in the creation of the world. The world was seen as self-generated, its existence was the result of a randomly coming together and falling apart of atoms.[184] The world therefore had no end either, as atoms cannot be destroyed. Epicurus held that there is no other reality than the world experienced through the senses. There is only the material world consisting of bodies moving around in a void.[185] This material world is not ruled by any god, but by chance alone.[186]

According to Philo, however, forces without reason and random chance cannot explain the order and harmony he observed in the material world.[187] With this opinion, Philo joined a long-standing tradition of opposition against the

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endless loop of coming together and breaking apart. Philo further writes that such persons associate themselves with Heraclitus. Diogenes Laertius (DL *IX,* 7) summarised the view of Heraclitus as follows: everything is generated by fire and returns to fire and is controlled by fate. Anthony A. Long describes the close relation between the Stoics and Heraclitus in Long, *Hellenistic Philosophy*, pp. 145–147.

184 Cicero summarises the Epicurean position regarding the divine as follows: 'He does nothing, is not involved in any activity, nor does he undertake any work' (*Nihil enim agit, nullis occupationibus est implicatus, nulla opera molitur*, Cicero, *ND* I.19.51). According to Cicero, the Epicureans furthermore held that nature is not created, but creates itself; that the gods have a human form; that their substance is not that of material objects; rather, they are images that arise out of the stream of the atoms (Cicero, *ND* I.18.46–20.54).

185 Epicurus, *On Nature I*, *Letter to Herodotus*, 39 (=DL *X*, 39).

186 An illustrative example of how Philo summarised these views is *Som.* II, 283: 'they say that this [world] we see and experience is the only one in existence, it was not created at a certain point in time nor will it ever perish, neither generated nor perishable (ἀγένητον δὲ καὶ ἄφθαρτον), completely without government, helmsman, or caretaker.' See also *Ebr.* 199; *Spec.* III, 189; *Praem.* 42. In almost all of these passages, Philo contrasts this opinion with his view that the world is created and cared for by God (see further *Plant*. 50; *Spec.* I, 35).

187 For background and a more elaborate discussion of the Epicurean defence against this accusation, see Long, 'Chance'. Christopher C. W. Taylor points out that it may be a misunderstanding of the atomist position to claim that they attributed everything to chance. Indeed, their position may have been much more deterministic: everything is ruled by necessity, but because humans cannot know the causes of everything that happens, they attribute it to chance (see Taylor, *Pleasure*, p. 188).

atomistic view of reality. Already Plato and Aristotle refuted the mechanistic philosophies for their seeming incompatibility of the arbitrariness of the atomic swerve on the one side with the stability of the laws of nature and the regularity of the movements of the stars and planets on the other. Philo similarly argued that without God providing order and stability to the material world, there can only be disorder and chaos.[188]

To sum up. The presentation of God as completely detached from the material world is the first extreme position regarding the relationship between God and creation that Philo rejected. Philo argued that without God's involvement with the material world, it would be in chaos, without order, stability or goodness. The opposite position, whereby God and the material world were seen as one, is the second extreme that Philo rejected. As will be shown, he did so for the same reason. To Philo, such a view also implied that there can be no reliable order in the world.

2.2.3.4 Analysis part 3: God and creation are not one

According to Philo, atomist philosophy failed to provide an explanation for the order visible in the material world. But Philo was also aware of philosophers who did provide an explanation for the order visible in the material world, but at the same time, in his opinion, assigned too much splendour to it. Philo used the name 'Chaldeans' to identify these philosophers. According to Philo, they claimed the heavenly bodies, the sun, the moon and the stars to be the ultimate powers which provide order and control events in the material world.[189] As Philo saw it, these philosophers presented the world itself as divine instead of distinguishing between creation and God.[190]

The identification of God with the world itself resembles a form of materialism present in Stoic philosophy.[191] In general, the Stoics held that the material world was one whole and that nothing existed outside it. They held that God must be part of the material world as well.[192] Philo opposed this view of reality, although

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188 See also Runia, *Creation*, pp. 117–118, where he additionally presents the example of Atticus (2nd century CE), who brought forward an argument in favour of divine providence similar to that of Philo.

189 *Migr.* 179, 192–194; *Her.* 99, 301; *Mut.* 16; *Spec.* I, 13–14; *Virt.* 212. Philo almost always combines his description of what he calls the 'Chaldean creed' with an exhortation to leave their opinion behind.

190 As Philo put it with a Greek wordplay in *Congr.* 49: μᾶλλον δὲ τὸν κόσμον αὐτὸν θεὸν αὐτοκράτορα νομίζων, οὐκ αὐτοκράτορος ἔργον θεοῦ.

191 Niehoff describes the similarities between what Philo presents as the 'Chaldean creed' and Stoic materialism in Niehoff, *Biography*, pp. 226–228.

192 Cicero, *ND* I.15.37; *SVF* II, 532, 774. Stoic philosophy in general is described as pantheistic (see note 171 and also, for instance, Long, *Hellenistic Philosophy*, p. 152 and Hornblower/Spawforth, *Classical Dictionary*, p. 1446). In the latter (p. 195) it is additionally claimed that Stoic philosophers, especially Posidonius, legitimised astrology, which is contested by Long in Long, *Epicurus to*

we should note that he describes this view as 'Chaldean' and not Stoic.[193] In *Opif.* 6b–12, Philo offers two arguments for why he maintains that God transcends his creation. These arguments bring two aspects to light of how Philo considered God and creation to be fundamentally different from each other.

Philo's first argument is that regarding everything in existence, one must distinguish between the active cause and its passive object.[194] The active cause forms the passive object into separate, distinct objects, thereby bringing the material world into existence. According to Philo, the active cause that brought the material world into existence cannot be part of that world itself. He identifies the active cause with 'the mind of the universe' (*Opif.* 8). Moreover, to avoid seeing that mind as in anyway a part of that universe, Philo adds that it transcends even immaterial concepts, such as virtue and beauty.[195]

Why did Philo believe that the ultimate active cause could not be part of the material universe? He did not explain his view in *De Opificio Mundi*, but in other places Philo elaborated on what he saw as the fallacy of the Chaldeans. According to Philo, the Chaldeans, the astrologers, thought that instead of a transcendent God, the stars controlled the events in the world. Philo countered

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Epictetus, p. 133. The doctrines of Antiochus of Ascalon (approximately 130–68 BCE), as described by Dillon, provide an example of the kind of doctrines that Philo refuted. Antiochus often took his starting point from the writings of Plato and in his philosophy merged Platonic, Aristotelean and Stoic ideas. Enlightening for our discussion is Antiochus' agreement with Zeno that there is nothing that is 'immaterial, transcendent or external to the material universe.' In addition, Antiochus merged Plato's Demiurge and World Soul into 'one positive force immanent in the world, the Logos' (Dillon, *Middle Platonists*, pp. 83–84).

193 For this reason, Bos avoids identifying the Chaldeans with the Stoics and only uses the label 'Chaldean' in his article discussing Philo's argument in *Opif.* 6b–12, see Bos, 'Philo'.

194 As Philo writes in *Opif.* 8: 'Moses … realised that it is completely inevitable that in everything that exists there is an active cause and a passive part' (Μωυσῆς δέ … ἔγνω δὴ ὅτι ἀναγκαιότατόν ἐστιν ἐν τοῖς οὖσι τὸ μὲν εἶναι δραστήριον αἴτιον, τὸ δὲ παθητόν). In Diogenes Laertius' summary of the Stoic view on the relation between God and the material world, a distinction is made between the active cause and the passive object similar to Philo (as Bos explains before the Stoics, Aristotle already distinguished between the active and the passive, see ibid., p. 71). In contrast to Philo, however, Zeno identified the substance of God with the whole of the world and heaven (see DL *VII*, 134 and 148). Sterling presents an overview of various aspects of the philosophical debate in antiquity over 'cause' in Sterling, 'Day One', pp. 126–129.

195 Philo continues in *Opif.* 8 that the active cause is 'the most pure and fully unmixed mind of the universe … greater than virtue, and greater than knowledge, greater than the good itself and the beautiful itself.' Bos suggests that Philo was inspired by Aristotelian arguments in this section. Aristotle argued that the active and the passive principle are both immaterial (cf. *An.* I, 407b 17–18). He further claimed in *Met.* XII, 1075b 34–37 that Plato did not clearly identify the cause of everything that exists (although Plato did connect νοῦς and αἴτιος in *Phil.* 30A–E, as Dillon points out in Dillon, *Middle Platonists*, p. 157). Bos argues that Aristotle's solution to Plato's perceived omission was to identify that cause as the intellect and the prime mover. According to Aristotle, God is the intellect transcending virtue in the sense of human practice (*Eth. Nic.* X, 1177b 25–30) (see Bos, 'Philo', pp. 71–73).

that if the heavenly bodies of the material world were the ultimate cause for everything in existence, then they would need to be constantly active and never be passive or at rest. This is not so, according to Philo. The sun, the moon and the stars can be seen to change their course with the seasons. Change implies being acted upon, 'suffering' in a sense.[196] Thus, if the heavenly bodies are acted upon, they are also passive in some way and cannot be the ultimate cause for creation. According to Philo, only a transcendent God can be said to be active only and never be acted upon.[197]

As Philo saw it, to believe that the cause for the material world lies inside that world itself is a grave mistake. Its consequence is that one honours creation over its creator.[198] According to Philo, there can be no greater impiety than to ascribe attributes of the truly active to what is essentially passive.[199] Philo reasoned that 'Chaldeans' believed something created (i.e., the stars) was greater than their creator (God). Philo held that the order is exactly the other way around, namely that the creator is always superior to that which he has created.[200]

Philo maintained that the ultimate cause for creation must exist apart from the material world, because everything existing in the material world, including the

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196 *Cher.* 88.

197 *Det.* 161: 'the truly existent must be active (δραστήριον), not passive (πάσχον)'; and *Mut.* 22: 'no one who has come into being (γενητὸς) can truly be lord (κύριος) … only the unoriginated (ὁ ἀγένητος) can be a true ruler (ἀψευδῶς ἡγεμών).'

198 A statement that we find in *Opif.* 7 and also in *Som.* II, 70; *Dec.* 60–64; *Spec.* I, 180; *Virt.* 180. Philo connects his arguments in *Opif.* 7 and 12. Through this connection he emphasises the contrast between the correct insights of Moses and the wrong opinions of others. Philo writes in *Opif.* 7 that those who assume the material world to be uncreated ascribe too much majesty to that material world, whereas as Philo makes clear in *Opif.* 12, Moses correctly ascribed majesty to God by honouring him as the creator of the world.

199 In *Spec.* III, 180 Philo writes: 'For there is no greater impiety (ἀσέβημα) than to ascribe the power of the active to the passive.' Moreover, Philo writes in *Deus* 22: 'Could there be a greater impiety than to suppose that the Immutable changes?' In *Legat.* 118 Philo writes that to presume a man to be a god, is to mistake the becoming and destructible nature of humans for being not-becoming and indestructible; moreover, to do so is the most evil of impieties. Apparently, the greatest impiety for Philo is to interchange the categories of being and becoming, to mistake the one for the other, most of all to take God to be a part of the material world, the world of becoming. In Philo's works, impiety often appears as rejection of misconceptions regarding God: for example, in *Aet.* 85 to believe that the world will be destroyed and that God rejoices in disorder is called an impiety, or in *LA* III, 29–31 to suppose that anything in creation moves by itself is seen as an abandonment of God. Impiety also appears regularly within the context of some religious law being broken: it is an impiety to mistreat guests and suppliants, to curse God or to use his name in vain, to work on the Sabbath, to commit murder or to expose children (*Mos.* I, 33, II, 200–204, 217, *Spec.* II, 251–254, III, 84 and 110). The two aspects of impiety (adhering to misconceptions about God and breaking religious laws) are combined in *Mos.* II, 294, where Philo writes that it is the greatest impiety to put one's own deliberations before the oracles from God.

200 *Migr.* 192–194.

heavenly bodies, is always acted upon in some way. He held that the ultimate cause cannot be but active. Therefore, Philo concluded that it must exist separate from the material world. Philo identified God as the ultimate cause.[201] According to Philo, the material world and God are fundamentally different, even incompatible (ἀντιπάλοι) natures.[202]

Philo's first argument why God and the material world are fundamentally different from each other is that in his view, only God can be said to be truly active and never acted upon. For Philo, God simply *is*. He saw God as pure existence – neither becoming nor changing – because he must be the best possible being and change could only turn him into something worse.[203] Philo's second argument why he considered God and the material world to be fundamentally different from each other, is also related to the theme of change, as will become apparent by zooming in on Philo's concluding statement in *Opif.* 12.

He writes:

> The great Moses, on the contrary, held that which is unoriginated (τὸ ἀγένητον) to be of a completely different order from that which is visible; for everything that is perceived through the senses is always becoming and changing (ἐν γενέσει καὶ μεταβολαῖς), never being the same (οὐδέποτε κατὰ ταὐτὰ ὄν). So, he assigned to that which is invisible and perceived by the mind "everlastingness" (ἀιδιότητα) as most closely related to it, and he gave to that which is perceived through the senses "becoming" (γένεσιν) as its appropriate name. Well, since this world is both visible and perceived through the senses, it must also have come into being (ἀναγκαίως ἂν εἴη καὶ γενητός); which is why he set down the coming into being of the world not without reason, for in doing so he spoke of God in the most respectful way.

Philo's argument in *Opif*. 12 is quite condensed. Something of a wordplay appears in *Opif*. 12 on two derivatives of γίγνομαι: γένεσις and γενητός. These words need to be translated differently in English, as 'becoming' and 'having

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201 See *Ebr.* 73; *Conf.* 98; *Mut.* 15.

202 *LA* III, 7. See also *Som.* II, 28 where Philo tells us that God is completely separated from creation.

203 For God as unchangeable in contrast to the constant change and movement of the material world see also *Cher.* 19; *Som.* I, 249; II, 290. Plato provides two pieces of evidence to support his view that God cannot change, in *Rep.* II, 380D–381E. First, change is forced upon something by a stronger external force. Given that there can be nothing greater or stronger than God, God cannot suffer from some external force and change. Second, change always makes something better or worse. Given that God is the best possible being, change can only make him worse and therefore God cannot change. Plato's arguments in support of the immutability of God can also be found in Philo's works: in *Sacr.* 9 (nothing can be added or removed from God) and *Cher.* 90 (God does not suffer or can be worn down into changing) (see also Edwards, 'Pagan Dogma').

come into being.' This fact somewhat obscures Philo's argument, namely the contrast he wished to emphasise between γενητός ('that which has become') and ἀγένητος ('that which has *not* become'). Expanding on Philo's argument in *Opif.* 12 will bring two important aspects of this contrast into view.

One aspect is similar to what we encountered above. For Philo, 'becoming' implied a cause. Philo does not mention the necessity of a cause in *Opif.* 12.[204] However, Philo does establish this link elsewhere in his works.[205] That he must have had this link in mind in *Opif.* 12 is also likely because of the close resemblance between Philo's formulation and that of a section of Plato's *Timaeus* (*Tim.* 28A). In this section, Plato discusses the contrast between 'being/not-becoming' and 'becoming/not-being.' He explains that things perceived by the mind truly exist, whereas things perceived by the senses never truly exist, because they are always becoming.[206] Plato then adds that what becomes must necessarily have a cause.[207]

The necessity of a cause is one important aspect of 'becoming.' Another important aspect of 'becoming' has to do with its relation to sense-perception. Philo discusses this relation quite elaborately in *De Ebrietate*.[208] In *Ebr.* 162–192, he argues against the opinion that the human mind is able to decide by itself what is true or false.[209] On its own, the human mind can only form judgements using impressions generated in it by objects in the world by means of the senses. These impressions vary among persons and over time even within the same person.[210]

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204 He mentions the active cause in *Opif.* 8, but he does not explicitly link cause and becoming to each other.

205 In *Cher.* 125–127 Philo explicitly states the connection between becoming and cause.

206 Philo uses a phrasing similar to Plato. In *Tim.* 28A Plato writes that what is grasped with the mind through reason is ἀεὶ κατὰ ταὐτὰ ὄν, whereas that which leads to opinions is formed through αἴσθησις ἄλογος … ὄντως δὲ οὐδέποτε ὄν. Philo in a sense combines these two and describes that which is perceived through the senses as οὐδέποτε κατὰ ταὐτὰ ὄν. As Runia notes, 'Philo gives a compact paraphrase of *Tim.* 27d6–28a4' (Runia, *Creation*, p. 120, cf. also Sterling, 'Day One', p. 131).

207 In *Tim.* 28A Plato states that 'everything coming into being necessarily does so through some cause (ὑπ' αἰτίου τινὸς).'

208 Cf. *Cher.* 19, 170; *Spec.* III, 178–179; *Som.* I, 249; *Som.* II, 290.

209 See especially *Ebr.* 166.

210 In *Ebr.* 171–192 Philo lists all the various differences and changes in the things that appear in the realm of the material world, such as differences between the forms and appearances of living animals, the dependency of impressions on the state of mind of the beholder, optical illusions and more. In *Tim.* 28A Plato also presents the information from the senses as leading to opinions, not rational knowledge (see note 206). Furthermore, Philo's list is reminiscent of sceptical arguments. Francis H. Colson calls Philo's list his 'version of the "tropes of Aenesidemus"' which are found in the works of the Sceptics Sextus Empiricus (see, for example, *Pyrrh. Hyp.* I, 36–37) and Diogenes Laertius (see DL *IX*, 79–88 and see also notes in Colson, *Philo vol. 3*, pp. 318–319 and 505–506).

This leads Philo to conclude that judgements based on these impressions can never result in certainty.[211] The second important aspect of 'becoming' is that it necessarily results in uncertainty and instability. The observation of 'what becomes' can never lead to stable, trustworthy information. Such observations only lead to opinions and not to true knowledge.

With these two aspects of 'becoming' in view, we can fully appreciate Philo's argument in *Opif.* 12. The material world is a world perceived through the senses. Given that it is perceived through the senses, it is necessarily always in a state of becoming. This state has two implications. One is that the material world must have a beginning, a cause that started its process of becoming. The other is that the material world, because it is in a state of constant change, is inherently unstable. It can never be a source of trustworthy knowledge.

The aspect of instability and unreliability brings the second argument into view of why, according to Philo, God cannot be identified with the material world. In the opinion of Philo, if God and the material world were one, the consequence would be that God must also be in a constant state of change and therefore unreliable. This was a blasphemous thought for Philo, which he strongly rejected.[212] Philo's second argument against the identification of God with the material world is that the latter belongs to 'becoming', implying change and unreliability, whereas God belongs to the completely opposite nature of 'not-becoming', never changing and therefore completely trustworthy.[213]

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[211] Philo presents this conclusion in *Ebr.* 170: 'However, since we find that they affect us ambiguously, we can say nothing with certainty about anything, because what appears is not stable, but always suffers from changes in many ways and forms.'

[212] Two aspects of the nature of that which becomes can be found in *Opif.* 6b–12: what becomes changes and what becomes has an origin. Another aspect of becoming we can find elsewhere in Philo's works is that becoming implies the dimension of time, which in turn implies the possibility of destruction. Becoming implies destruction, because becoming implies a time when something was not as well as a time when it will no longer be. Philo reasons that to identify God with the material world is to imply that God also becomes and that there was a time when God was not, or will no longer be. To say something like that about God is for Philo a profanity (see note 199).

[213] Philo does not state this explicitly in *Opif.* 6b–12, but the claim that God belongs to the category of not-becoming can be found in *Sacr.* 101, where Philo speaks of θεὸς ὁ ἀγένητος. A positive formulation of the same thought is where Philo identifies God with true being (see, for example, *Det.* 160; *Mut.* 11–13; *Som.* I ,231–234). The distinction between 'becoming' and the 'not-becoming' is at the root of many more characteristics for God: because God belongs to the category of 'that which has not become' he is immortal, imperishable, at peace, free from illusion, enjoys freedom, unchangeable, holy and solely blessed. By contrast, 'that which has become' is mortal, perishable, at constant war, subject to fatality, mutable and profane. These differences between γενητός and ἀγένητος can be found in *Mut.* 181; *Som.* II, 253; *Sacr.* 101. In *Som.* I, 249–250 Philo claims that creation is ever in movement, whereas the not-becoming (with God as the prime example) stands still and does not change. Similar statements can be found in *Post.* 23, 29–30; *Som.* II, 221–222. In *Som.* II, 290 Philo writes that creation is in a constant state of change and decay. In *Spec.* II, 166 Philo further associates creation with destruction, and God with eternity. A similar link between becoming and destruction can be found in *Dec.* 58. In *LA* III,

To sum up. Seeing God and the material world as one is the second extreme position regarding the relationship between God and creation that Philo rejected. Philo presented two arguments against those who identify God with the material world. He considered God and the material world to be of completely different natures in two fundamental ways. The first is the difference between God as truly active and the material world as passive. The second way is the contrast between becoming and being. The material world is in a continuous process of becoming and changing. Philo reasoned that if God were a part of the material world and the material world were the only existing thing, nothing could truly exist; everything would always be becoming and changing, without order and stability. Without order and stability, for Philo, there ultimately would be no beauty, truth or goodness in creation.

2.2.3.5 Results from the analysis of Opif. *6b–12*

My analysis of *Opif.* 6b–12 has shown what was at stake for Philo in the debate regarding the relationship between God and the world. His main concern was whether there can be order, stability and goodness in creation. Philo battled on two fronts, namely first against those who present God or the gods as completely detached from the world, and second against those who identify God and the world as one entity. According to Philo, both these views undermine God's providential care for the world, without which the world would be a place of chaos.

Against those who claimed that God does not concern himself with matters in the material world, Philo maintained that a world ruled by chance cannot explain the order and beautiful harmony distinguishable in creation. As Philo saw it, only God can provide and sustain that order, so the material world and God must be in some way connected. At the same time, Philo considered it blasphemous to identify God with the material world itself. Philo deemed everything that appears in the material world as subjected to change, becoming and destruction. To identify God with the material world is incompatible with Philo's view that God is the only truly existent. According to Philo, the nature of what truly exists is completely opposite to that of the material world. True being is the best form of being and therefore implies not changing, not appearing or disappearing.

Philo considered God and the material world as opposing natures. This view reminds us of one problematic aspect of divine forgiveness: forgiveness implies a relationship, yet how can two opposing natures be connected? At the same time, we have seen that Philo emphasised the necessity of a connection between

101 Philo writes that God cannot be identified with anything in the created world, because what is created disappears, whereas the uncreated is eternal.

God and the world. There could be no stable order in the material world, if God were not involved with that world, or if that world were the only thing in existence. To remain harmonious, the material world is dependent on the immutable God. Without such order, creation would be without beauty and goodness.

The following question then presents itself: if Philo held on the one hand that the material world and God are of completely different natures, and on the other hand claimed that the material world is dependent upon God for its continuing existence, how could he reconcile these two seemingly incompatible tenets? Philo's solution to this problem will come into view when he describes the creation of the intelligible world in *Opif.* 13–36a. I will now analyse this passage.

2.2.4 Opif. *13–36a: God's providence operates through the intelligible world*

2.2.4.1 *Paraphrase*

In *Opif*. 13–36a, having established in the preceding sections (*Opif.* 6b–12) that the world must have been created, Philo can now begin his exposition of the creation story. Before discussing the details of the creation of the material world on days two to six (in *Opif.* 36b–68), Philo dedicates *Opif*. 13–36a to the first day of creation which in his opinion was reserved to bringing the intelligible world into being.

Philo first explains (in *Opif*. 13–14) why six is the most appropriate number for creation, using arithmological arguments. He further argues that of the six creation-days, day one was set apart by Moses. Philo attaches special significance to the fact that in Gn. 1:5 this day is designated 'one' (μία) and not 'first' (πρώτη) (*Opif.* 15; the argument is repeated in *Opif.* 35). The choice of avoiding the ordinal number 'first' is made to separate day one from the sequence of the other creation days. Being 'one' shows the special relationship between what is created on day one and the monad (ἡ μονάς), the fundament of everything that exists.

On day one, God created the intelligible world (*Opif.* 16). Philo compares the way the intelligible world is conceived to the way a human architect wanting to build a city first creates a design for it in his mind. The architect then uses this mental model to create the city in material form (*Opif.* 17–18a).[214] Similarly, God first created the intelligible world in his divine reason (*Opif.* 18b–20). This is because, being good, he wanted to bring order, quality and life to that which lacked all those things (*Opif.* 21–23). He did this by forming the material world, using the intelligible world – existing in his divine reason – as a model

[214] This element of *Opif.* 13–36a will be analysed in Chapter 3, see pp. 100–105.

(*Opif.* 24–25).

The intelligible world was created first. Not first in time, for, as Philo argues, time comes into being only with the creation of the material world. It was created first in order, as it is the most excellent of everything God created (*Opif.* 26–28). According to Philo, Moses wanted his readers to note especially the concepts of life-breath and light. Life-breath deserves special attention, as it emphasises that God is the source of all life (*Opif.* 29). Light also deserves special attention, as it refers to intellectual light. This is the light of reason that brings understanding. Such intellectual light is far greater than the visible light of the sun, the moon and the stars, for all objects of the material world have a certain dimness when compared to the objects of the intelligible world (*Opif.* 30–34).

The last two things created on day one were the concepts of dawn and evening. They function as the boundaries between light and darkness, defining day and night and thereby the boundaries of time (*Opif.* 35). By setting these boundaries the intelligible world is now complete, and the creation of the material world can begin (*Opif.* 36a).

2.2.4.2 *Analysis part 1:* Ἀγένητος *implies existence outside the dimension of time*

Philo's concept of 'the intelligible world' (κόσμος νοητός) has been greatly debated in Philonic scholarship.[215] I wish to add my own observations to the discussion, because in Philo's concept of the intelligible world lies an important key towards understanding how he held that God and the material world can interact with each other, while claiming that they are of completely different nature. This exploration is therefore relevant to Philo's view on divine pardon, a specific form of interaction between the immutable God and the ever-changing material world, as it will show how Philo believed the gap between two such contrasting natures might be bridged.

In the first two parts of the analysis, I will explore the contrast between God and the intelligible world on the one hand and the material world on the other. The first part of the analysis of *Opif.* 13–36a will be dedicated to the apparent contradiction between Philo's statement that the intelligible world is created and at the same time is qualified by him as ἀγένητος. Exploring this paradox will enable a better understanding of how Philo used γενητός and ἀγένητος to amplify the contrast between God and the material world. Understanding Philo's use of γενητός and ἀγένητος prepares the way for the second part of the analysis, where his view on the relationship between God and the intelligible world will be explored. The intelligible world will be seen to be intimately

[215] See for instance Daniélou, *Philon*, pp. 168–172, Dillon, *Middle Platonists*, pp. 158–166 and Williamson, *Philo*, pp. 103–143, see also literature in note 217.

connected to God, resulting in a gap between God and the intelligible world on the one hand and the material world on the other. The final step of the analysis of *Opif*. 13–36a, however, will show how precisely the deep chasm between God and the material world is bridged through the intelligible world.

I will begin the analysis of Philo's description of the intelligible world's creation with what appear as contradictory statements regarding that world. In *Opif*. 13–36a, Philo presents the intelligible world as part of creation.[216] Nevertheless, Philo also used the word ἀγένητος as a qualification for the concepts (which he also calls 'ideas' or 'powers') that are part of the intelligible world.[217] Two ideas, first that the intelligible world is created by God and second that the contents of this intelligible world are ἀγένητος, seem to contradict each other – that is, if we understand ἀγένητος to mean 'uncreated.' I will explore this apparent contradiction by focusing on the concept of 'time', because Philo also described 'time' as both created and as ἀγένητος.

As Philo explains in *Opif.* 26, time came into being (γέγονεν) either together with or after the material world, because it is connected to movement through space. The same definition of time appears in *Aet.* 52.[218]

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216 In several other places Philo also states that God is the creator of both the conceptual and the material world, see, for example, *LA* I, 21 and *Virt.* 213.

217 See *Cher.* 86 (here Philo uses ἀρχέτυπος) and *Deus* 78 (where Philo writes that the powers are ἀγένητος). There are countless concepts contained within the intelligible world, which explains Philo's statement in *Opif.* 15 that it would be impossible to recount every individual concept that was created on day one (see also *Conf.* 171, where Philo writes that the powers are numberless). The most eminent concept is the intelligible world as a whole, which contains all other concepts. In *Opif.* 13–36a Philo uses various words to designate the contents of the intelligible world. In *Opif.* 17 he uses ἰδέαι, and in *Opif.* 20 δυνάμεις. In *Opif.* 21, Philo names goodness as one of these powers. For Philo, these powers represent concepts (such as goodness), just like the ideas, which explains how he can use the two terms interchangeably. Goodness (ἀγαθότης) and authority (ἐξουσία) can often be found in Philo's works as the two chief powers from which all others derive. See, for example, *Cher.* 27–28 for a description of the hierarchy that Philo has in mind: goodness and authority are the two chief powers; they again come together in reason. A similar description can be found in *Sacr.* 59; *Plant*. 90–92; *Fug.* 95; *Som.* I, 162–163; *Abr.* 121; *Mos.* II, 98–100; *Spec.* I, 307; *QG* IV, 2, 8; *QE* II, 68. For a more elaborate discussion of the relation between divine reason, the (chief) powers and the ideas see also Bréhier, *Les idées*, pp. 107–117 and 155–157, Wolfson, *Philo vol. 1*, pp. 210–331 and Runia, *Timaeus*, pp. 447–449. Both Bréhier and Wolfson identify the powers with the ideas.

218 The arguments that Philo presents in *De Aeternitate Mundi* seem to contradict those of *De Opificio Mundi*. Some scholars interpret the larger part of *De Aeternitate Mundi* as a presentation of Aristotelian arguments, supposedly refuted by Philo in the second, lost part of the treatise (see Dillon, *Middle Platonists*, p. 133 and Colson, *Philo vol. 9*, p. 174). The central question of this treatise, however, is whether the *order* of the material world can be undone (see *Aet*. 6). When the arguments presented in *De Aeternitate Mundi* are read with the contrast between 'being' and 'becoming' in mind – and in particular with a translation of 'not-having-become' for ἀγένητος – they appear less contradictory to those in *De Opificio Mundi*. Philo agrees in *Aet*. 10 with Aristotle that the *order* of the material world (that is, the intelligible world) is not subject to becoming, change or destruction, for it is ἀγένητος and ἄφθαρτος.

Philo, however, begins that section with the claim that time is ἀγένητος. Did Philo contradict himself, by describing time both as ἀγένητος and as having come into being with the material world? The key to understand what Philo meant with his statement that time is ἀγένητος can be found in *Aet.* 53. Here, he reasons that time must be without a beginning or end *in time*, because to say that there was a time 'when time was not' is nonsense. Philo therefore reasons that time must be ἀγένητος, meaning that time 'did not become' at a certain point of time, rather than meaning that time is 'uncreated.'[219]

Qualifying something as ἀγένητος meant for Philo that it has no beginning or end in time; it exists outside the dimension of time.[220] This is precisely how he described the nature of the intelligible world: it was made, but it was not made in time.[221] He further explains that when a 'beginning' is ascribed to the creation of the intelligible world, this should not be understood as a beginning in time.[222] Philo interprets it to mean 'first' in a hierarchical sense: the intelligible world takes first place in the hierarchy of all the things God made. Implicated in this hierarchy is dependence. In hierarchy God is the very first. He is pure existence, the source for everything else – including the intelligible world – to exist. According to Philo, the intelligible world was created, meaning it has a beginning in the sense that it is dependent upon God for its existence; and it is also ἀγένητος, not meaning 'uncreated' but rather that it exists outside the dimension of time.[223]

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219 The only dimension available for time to have been made in is eternity. In *Her.* 165 Philo writes that time is 'the copy of eternity' (τό μίμημα αἰῶνος) (similarly in *Deus* 32 and *Mut.* 267). Colson refers to a similar thought of Plato in *Tim.* 37D–E (see Colson, *Philo vol. 3*, p. 484 and Colson, *Philo vol. 4*, p. 365, note c). In *De Opificio Mundi* Philo mentions more than once that the whole of creation came into being simultaneously (see for instance *Opif.* 27 and 67). Dillon explains that within Platonism the question of whether the world was created at a certain point in time was greatly debated. According to Dillon, both Eudorus and Philo agree with Xenocrates that the world was not created at a point in time. As Dillon notes: 'The world must be taken to have been created extra-temporally, in the sense that it is dependent upon an external cause, to wit, God' (Dillon, *Middle Platonists*, p. 132).

220 For the interpretation of eternal as meaning supra-temporal instead of everlasting, see Bos' analysis of Aristotelian metaphysics, in Bos, *Soul*, p. 219.

221 See *Opif.* 26 and also *LA* I, 20; *Sacr.* 65, 76.

222 See *Opif.* 27.

223 As Philo writes in *Mut.* 267: 'Eternity defines the lifespan of the intelligible world, as time defines that of the visible world.'

When Philo qualified the intelligible world as ἀγένητος and placed it outside the dimension of time, he also qualified it as *not* 'becoming' – meaning that the intelligible world neither has a beginning in time, nor changes over time, nor will cease to exist at a certain point in time.[224] True existence and not-becoming is a form of existence completely opposite to that of the material world. Things in the material world necessarily come into being at a certain point in time, they change or grow as time goes by, and then disappear again.[225] With ἀγένητος Philo qualified the nature of the intelligible world as opposite to that of the material world. With this qualification he placed the intelligible world in the same category of 'being' as God.[226]

To sum up. Philo used the qualification ἀγένητος for the intelligible world to express that it belongs to a form of existence completely different from what can be qualified as γενητός.[227] The contrast is not between uncreated or created. Rather, Philo used ἀγένητος to qualify something as belonging to the category of God, of true being and not-becoming, unchanging and imperishable; and γενητός to qualify something as belonging to the category of the material world, the world of becoming, of the flow of time, of birth, change and decay. When Philo described the intelligible world as created by God, he expressed a form of hierarchy and dependence regarding the intelligible world and God. Philo saw God as true being in the first place, and the intelligible world as dependent upon God for its existence, for its share in true being. The relationship between God and the intelligible world will be further explored in the next section.

2.2.4.3 Analysis part 2: God and the intelligible world are intertwined

In the previous section, I explored Philo's qualification of the intelligible world as ἀγένητος and we saw how this qualification meant for Philo that God and the intelligible world are closely related to each other. They both belong to the category of true being, opposite to the material world of becoming. The current section describes how Philo regarded God and the intelligible world as so closely related to each other that neither can easily be distinguished from the other. We will see how the distinction between God and the intelligible world

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224 The timelessness of the intelligible world also explains the close relation that Philo expresses in *Opif.* 12 between the conceptual, the invisible, the not-becoming and everlastingness.

225 See pp. 61–67.

226 Philo qualified both God and the intelligible world as ἀγένητος. Philo uses ἀγένητος for God in *Migr.* 91; *Mut.* 22; *Som.* I, 77; *Dec.* 60; *Virt.* 213. Philo expresses the thought that time does not apply to God in *Deus* 32 (see further note 230). The doctrine that the ideas are that which truly exist is formulated as a Platonic tenet by Seneca in *Ep.* 58 (see Dillon, *Middle Platonists*, p. 136). Wolfson claimed that Philo qualifies the ideas as ἀγένητος to indicate that they were not created out of matter (Wolfson, *Philo vol. 1*, p. 222).

227 This idea is comparable to Dillon's explanation that Philo used the term ἀσώματος to express that something has qualities opposite to those of σῶμα (especially decay and change) (see Dillon, 'Angels', p. 203).

becomes vague when we explore the following question: where did Philo believe the intelligible world exists?

In *Opif.* 16–25, Philo explains that if in any sense the intelligible world can be said to exist in a place, this place must be divine reason: God's mind.[228] Philo problematises this statement in *Opif.* 17. Here, he writes that it is not appropriate to say that the intelligible world exists in a place, because a 'place' is something belonging to the material world. In *Opif.* 24, Philo bypasses this terminological problem by identifying the intelligible world with divine reason itself, instead of saying that it exists within it. He writes: 'one would say the intelligible world to be nothing else than the reason of God already creating the world.'[229]

In this sentence, 'already' is used as translation of ἤδη, but we should bear in mind that this 'already' cannot imply a temporal sense for Philo. The dimension of time does not apply to God, and therefore does not apply to his act of creation.[230] As Philo saw it, it is nonsensical to suggest that there was a time when God was not engaged in the act of creation. Given that the dimension of time does not apply, God can be seen as always being in the act of creation. Therefore, the intelligible world can be identified with divine reason, because time is not a relevant category whenever God's act of creating the world is concerned.[231]

The identity between divine reason and the intelligible world can be taken a step further. Not only could Philo identify divine reason and the intelligible world with each other, he could also identify the intelligible world and God with each other. He designated both God and the intelligible world as 'the monad' (ἡ μονάς) or 'the one' (τό ἕν). In *De Opificio Mundi* he identified the intelligible world with the monad.[232] Elsewhere he identified God the Creator with the monad or the one.[233] Both 'the monad' and 'the one' were used in ancient philosophy to identify the source of everything that exists. The origin of this

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228 According to Dillon, the doctrine that the ideas exist in the mind of God was an established doctrine of Middle-Platonism, and probably originated with Xenocrates (396–314 BCE) (see Dillon, *Middle Platonists*, p. 29). Runia presents an overview of the background of this doctrine in Runia, *Creation*, pp. 151–152.

229 Οὐδὲν ἄν ἕτερον εἴποι τὸν νοητὸν κόσμον εἶναι ἢ θεοῦ λόγον ἤδη κοσμοποιοῦντος.

230 An explicit denial by Philo of God creating in time can be found in *LA* I, 20 and *Sacr.* 65. In *Sacr.* 76 and *Dec.* 58 Philo writes that to God the dimension of time does not apply.

231 Wolfson also identified the intelligible world with divine reason itself. He referred to Aristotelian philosophy as a source for the notion that the mind and what the mind thinks can be identified with each other (Wolfson, *Philo vol. 1*, p. 246). The identity between the mind and what it thinks will be further explored in Chapter 3 (see pp. 124–137).

232 Both in his introduction to the passage in which he describes the creation of the intelligible world in *Opif.* 15 and in his summary in *Opif.* 35.

233 See *Som.* II, 70; *Spec.* II, 176; *Virt.* 213.

concept was ascribed to the Pythagoreans, who argued that numbers represent the fundamental order of the world and that everything in existence begins with the monad, because all other numbers are derived from it.[234] Plato accepted this idea and expanded on it by associating the elements with various mathematical figures.[235] The idea that the order in the world is associated with numbers, and that 'the monad' is fundamental for everything in existence became part of Philo's thinking as well.[236]

Philo was able to identify different things (God, his mind, the intelligible world) with the same labels, precisely because he considered them to be one. According to Philo, 'the monad' is essentially indivisible and therefore everything associated with it is essentially one and the same. The essential oneness of what to us appear as different things can be further illustrated: given that Philo saw 'the monad' as the beginning of everything else, he identified it with 'the first cause'.[237] He also used 'first cause' for the mind of God.[238] Since he saw 'the monad' as source of everything else to exist, he also identified it as the truly existent (τὸ ὄντως ὄν).[239] He identified God as the truly existent as well. Philo identifying different things with the same labels does not mean that he was a confused or inconsistent thinker. He was able to use the same labels

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234 See Kahn, *Pythagoreans* pp. 23–38; amongst others, Aristotle ascribes this notion to the Pythagoreans in *Met*. I, 986a15–21; X, 1056b21 and discusses it somewhat critically in XIV, 1089b35.

235 For example, in *Phd*. 101C Plato identifies one with unity and in *Soph*. 245A–B he identifies one with being and wholeness. As Plato writes in *Tim.* 53B, everything exists because of 'shapes and numbers' (εἴδεσι τε καὶ ἀριθμοῖς); moreover, in *Tim*. 53C–56C he describes how the elements fire, earth, water and air correspond to various numbers and mathematical figures.

236 James W. Thompson discusses Philo's identification of God with 'the one' in Thompson, 'The One', pp. 572–576; see also Noack, *Gottesbewußtsein*, pp. 131–141 (cf. Rabens, '*Pneuma*', p. 302, note 30), who points out that for Philo God also transcends the title of 'the one', as will be further discussed in the analysis of *Deus* 51–85 (see p. 87). Possibly, Philo suggests in *Opif*. 15 that he wrote a treatise – now lost to us – about the special properties of numbers and/or 'the one', although instead of referring to a separate treatise, he could simply refer to his discussion of 'day one' in *De Opificio Mundi* itself (see Runia, *Creation*, pp. 136–137). His interest in numerology is apparent in *De Opificio Mundi*; for example, he dedicates *Opif.* 47–52 to describing the special properties of the number four and 89–127 to the number seven (shorter and somewhat different in *LA* I, 8–15). Symbolical meanings for numbers appear more often in his works; in *Spec*. I, 187, for example, he associates one with beginning and seven with completion. A more elaborate discussion of Philo's use of numerology as an exegetical tool (including an overview of Philo's possible precursors) can be found in Moehring, 'Arithmology'; Horst R. Moehring concludes that Philo uses numerology 'to demonstrate that God's creation is orderly and in harmony with certain numbers and numerical relations,' (ibid., pp. 143–144) and that 'the cosmic and human order described by Moses is of universal validity' (ibid., p. 176). A comparison between Philo's discussion of the number seven in *Opif.* 89–127 and *LA* I, 8–15 is presented by Robert A. Kraft, in Kraft, *Jewish Texts*, pp. 217–236 (see also Runia, *Creation*, pp. 274–275).

237 *Spec.* III, 180.

238 *Opif.* 8, see also the analysis of *Opif.* 6b–12, especially pp. 61–67.

239 *Deus* 11. Similarly, in *Her.* 216 Philo identifies 'the one' as καὶ μόνον καὶ καθαρὸν ὄντως.

for God, his mind or reason and the intelligible world, because he saw them as essentially one and as indivisible.

The indivisible nature associated with God and the intelligible world again deepens the contrast between them and the material world. As Philo identified God and the intelligible world with 'the monad', he identified the material world with the number two. The number two represents that which has come into being, the world of 'becoming' as well as the matter (ὕλη) from which that world is formed, because Philo associated it with division and multiplicity.[240] Philo esteemed indivisibility over divisibility.[241]

To sum up. Philo presented God and the intelligible world as closely intertwined, so much so that he considered the intelligible world and God as essentially one with each other. The consequence of this unity between God and the intelligible world is that Philo presented both as completely different from the material world. I began the analysis of *Opif.* 13–36a with the following question: how did Philo believe that God and the material world can interact with each other when he also held them to be of completely different natures? The first two parts of my analysis of Philo's presentation of the intelligible world in *Opif.* 13–36a appear to have only deepened the problem. However, as we will see in the next section, it is precisely because the intelligible world and God are so closely intertwined that the former can function as a bridge between two completely different forms of existence, namely God and the material world.

2.2.4.4 Analysis part 3: The intelligible world gives existence to the material world

The previous part of the analysis showed how Philo held that the intelligible world always exists in God as divine reason engaged in the act of creating the material world. This final part of the analysis will show how Philo maintained that the intelligible world exists in the material world as well. We will see that the intelligible world forms a bridge between God and the material world, connecting the world of 'becoming' to that of 'being'. In this way, it is the medium for God to express his benevolence towards creation and his care for it.

In *Opif.* 16, Philo describes how the intelligible world exists in the material world. Here, he claims that the material world was created after the pattern of the intelligible world.[242] Philo writes that each material object that can be experienced through the senses has a corresponding immaterial object existing as part of the intelligible world.

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[240] See *LA* I, 3; *Som.* II, 70; *Spec.* III, 180; *QG* I, 15; II, 12.

[241] *Spec.* I, 180.

[242] Similarly, in *Opif.* 36, 130; *Ebr.* 133; *Her.* 280; *Mos.* I, 158; *Spec.* I, 302, 327; III, 191; *Aet.* 75.

In *Opif.* 21–22, Philo explains why material objects need corresponding immaterial objects to guarantee their continued existence: without a concept (ἰδέα), an individual object appearing in the material world would be without order and quality.[243] As Philo saw it, without the concepts through which material objects are catalogued, qualified and identified they would remain an unidentifiable chaos. Such unidentifiable chaos has the potential of *becoming* anything, but only immaterial concepts can bring material objects into actual *being*.

Did Philo believe that there is something like pre-existent matter? This is not the case. Instead, he maintained that unformed matter is something to which the term 'existence' does not quite apply; it exists only as potential, in and of itself it *is* nothing yet. It comes into being – it *becomes* something – through the imprint of the concepts from the intelligible world.[244] Through that imprint, individual objects with qualities that identify them as belonging to a certain class or category can come into being.

Through the intelligible world God grants 'being' to not-yet-existent matter, which explains why Philo saw the intelligible world as an expression of God's benevolence. In *Opif.* 21, Philo writes that because of his goodness, the creator wished to grant existence to something other than himself, for it is inherent to goodness to share and not jealously keep to oneself.[245] Philo saw the intelligible world as the medium through which God gives the material world a share in

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[243] Compare *Mut.* 135; *Som.* II, 45; *Cont.* 4. Plato describes in *Tim.* 29E–30A how through the process of creation God bestows order on that which of itself is without order.

[244] The question whether Philo believed that matter is pre-existent, is greatly debated in Philonic scholarship. Some scholars hold that Philo preferred the notion that God brought order to that which was without order (Bréhier, *Les idées*, p. 82; Runia, *Timaeus*, pp. 425–426, 451, 454). Both Runia and Dillon maintain that Philo remained ambivalent about whether matter was created by God or not (ibid., p. 289; Dillon, *Middle Platonists*, p. 158). According to Wolfson, Philo believed that God created everything, including the elements out of which the material world was made (Wolfson, *Philo vol. 1*, p. 308). However, *Opif.* 22 (similar in *Her.* 160) seems to express that Philo regarded matter as something pre-existent, on which God imprints the patterns of creation. Then again, in *Som.* I, 76 Philo clearly states that nothing existed before and separately from God and that God brought everything into being 'not only a as crafter (δημιουργός), but also as its founder (κτίστης)' (see also *LA* II, 2; *Mos.* II, 100; *Prov.* frag. I, 1). The solution lies in the way Philo saw potential as not yet existing, as he reasons in *Opif.* 21, where he writes that something that can *potentially* be everything does not exist in the proper sense until it becomes something *definite*. According to Philo, this potential only becomes something definite, something that actually exists, through the creative action of God (see also Frick, *Providence*, p. 42; Winston, 'Eternal Creation', p. 120 and the summary of the debate on Philo's stance towards *creatio ex nihilo* in Runia, *Creation*, pp. 152–153). On the subtleties of the debate concerning the nature of matter in Platonism in late antiquity (80 BCE to 250 CE), see Boys-Stones, *Platonist Philosophy*, pp. 103–107.

[245] Philo's argument in *Opif.* 21 closely resembles the arguments Plato presents in *Tim.* 29E. Similarly in *Migr.* 182–183.

'being' and thereby a share in beauty and goodness.[246] This happens as follows: the concepts truly exist, they are unchangeable. They retain their form and quality for eternity, whereas the individual objects of the material world *become* – that is, they appear, grow, change shape, deteriorate, and disappear again. The class and the category of the individual object, however, do not disappear.[247] Not in the slightest way: it is precisely because of that eternal concept that it is possible that individual objects appear, disappear and reappear again and again with consistent forms and qualities. The coherence of material objects is safeguarded by the eternal existence of the unchanging concepts. Conversely, Philo held that without the intelligible world, there can be no order, no quality, no objective guarantee that something that appears in the material world would do so consistently.[248]

As much as it is an expression of God's benevolence, the intelligible world is also an expression of God's care for the material world.[249] According to Philo, the intelligible world guarantees continued existence, beautiful harmony and good order of the objects that appear in the material world.[250] He viewed the intelligible world as the medium through which God's providential care for the material world works and operates.[251] It is through the intelligible world that the gap between God's existence and the becoming and constantly changing material world is bridged.[252] Philo reasoned that God's providence means that through the intelligible world, he guarantees the eternal existence of the material world. Without it, the material world would disintegrate. This can be illustrated with a quotation from *Dec.* 58 where Philo writes about the created world: 'For it has come into being and its becoming is the start of its destruction, were it not for the creator's providence making it immortal.'[253]

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246 A thought Philo also expressed through speaking of the eternal existence of nature (see *Opif.* 44; *Sacr.* 98; *Her.* 114) (see also Chapter 3, pp. 118–121).

247 *Cher.* 51; *Fug.* 11–13. Plato argues for the immortal existence of the soul based on the assumption of the indestructible existence of the qualities in *Phd.* 105E–106B.

248 In *Spec.* I, 327–329, Philo argues against those who claim that the ideas do not truly exist. According to Philo, the implication of this line of thinking is that quality and form are said to be non-existent, which again means that what is left is 'formless matter' (ἄμορφος ὕλη). Philo adds that 'the opinion which eliminates the ideas destroys everything and brings it back to the pre-elemental state of being, the state without form or quality.' He then adds that by use of the truly existing ideas God has brought everything else into being (see also Philo's objections to the atomists as discussed on pp. 59–61).

249 In *Mut.* 45–46, Philo describes God's care for the world as an expression of God being good and generous (ἀγαθὸς καὶ φιλόδωρος).

250 See also Wolfson, *Philo vol. 1*, p. 286; Runia, *Timaeus*, p. 444.

251 Philo expresses this thought explicitly in *Migr.* 6.

252 Philo expresses this thought explicitly in *Post.* 14, 20; see also *Spec.* I, 239 (paraphrased in note 248).

253 Dillon suggests that Philo tended towards a belief that the material world is ruled by an entity almost separate from God (Dillon, *Middle Platonists*, p. 170). I disagree with this view. I maintain that Philo held that God through his providential care is closely involved with the material world, even

For Philo, the intelligible world is a channel connecting God to the material world. God, because he is good and cares for the world, uses this channel to let the material world share in the category of 'being' and thereby in beauty and goodness. This channel is a two-way connection. The concepts also form a channel through which humans can perceive the truly existing intelligible world and can recognise God's goodness and care. Philo held that the material world perceived by the senses, can lead the mind to perceive the concepts of the intelligible world.[254] How does this work? The senses experience and identify material objects through the forms and qualities of those objects.[255] These forms and qualities are concepts, which are grasped by the mind. The mind discerns the patterns of the intelligible world when the eye looks at the visible objects which appear in the material world.[256]

To sum up. Philo maintained that God's providential care for creation operates through the intelligible world. The concepts give the objects of the material world meaning and coherence. The concepts connect the material world of becoming to the divine world of true being, beauty and goodness. The concepts are also a means for the human mind to come into contact with the world

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though at the same time Philo more than once emphasised that God should not be identified with the material world. Wolfson, Runia, Frick and Francesca Calabi also identify providence with divine reason (Wolfson, *Philo vol. 1*, pp. 331–332; *vol. 2*, p. 190; Runia, *Timaeus*, p. 441; Frick, *Providence*, pp. 52, 117; Calabi, *God's Acting*, p. 100). Wolfson did not believe that Philo had a problem with transcendence, for according to Wolfson, Philo believed that God could be in direct contact with the material world and does not need intermediaries; God chooses to employ intermediaries (Wolfson, *Philo vol. 1*, pp. 282, 289, 376; see also Frick, *Providence*, p. 59). Runia states that Philo did not provide a solution for the problem of God's transcendence (Runia, *Timaeus*, p. 443). However, Runia largely holds the view that divine reason is the instrument for God to be immanent in the material world, while at the same time maintaining God's transcendence (ibid., p. 450). According to Daniélou, Philo solved the problem of God's transcendence by suggesting that God gives συγγένεια between the creator and creation, although how this 'relation' operates does not become clear (Daniélou, *Philon*, p. 176). Bos suggests that Philo was inspired by the Pseudo-Aristotelian treatise *De Mundo* for the concept that the gap between God and the material world is bridged through God's powers (Bos, 'Philo', p. 69). Runia maintains that Philo must have found the solution of *De Mundo* 'unsatisfactory, because God's providence is not exercised directly' (Runia, *Creation*, p. 123).

254 Even though he regarded the human senses as untrustworthy, as discussed on pp. 61–67.

255 *Opif.* 62–63, 134.

256 The world of the senses is in this way a gateway to the world of the mind, a statement Philo makes in *Som.* I, 188. He continues in the same section and writes about a time when the intelligible world shall change its title and its walls and gates shall be removed. This has been interpreted as either a Christian interpolation, or an expression of Philo having apocalyptic notions. Philo's statement, however, can be interpreted in the light of a comparable statement by Plato in *Phd.* 109B–111C. In this passage, Socrates compares life in the material world to living on the bottom of the sea. Should people raise their head out above the water (which to those living at the bottom of the sea is mistakenly held to be the heaven), they would see a completely different and new world. Just so, when human souls travel to the real heaven and see the real world, they will learn that before they mistook something completely different to be the heaven, but now know the true heaven.

of being. Order and qualities reveal themselves in the material world, when the mind begins to discern the patterns, the concepts that lie behind the bewildering diversity of the material world.

My analysis of *Opif.* 13–36a began with the question how Philo thought God could interact with the material world. It was demonstrated that Philo maintained that only the intelligible world is able to establish the connection through which God interacts with creation. At the same time, this connection between God and the material world functions as the medium through which humans are able to come into contact with the divine. The interaction between God and human beings will be further explored in Chapter 3.

2.2.4.5 ***Results from the analysis of* Opif. *13–36a***

My analysis of *Opif.* 13–36a provided the answer to the question of *how* God's providential care for the material world can work, even though Philo, as we saw in the analysis of *Opif.* 6b–12, maintained that God and the material world are two contrasting natures. According to Philo, God's providential care operates by means of the intelligible world. Philo saw the intelligible world as the collection of all the concepts forming and ordering everything that appears in the material world, allowing it to exists in a harmonious and beautiful way. These concepts exist as part of God, as the contents of divine reason. They also exist as part of the material world, as concepts which through their imprint upon matter create individual material objects. By means of the concepts, discernible for the human intellect, God benevolently grants 'being', beauty and goodness to the material world.

The notion of providential care brings to mind images of parents caring for their offspring, an image evoking personal and emotional associations. It has become clear, however, that providential care appears in Philo's thought as a more detached process. As Philo presented it, the intelligible world does exactly the same as providence, namely safeguarding the order and the stability of the material world, but without personal or emotional overtones.

The first main question of this chapter was: what was Philo's view on the possible connection and interaction between God and creation? My analysis of *Opif.* 6b–12 brought into view *why* Philo wanted to maintain that God and creation are connected, even though he considers them to be contrasting natures. Now the analysis of *Opif.* 13–36a has shown *how* Philo thought these two contrasting natures can interact with each other. What do these findings mean for Philo's view on divine pardon? I will answer this question in the next section.

2.2.5 Conclusions: God's relationship to creation and divine forgiveness

I have examined two passages from *De Opificio Mundi* to explore Philo's view on the relationship between God and creation. Through the analysis of *Opif.* 6b–12, several aspects have become apparent regarding Philo's view on the relationship between God and the world. Philo strongly emphasised that God and creation are connected. It was essential for Philo to see God as the father and maker of the material world who takes constant providential care of it. Otherwise, as Philo suggested, it would be impossible for stability and order to exist in the material world. The material world would then be a place of anarchy and chaos.

Nevertheless, the analysis of *Opif*. 6b–12 has also shown that Philo wanted to emphasise that the material world and God are of two completely different natures. One main difference between the two is that only God can be said to truly exist and be fully active. The nature of the material world is to be passive, to be acted upon. The material world can only come into existence through the action of an active cause. The other main difference between the material world and God is that the material world – i.e., the world experienced through the senses – is constantly changing and becoming. The only truly existing entity is God. God does not change or become. Rather, God *is*.

The analysis of *Opif.* 13–36a has shown how Philo believed a connection between the material world and God is possible. He transformed a personal and emotional concept – providential care – into a more detached process. He presented the intelligible world as a bridge through which God benignly grants the material world which he defined by 'becoming' a share in the divine category of 'being', thereby also giving it a share in beauty and goodness. According to Philo, God's providential care for the world meant that God in his divine reason thinks the concepts that bring material objects into existence and that guarantee their continued existence, while individual objects appear and disappear in the material world.

Through analysing these sections from *De Opificio Mundi*, I wanted to ascertain Philo's view on the possible connection and interaction between God and creation, because forgiveness presupposes a relationship between the forgiver and the forgiven. We have seen that for Philo connection and interaction between God and the world are not only possible, but are essential for creation to subsist. Moreover, he considered a connection and interaction between God and creation as a crucial expression of God's goodness, granting true being, beauty and goodness to creation.

The possibility of a connection between God and creation is also a necessary requirement for God to be able to interact with human beings at all. For if God is to pardon human errors, God and humans need to be connected in some way as well. In my analysis of *Opif*. 13–36a it became apparent that Philo saw

the intelligible world not only as a bridge between God and the material world, but also as a medium through which the human mind can enter into contact with and perceive that which truly exists. It appears that, according to Philo, the intelligible world functions as a channel to connect humans to the divine realm and possibly even to God as well.

Before addressing the topic of interaction between God and humans in Chapter 3, another implication of divine pardon must be considered in light of Philo's doctrine of God. Philo's transformation of the personal concept of God's providential care into a more impersonal process, leads us to the second question of the current chapter: how did Philo interpret biblical passages in which God is presented with human characteristics? A forgiving God implies that God is described as showing human emotions: turning from angry to merciful; or, also like humans, as changing his mind, substituting punishment with amnesty. However, as we have seen, Philo identified God with true being without change. The attribution of human traits involving change to an unchanging God would seem to be problematic for Philo. How did Philo handle this difficulty?

2.3 Philo's view on anthropomorphic presentations of God

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

Having examined Philo's view on the relationship between God and creation, I will now move on to the second difficulty regarding divine forgiveness in light of Philo's doctrine of God: what did Philo think about the relational and emotional presentation of God? Forgiveness implies that someone is hurt and possibly angered by someone else's offence. The perpetrator's remorse may subsequently soften the victim's anger and, if compensation is offered for the damage, the victim may decide to grant the perpetrator amnesty instead of inflicting punishment. This change in attitude involves a change of mind. When ascribed to humans, such behaviour is not problematic for Philo. Humans can be expected to be subjected to constantly changing emotions; humans as imperfect beings can also be expected to frequently change their minds.[257] However, given that Philo saw God as immutable and perfect, the attribution of human emotions or the suggestion that God changes his mind proves problematic.

2.3.2 Quod Deus Sit Immutabilis: Structure of argumentation

Philo engaged the matter of why in the Bible human characteristics are ascribed to God in the treatise *Quod Deus Sit Immutabilis*. This treatise is part of a large body of treatises, usually named the *Allegorical Commentary*, in which Philo

[257] Philo's anthropological outlooks will be more elaborately discussed in Chapter 3.

discusses aspects of Gn. 2–41.[258] In the treatise *Quod Deus Sit Immutabilis* Philo presents an interpretation of Gn. 6:4–12, verses presenting God's motive for the Flood. Part of Philo's interpretation is a discussion of why in these verses God is presented as having changed his mind. This presentation of God leads Philo to bring forward arguments for God's immutability. Philo's consideration of the immutability of God, however, is not the main issue of the treatise; rather, it is a subsidiary argument to the treatise's central message.[259] The central message of *Quod Deus Sit Immutabilis* is that humans can only become virtuous when divine reason is present in their soul and when they have chosen to follow its guidance. Such souls follow the way of wisdom: they are oriented towards God and heaven and therefore towards truly existent and stable things. The treatise is structured as follows.

Introduction of the theme of this treatise, connecting it to the previous one (Gn. 6:4).
1–19: The words 'after that' (in Gn. 6:4) connect *Quod Deus Sit Immutabilis* to the previous treatise, *De Gigantibus*, and lead Philo to introduce the main theme of the current treatise: the differences between souls close to God and those far removed from him. In souls close to God, the divine spirit is present and such souls are characterised by stability and unity, leading to virtue. The divine spirit, however, is absent from souls far removed from God.[260] Such souls are characterised by instability and multiplicity, producing a myriad of evils.

God is completely stable and does not change his mind (Gn. 6:5–7).
20–32: Having put forward the main theme of the treatise, Philo wants to explain various anthropomorphic aspects ascribed to God in Gn. 6:5–7. The first pertains to whether God changes his mind (ἐνεθυμήθη and διενοήθη in Gn. 6:6). Philo first explains that this aspect of Gn. 6:6 does *not* mean that God changes and presents two arguments in support of God's immutability. The first and most important argument is that if wisdom brings stability to the human soul, the source of wisdom, i.e., God, must be completely stable. The second argument is that God is not as fickle as humans are, because he has no emotions and is all-knowing. He therefore never changes his mind.

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[258] This series probably consisted of thirty-one treatises, nineteen of which have been preserved in Greek: *Legum Allegoriae* I–III, *De Cherubim*, *De Sacrificiis Abelis et Caini*, *Quod Deterius Potiori Insidiari Soleat*, *De Posteritate Caini*, *De Gigantibus*, *Quod Deus Sit Immutabilis*, *De Agricultura*, *De Plantatione*, *De Ebrietate*, *De Sobrietate*, *De Confusione Linguarum*, *De Migratione Abrahami*, *Quis Rerum Divinarum Heres Sit*, *De Congressu Eruditionis Gratia*, *De Fuga et Inventione*, *De Mutatione Nominum*, *De Somniis* I–II. For a brief overview of general characteristics of this body of treatises, see Sterling/Niehoff/van den Hoek, 'Philo', pp. 263–267 and Niehoff, *Biography*, pp. 173–185.

[259] The title of the treatise therefore seems to be a little off the mark, as Colson remarks in his introduction to the treatise, Colson, *Philo vol. 3*, p. 3.

[260] As Philo discusses in *De Gigantibus*, it is difficult for the divine spirit to remain in the soul, when a soul becomes attached to a body (see *Gig.* 19, 28, 53; see also note 427).

God contemplates the nature of everything in creation (Gn. 6:5–7, continued).
33–50: Having explained that God does not change his mind, Philo next explains what ἐνεθυμήθη and διενοήθη used in Gn. 6:6 *do* mean. He proposes that God considered the defining properties of everything in creation and specifically whether something adheres to the order in creation or attempts to rebel against it. Philo concludes that the defining property of humans is that only they among created beings are free to choose whether they will comply with the order in creation, choosing to do good, or go against it, choosing to do evil. With this freedom of choice comes the duty to choose good over evil.[261]

Embodied souls need anthropomorphic presentations of God (Gn. 6:5–7, continued).
51–85: Philo focuses on another anthropomorphic aspect in Gn. 6:5–7, namely that God became angry (ἐθυμώθην in Gn. 6:7). His approach is again to explain first what this does not mean, namely that in truth, God is not like humans; and then to explain what this does mean, namely the reason why God is presented like humans in the Bible. Moses did so to accommodate those not gifted enough to see God as he truly is. Philo explains that there is a difference in perspective. God, as he is to himself, is one, unmixed and undivided; he only appears as mixed or divided in how humans perceive him. In particular, humans perceive God as being merciful, tempering his judgement through mercy and allowing the human race to subsist.

Acknowledging God as the source of creation leads to virtue (Gn. 6:8–9).
86–121: Philo discusses various aspects of the statement that Noah found grace with God (Gn. 6:8–9). According to him, this statement means that Noah realised the highest truth, namely that all things in creation are God's gracious gift. Philo contrasts realising this truth with instead becoming captivated by the input from the senses, which is the cause of a myriad of evils. Philo warns: do not become captivated by the sensations, for that will lead to vice; rather, seek to perceive God which will lead to virtue.

God brings the corruption of the earth to light (Gn. 6:11).[262]
122–139: Philo discusses the statement in Gn. 6:11 that seems to imply that God corrupted the earth. However, this statement does not mean to Philo that God indeed did harm the earth; rather, it means that he brought the corruption of the earth to light.

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261 These sections and in particular the link with the divine spirit will be discussed in Chapter 3 (see pp. 112–139).

262 Gn. 6:10 is not discussed by Philo.

In particular, it means that divine reason in the form of conscience brings someone's sins to light.

Earthly temptations lead away from God; God therefore battles against them (Gn. 6:12).
140–183: Philo summarises the previous topic: God corrupting the earth means that God, through Noah's virtuousness, brought the sins of humankind to light. He then focuses on a particular grammatical detail of Gn. 6:12 which leads him to elaborate on how earthly things and the flesh attempt to destroy wisdom, the way leading to God.[263] Conversely, divine reason attempts to block the road of these earthly temptations. Philo then warns that those who ignore divine reason, which manifests itself as conscience showing the way of wisdom, are eventually destroyed.

Philo discusses in this treatise, amongst other topics, why in the Bible human characteristics such as regret, changing the mind or becoming angry, are ascribed to God. These human characteristics are implied in the dynamics of divine forgiveness as well. Philo presents what he believes are the reasons for such anthropomorphic descriptions of God to appear in the Bible in *Deus* 51–85. My analysis will therefore focus on this passage.

2.3.3 Deus *51–85: The reason for anthropomorphic descriptions of God in the Bible*

2.3.3.1 *Paraphrase*

Philo has explained in the preceding passage, *Deus* 33–50, that 'bethinking' (ἐνεθυμήθη and διενοήθη used in Gn. 6:6) does not mean that God changed his mind, but that God always contemplates the nature of all things he created and specifically whether they follow the order he has intended for creation or not. Philo has concluded that only humans are free to choose whether they will do so or not and that therefore only humans can obey or disobey God, and only they can be commended when they obey or punished if they do not. Before discussing (in *Deus* 86–121) whether Noah should be considered as praiseworthy, because he is said to have found grace, Philo first explains in *Deus* 51–85 the meaning of the statement that God became angry (in Gn. 6:7) and why anthropomorphic descriptions of God are used in the Bible in general.

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[263] This grammatical detail is that Gn. 6:12 states that 'all flesh destroyed his way (τὴν ὁδὸν αὐτοῦ) throughout the earth.' As Philo explains in *Deus* 141–142 'flesh' (σάρξ) in Greek is a feminine noun, so 'his' (αὐτοῦ) cannot refer to the flesh destroying its own way. Rather, 'his' must refer to something masculine; Philo maintains that this must be God, concluding that all flesh attempts to destroy the way of God.

Philo begins his discussion of anthropomorphic descriptions of God by emphasising that in truth God is not like humans at all (*Deus* 51–59). Human souls who are fully oriented towards immaterial and divine things are able to grasp this essential truth. They see God as singular existence. They apply no other characteristics to God, especially no imagery based on created things. God in truth cannot have emotions such as wrath or anger. Philo reasons that emotions are part of the body, and God has no body. The parts of the body serve the several needs of human beings; God, having no such needs, needs no body. Anthropomorphic descriptions of God are essentially false, and are used in the Bible only for pedagogical reasons.

As Philo explains (in *Deus* 60–69), God is described in the Bible like humans, because God also wants to reach human souls that are primarily oriented towards material and earthly things. Such souls can only think of God in earthly and bodily terms. They need anthropomorphic imagery to gain at least some conception of God. The Bible presents God as a wrathful Lord for such earthly human souls, so that through fear of punishment they will better their ways. Philo compares this approach to that of physicians who pedagogically use untruths so that patients will accept their treatment.

After these preliminary remarks, Philo brings forward what he thinks the statement means that God became angry for having made man (*Deus* 70–72). Philo reasons that humans are always condemnable under God's judgement, for no human being can go through life without ever sinning. It is fitting, therefore, to say that God is always angry with the human race – although anger should still be seen as a metaphor, for it is a human emotion. God's anger should not be seen as the result of a change of mind.

However, if God can righteously condemn the whole human race, how then can the human race still subsist? In response to this question, Philo adds (*Deus* 73–76) that God tempers his righteous judgement by mixing it with mercy. Philo further explains (*Deus* 77–85) that God is experienced in such a mixed way when seen from creation. Philo compares this difference to how God tempers the rays of the sun with cool air, preventing them from burning humans by the time they reach them. Philo emphasises that God's judgement only appears as tempered when seen from the human perspective. In truth and from God's perspective his judgement remains unmixed and unaltered.

2.3.3.2 Analysis part 1: Embodied souls require anthropomorphic descriptions of God

In the following section I will explore Philo's view on anthropomorphic descriptions of God in the Bible as brought forward in *Deus* 51–85. I want to explore Philo's handling of such descriptions, because divine pardon implies an anthropomorphic presentation of God like, for example, becoming angry or

being appeased again. Philo, however, maintained that God is not like humans. At the same time, he was confronted with how the Bible often depicts God in anthropomorphic ways. This seeming contradiction is addressed by Philo in *Deus* 51–85, in the context of two biblical quotes that provide him with the solution to this contradiction. In Num. 13:19 God is declared to be 'not like humans'; and in Dt. 8:5 God is described as 'to train his son like humans.' Philo concludes from these two statements that anthropomorphic descriptions of God are intended to educate and warn humans, but not to say anything about God's nature.[264] How does this work, according to Philo?

First, in *Deus* 20–32, Philo has discussed that God is not like humans, because he is not as unreliable and fickle (ἀψίκορος) as they are.[265] Humans are fickle and God is not, according to Philo, for two reasons. First of all, humans change their opinions all the time due to the influence of their sensations.[266] God, however, is not under the influence of any sensations.[267] Another cause for humans to constantly change their opinions, is that humans are part of the created world and have no full understanding of creation.[268] God, however, is not part of creation and has full knowledge of that creation, which means that he fully knows everything and therefore never has to change his mind.[269]

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264 As Philo writes in *Deus* 54: 'These descriptions are intended for training and admonition, but not to declare God's nature to be that way.'

265 See *Deus* 20–32. According to Philo, fickleness is a characteristic of politicians, who switch masters all the time (*Ios*. 36). Fickleness is also a characteristic of love, and more specifically of love under the influence of ὁρμαί and πάθη (*Spec.* III, 79; *Virt*. 113; *Legat*. 61). Finally, fickleness is a characteristic of the pleasure-lover (*Sacr.* 32). Not being fickle is a characteristic of students of wisdom (*Det*. 118, *Aet*. 16, *QE* II, 40). An essential part of the study of wisdom is to learn to control the storming surge of the sensations (*LA* III, 128, 134; *Det*. 53; *Spec.* I, 145; II, 163; *Praem*. 60). Philo's view on the relation between reason and the sensations will be further explored in Chapter 4 (see pp. 149–163). The constancy of the sage is also due to his control over the sensations (see *SVF* III, 431–42, which includes *Migr*. 156 as fragment 436). See also Long, *Hellenistic Philosophy*, pp. 206–207, where Long describes how the Stoics saw control of reason over the sensations as proof that someone is a true sage. Philo argues: if wisdom can instigate such a resolve in the sage to stand firm against the attack of the sensations, how much firmer must God be standing who is the source of wisdom itself?

266 I prefer to use 'sensations' as translation for πάθη, as it is more neutral than 'emotions' or 'passions' (which imply strong or very strong feelings) and because 'sensation' expresses a connection to the senses. Both elements (a more neutral description and the connection to the senses) fit well with Philo's presentation of what a πάθος is and does.

267 In *Post.* 3–4, Philo explains that it is impious to ascribe a body to God, for that would suggest that he is subjected to sensations just like humans. Alkinoos (*Did*. X, 7) explains that a body is a compound of matter and form. Given that God is simple and original, he cannot have a body. For an elaborate background to the doctrine of the emotionless state of the gods, see Frohnhofen, *Apatheia*, pp. 42–50 especially.

268 As Philo argues in *Som*. I, 154 and 192, change is inherent in the human soul and body.

269 The argument that God has full knowledge of the course of creation is reminiscent of the Stoic view that the full course of creation is determined and that God, the world-mind, has complete knowledge of the course of creation (see Long, *Hellenistic Philosophy*, pp. 164–165).

In *Deus* 55 Philo takes the argument even further: not only does God not have a human form, he has no form or quality (ποιότης) at all, he is 'simple being'.[270]

According to Philo, a 'characteristic' (ποιότης or χαρακτήρ) is something that belongs to things appearing in the material world; it is what defines the character of things. Indeed, formless matter becomes something definite through the imprint of a defining shape.[271] This is why Philo considered matter to be completely passive: it can only exist if it 'suffers' the imprint of the original concepts.[272] God, according to Philo, is completely different from matter and only active. As Philo argues in *Deus* 55, the blessed nature of God implies that he has no defining characteristics (ἄνευ χαρακτῆρος): God does not have to 'suffer' the imprint of a defining shape.[273] God simply *is*, which also meant, for Philo, that God cannot be related to anything else.[274] Philo considered only God's

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270 This statement in *Deus* 55 is reminiscent of the fundamental difference between God and humans already discussed in the analysis of *Opif.* 6b–12. God and humans are fundamentally different, because humans as material beings belong to the world of becoming, whereas God is pure being (see pp. 61–67).

271 See also the analysis of *Deus* 33–50 in Chapter 3, especially pp. 117–118.

272 As discussed in the analysis of *Opif.* 13–36a (see pp. 75–79).

273 Similarly to *Deus* 55, Philo uses in *LA* I, 51 the term ἄποιος for God in a superlative sense. Here, he reasons that not only does God not have a human form, he has no form at all. God is ἄποιος – that is, he does not have any characteristic qualities (see also *LA* I, 36 and III, 36). According to Wolfson, Philo held that God being one, also has one property, which is action. Different names for God identify different properties, which stand for different powers, which are all combined into one power and property: action. These powers and the activity of God are how humans know God (Wolfson, *Philo vol. 2*, pp. 131–140; compare above note 75 and see also Sandmel, *Philo*, pp. 91–92). Calabi refutes the conclusion that Philo identified God completely with action, by pointing out that in *Cher.* 77 Philo writes that God alone can be said to act, not that God is only action (Calabi, *God's Acting*, pp. 31–33). In a sense for Philo, God is not completely without qualities, however. For Philo maintained that one thing is positively known about God, as he writes in *Fug.* 10: God is the mind who shaped and ordered creation, and who stills rules that creation. The powers are closely connected to God and share characteristics with God. Where in *LA* I, 51 God is said to be ἄποιος, Philo says in *LA* II, 80 that his powers (or 'graces' as he calls them here) are without quality as well. In *Spec.* I, 47 the powers are said to be in their essence unknowable, as Philo also believed the essence of God to be. Nevertheless, humans may experience the powers and may know that they exist, through their activity in creation: they give quality to what of itself is without quality. Furthermore, as Philo writes in *Post.* 168–9, through these activities of the powers, man through reasoning may not only infer the existence of the powers, but of God himself, who is the source of these powers. The connection between God and the material world is a two-way street: through the powers God gives and maintains order in the material world, and by seeing this order in the material world, humans may develop knowledge of the existence of God.

274 Philo brings forward in *Gig.* 41–42 that God cannot be compared (and thus linked) to anything in creation, because the identification of everything that exists in creation, happens through a distinction between things that are in opposite pairs and at the same time related to each other (such as light and darkness, odd and even, day and night). God, according to Philo, cannot be related to anything else, as he writes in *Mut.* 27: τὸ γὰρ ὄν, ᾗ ὄν ἐστιν, οὐχὶ τῶν πρός τι. Runia explains that πρὸς τί is a technical term referring to relative objects. Philo maintained that God is absolute and not a relative object (Runia, 'Naming and Knowing', p. 80 nt. 41, see also Wolfson, *Philo vol. 2*, p. 138 and

powers to be related to other things, although he emphasised that they too should be considered to belong 'as it were' (ὡσανεί) to the category of relational things.[275]

Philo's use of 'as it were' even when describing the attributes of God's powers, makes one wonder what Philo believed *could* be said about God in an adequate way. For if Philo considered God to be without form or qualities and as unrelated to anything else and if his powers need to be described using the qualification 'as it were', what is then left for humans to say about God in a truthful fashion? For example, can he be adequately described as merciful or forgiving?

As it is, Philo considered human language and knowledge as always falling short in their ability to describe God adequately.[276] This is because he held that human language and knowledge are always based on division. To Philo, the process of identifying things already implies division: division between the object and its properties as well as between objects themselves. Furthermore, as Philo argues, division is an inherent aspect of human language uttered in speech.[277] As discussed in the section describing the identity between God and the intelligible world, Philo regarded that which can be divided as less perfect than that which remains whole.[278] Given that human language and knowledge are based on division, Philo held that contemplation of the divine should take place within the mind and not by means of speech.[279]

However, Philo also saw severe barriers within the human mind itself to apprehend the true nature of God. He even considered the statement that God is one to be not wholly accurate, as it also implies division: between God and one; and God and existence.[280] This led Philo to conclude that it is impossible

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Frick, *Providence*, p. 77). According to Philo, the only thing to which God is related is existence itself (see *Mos.* I, 75: ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ ὤν … ᾧ μόνῳ πρόσεστι τὸ εἶναι).

275 As Philo writes in *Mut.* 28.

276 Samuel Sandmel discusses Philo's view on the limitations of human language in Sandmel, *Philo*, pp. 93–96

277 He also associated speech and hearing with the dyad, as they are of a divided and mixed nature, because sound is a mixture of breath, air, pitch, windpipe and tongue (see *Deus* 84).

278 See pp. 72–75.

279 *Gig.* 52. As Philo writes in *Her.* 72, human speech, because of its divided nature, can never express the true nature of things in general, let alone of God. As Philo explains in *Deus* 83, God's speech is not divided; he speaks in monads. Compare *Migr.* 47–48, where Philo explains that the words of God are seen by the mind, rather than heard by the ears.

280 Plato in *Parmenides* discusses such paradoxical notions with regard to the monad, for to say that the monad exists is to divide between the monad and its existence (Plato, *Parm.* 142D); the notion that the monad is 'beyond Being' was later developed by Speusippus and Plotinus (cf. Dillon, *Middle Platonists*, p. 16). Sextus Empiricus argued against the existence of God, on the basis that these

for human beings to speak about God in any fully truthful way, so he preferred to regard God's true nature as ἄρρητος and beyond understanding.[281]

Philo claims (in *Deus* 55) that only humans who orient themselves towards the soul, instead of the body, will see God as he truly is – as absolute being – without assigning any characteristics to God and probably also without the difficulties implied in human language and knowledge. Is such a pure apprehension of God possible, according to Philo, while the soul is still in the body? In *Deus* 51–85, this does not become clear. In *Sacr.* 94–96, where a similar reasoning as in *Deus* 51–85 can be found, Philo does state explicitly that as long as humans are part of the mortal world, it is impossible to escape the limitations of human apprehension. This means that while the soul is still in the body, it is impossible to think of God without assigning a form, qualities or relationships to him – that is, it is impossible to think of God in non-anthropomorphic terms.[282] Philo argues that it is precisely for this reason that anthropomorphic descriptions are used in the Bible. These descriptions appear for the benefit of souls connected to the body. For they can only gain some apprehension of God if he is presented to them in human language and in anthropomorphic terms.

In *Deus* 65–68, Philo compares this approach to that of a healer. Sometimes a healer does not state the facts as they are, to be able to better treat a patient. Similarly, an untruth is used in the Bible to better people who do not have the capacity to see God as he truly is, namely as pure existence.[283] In other instances Philo distinguishes between statements about God that are 'proper' (κυρίως) or 'analogous' (καταχρηστικῶς). As Philo sees it, the only truly 'proper' statement that can be made about God is that he exists.[284] All other statements should be

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paradoxes cannot be solved (*Adv. Phys.* I, 130–150). Dillon and Calabi suggest influences derived from Plato's *Parmenides* at work in Platonic tradition for the concept of the unknowability of God to appear before Philo (see ibid., p. 155 and Calabi, *God's Acting*, p. 48). Billings suggests that Plato expressed the thought that God can only be seen through Eros and 'divine madness' (cf. *Phdr.* 249C–E and *Symp.* 211E–212B, see also Billings, *Platonism*, p. 17). I find the arguments for a philosophical precursor more likely than the suggestion of Bréhier that Philo was inspired by Deutero-Isaiah to claim that God cannot be known (Bréhier, *Les idées*, p. 73), or that Philo invented the concept of the incomprehensibility of God (Wolfson, *Philo vol. 2*, p. 113, Daniélou, *Philon*, p. 147 and see also note 59).

281 See *Her.* 170; *Mut.* 14–15; *Som.* I, 67. God is described as one and ineffable also in Sib. Or. III, 11–12.

282 Compare a statement by Alkinoos (*Did.* X, 1), who writes that human thinking can never be pure, because inevitably the mind will model its thought after the patterns of the input of the senses.

283 A similar reasoning can be found in Plato *Rep.* II, 382d and especially III, 389b. Plato reasons that the gods, like healers, can use an untruth about themselves to inspire humans to good words and deeds. Plato calls this the concept of a noble lie, in *Rep.* III, 414b–415d.

284 See *Abr.* 121. According to Philo, the truth of the matter is that God with his proper name can only be called ὁ ὤν. In this section, the explanation that this name implies that humans can only understand that God exists is not given, but it appears as an interpretation of God's name elsewhere in Philo's treatises. See for instance: *Mut.* 11; *Post.* 168; *Som.* I, 231. Just before, in *Abr.* 120, while exploring the

regarded as 'analogous' or even 'misuses of language'.[285] Such descriptions of God in human language allow humans some approximate knowledge of God while they live in the earthly realm, but always fall short of describing God as he truly is.

To sum up. Philo saw God as fundamentally different from humans, so much so that he deemed it impossible for humans to say anything about God in a truthful fashion, at least while the human soul is connected to a body. At the same time, he believed that God also wants humans in their earthly existence to know him. According to Philo, this is why he is described in the Bible in anthropomorphic ways. These descriptions do not confer any knowledge of who God truly is, but they do allow humans to know that God exists. But is this all? One wonders why the Bible then presents God by ascribing all kinds of qualities and characteristics to him, including that he is merciful and inclined to forgive. Did Philo believe that the only reason for these detailed stories is to convince humans of God's existence? As we will see in the next section, there is more to it than only that.

2.3.3.3 *Analysis part 2: The difference between how God is and how humans experience him*

In the previous section, we saw how Philo distinguished between God as he truly is and God as he is seen and described by human beings. In the following part of the analysis, we will see how this distinction presents Philo with the opportunity to propose a twist of perspective: God can be described from the divine perspective as he truly is, or he can be described from the human perspective as he is seen or experienced while humans are still connected to a body.[286] It should be interesting to see what function and meaning Philo believed these human descriptions of God in fact had, even if they cannot confer actual knowledge about God.

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allegorical meaning of Gn. 18:1–15, a story of Abraham receiving a visit from God and two angels, Philo applies a contrast between κυρίως and καταχρηστικῶς. Philo writes that one cannot really say (μὴ … κυριολογεῖσθαι) that the angels are shadows of God. Only metaphorically speaking (κατάχρησις) can they be called shadows of God. Another example is *Mut.* 27, where Philo explains that 'I am your God' (appearing in Gn. 17:1), should not be seen as proper (κυρίως), but as an analogue or metaphor (καταχρηστικῶς), because in reality God cannot be anyone's possession.

285 The verb καταχράομαι, from which καταχρηστικῶς is derived, has 'to abuse' as its connotation. Runia discusses Philo's use of this term in Runia, 'Naming and Knowing', pp. 83–86. Colson translates these connotations by formulating 'use by license of language,' for example as a translation for καταχρῆσθαι in *Mut*. 12.

286 For suggesting that the differences in perspective with regard to knowledge of God (the difference between God as regarded by God himself and as experienced by humans) are important, see also Calabi's analysis. As Calabi puts it, one should realise that according to Philo 'it is man who changes, and therefore his perception of God's acting also changes'; moreover, 'the question is not how God acts in the world, but how God appears to those who see Him' (Calabi, *God's Acting*, p. 100 and 108, see also ibid., pp. 47, 55, and 86–89). The argument of perspective is also brought to the fore in Frick, *Providence*, p. 58.

According to Philo, one way in which human descriptions of God might be meaningful is that they are an indication of where people stand on the road towards moral perfection. As he describes in *Deus* 68–69, those who see God as he truly is, serve and honour him out of love. All others serve him out of fear. Anthropomorphic descriptions of God also aid in making moral progress. Fearful presentations of God, representing him as a dreadful human tyrant full of wrath, even though incorrect, are used in the Bible as necessary means to stop 'the foolish' (ὁ ἄφρων) from doing evil.[287]

Philo regularly distinguished between various types of people who see God in different ways and serve him for different reasons.[288] Philo argued that how people see God and how much they have progressed in virtue are closely intertwined.[289] The most perfect gain a conception of the existent (τὸ ὄν) through the existent alone, needing nothing else. They truly see God as one. These perfect souls are the most noble, serving God for the sake of God alone. The other types gain some understanding of God through his actions, manifesting themselves in the created world through his powers. They know him as the creative power named 'God' (θεός), or as the kingly power named 'Lord' (κύριος).[290] These types have a fainter vision of God, for they see him as a complex of three.[291] They rank second-best, serving God out of some measure of self-interest: to gain blessings or to avoid punishment.[292] These types of people represent different stages in moral progress.[293]

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287 The same reasoning can be found in short in *Conf.* 98, and also in *Mut.* 23, where Philo writes that the more dim-witted people serve God out of fear for punishment. They believe that God may become angry with them if they do not follow his laws.

288 See, for example, *Fug.* 95–105; *Mut.* 15–53; *Abr.* 119–132.

289 The connection between knowledge of God and moral progression in Philo's works has already been noted by Bréhier (Bréhier, *Les idées*, p. 142).

290 It was only with great reluctance that Philo accepted that any name could be used for God. Philo writes in *Mut.* 12 that God gives a name only 'as if it were his proper name' (ὡς ἂν ὀνόματι κυρίῳ). Sandmel suggests that Philo believed God to be nameless, because he cannot be limited; naming something implies limitation of that something (Sandmel, *Philo*, p. 93).

291 For a similar description of the vision of God and his powers, see *QG* IV, 2–8 and *QE* II, 68.

292 As Philo puts it in *Mut.* 23–24, the most perfect souls are guided by the truly Existent as the Lord and are blessed by him as God, but they also understand that in reality God is one. Mansfeld interprets the theological exposition in the *Didaskalikos* of Alkinoos as a similar description of various ways of knowing God, where the best way is also the most abstract. The notion that there are various degrees in knowing God explains how Alkinoos could combine positive statements about God with the statement that God is ἄρρητος (see Mansfeld, 'Compatible Alternatives', pp. 100–101 and 109–111 especially).

293 See, for example, *Mut.* 15–18. Here, Philo interprets the statement in Gn. 17:1 that Abraham saw the Lord. Philo sees Abraham as a symbol for someone who used to belong to the Chaldean creed, holding the stars to be in control of the fate of the world. If this type of person is said to 'see the Lord', Philo takes this as an indication that such a person is on the road towards a better understanding, seeing that there is a Lord, an entity beyond the heaven and the stars who is in control of creation.

God allows different names to be used for him to accommodate these different types of people.[294]

One way in which human descriptions of God were meaningful for Philo is in indicating different stages of moral progress. Before describing the other way in which Philo held them to be meaningful, I wish to consider whether he believed it is possible for human souls living on earth to leave the state of foolishness behind, to see God as he truly is, to serve God out of love and not out of fear and to become virtuous instead of only avoiding evil. The reason for this question is to establish to which types of people Philo found the description of God as forgiving to be relevant: those on the road towards perfection, or the perfected souls?

The answer is that Philo held both full acquisition of virtue and full understanding of God to be impossible for humans as long as they are still in the body. Philo's support for this conclusion is that humans are unable to fully grasp the nature of their own mind, let alone the nature of God.[295] The highest form of knowledge of God available to humans in the material world is knowledge of God gained on the basis of his actions, i.e., knowledge of his kingly and creative powers.[296] Even knowledge of those two powers is severely

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Philo explains that what such a person sees is not God himself, not the Existent, but an appearance of one of God's powers, namely the kingly power. As we have seen above, the kingly power is one of two chief powers that Philo regarded as the head of all other powers (see note 217). These powers are part of the intelligible world through which God brings constant order and harmony in the world of creation (see above, pp. 68–79). According to Philo, to see that there is such an intelligible world is a first step towards betterment, for it leads a person to see that there is a creator. Another way in which Philo regularly described different stages of moral progress is by connecting them to the names of the biblical patriarchs. He saw Abraham as a symbol for those who progress in virtue through learning, Isaac for those who are virtuous by nature and Jacob for those who progress in virtue through practice (see for example *Som.* I, 166–170). For a more elaborate discussion of Philo's presentation of the patriarchs as symbols for different stages in moral progress, see, for example, Sandmel, *Philo*, pp. 56–76.

294 Dirk Obbink presents an example of an allegorical interpretation of Orpheus' poems from the 4th century BCE, where the various names for different gods are similarly interpreted as to 'accommodate their audiences in some fashion, so that a single entity might have multiple designations' (Obbink, 'Allegory', p. 21).

295 See *Mut.* 10 and *Som.* I, 30–33. Similarly, Seneca in *Ep.* 121.12 states that humans can know *that* they have a soul, but not *what* that soul is. Human knowing is described as limited also in Sap. Sal. 9:16–17, 4 Ez. 4:21 and Sib. Or. Frag. 2, 15–16.

296 Runia identifies knowing God through his actions as one way to know God. According to Runia, Philo believed that there is also the possibility to come to know God in a more direct, intuitive way (Runia, *Timaeus*, p. 437). I agree that Philo believed that these two ways were possible. For example, in *LA* III, 97–103 Philo draws a picture of two types of persons who gain knowledge about the deity. There are those who apprehend God by inferring his existence through observing the visible world. There is also a more perfect type of mind, who gains his knowledge of God not through looking at created things, but directly from God himself. However, I conclude that Philo did not believe that this way was an option for souls that are still in the body.

limited while the human soul is contained in the body. As long as humans are living in a body, they can only know and serve God as 'Lord'. To Philo, this implies that avoidance of sin is the highest form of virtue available to humans in bodily form.[297] Perfect knowledge of God and true virtue are available only to incorporeal souls.[298] For Philo, it is reasonable to conclude that to describe God as forgiving is relevant to human souls living in the earthly realm. This conclusion will be confirmed when I next explore the other way in which Philo held human descriptions of God to be meaningful.

The second way in which Philo regarded human descriptions of God meaningful is by seeing them as descriptions of how humans experience God, even when these descriptions do not adequately describe how God actually is. This approach becomes apparent when Philo addresses what he considers the central question in his analysis of Gn. 6:7 in *Deus* 70–85: did God indeed change his mind in that he became angry about having made humans? Philo argues that from God's perspective he did not change his mind, for he can be justly (although still metaphorically, for anger is a human emotion) said to always be angry with humans. According to Philo, there is not one human being who will run the course of his or her life without ever making a mistake or doing something wrong (*Deus* 75). Therefore, if God is said to condemn humans, this implies no change of mind of God.

To conclude that God was justified in condemning the whole human race introduces a new question: how is it possible that God allows humans to subsist? Philo explained that God, because he is good, mixes mercy (ἔλεος) into his condemnation and saves the human race from destruction. The combination of goodness and mercy appears more often in his works as saving not only humans but the whole of creation from destruction. Philo considered goodness the cause for creation to exist in the first place and mercy as the cause for creation to *remain* in existence.[299] One way in which God has mercy for

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297 See *Mut.* 50. Similarly, Philo explains in *Fug.* 103–105 that even knowing the Existent as God, or as Lord, is available to humans while living on earth only in an indirect way, namely through injunctions telling humans to do what is right and admonitions of what not to do.

298 See *Sacr.* 94–96, as discussed in the previous section (see pp. 85–90). Similarly, in *Mut.* 33 Philo writes that those who are pleasing to God (i.e., virtuous and wise) are 'minds without bodies' (ἀσώματοι διάνοιαι). Moreover, in *Mut.* 38 he writes that perfect souls do exist, but they cannot be found among mortal humans. The sage, as he writes, transitions 'from the mortal life to the immortal.' In *Mut.* 255 we find something similar: on earth virtuous humans are scarcely found, but heaven is full of them. Compare this also to the statement in *Som.* I, 232, where Philo writes that souls while still in the body have no true understanding of God, whereas souls in heaven possibly know God truly as he is. These two statements combined provide more support for the strong link that Philo sees between knowledge of virtue and knowledge of God as well as the position of Philo that on earth, in the material realm, this true knowledge cannot be reached.

299 As Philo notes in *Mos.* II, 132, everything exists due to God's goodness (ἀγαθότης) and his merciful power (ἵλεως δύναμις). In *De Vita Mosis* I and II Philo often describes God's nature as merciful, see

creation is that he allows something that is inherently less perfect than himself to exist.[300] Another way is that God, being merciful, keeps the original forms in existence, thereby guaranteeing the continued existence of everything, even though individual material manifestations of those forms perish all the time.[301] We can recognise Philo's description of God's providential care for creation in how he presents God's mercy for creation.

However, the view that God dilutes condemnation with mercy presented a new problem for Philo: is God then mixed, or a composite of different things instead of one and undivided?[302] Philo solved this apparent contradiction by using a shift in perspectives. He explains in *Deus* 77–81 that there is difference between how God is to himself and how he appears to humans. God as he is to himself is one, unmixed and pure. Humans (and the whole of creation) would become overwhelmed, however, if they were to experience God as he truly is.[303] Humans therefore see and experience God in a mixed or diluted way.

As discussed earlier in this section, humans can, according to Philo, see God in different ways. While living on earth, they can only see him as 'Lord' or 'God', whereas when they are no longer confined by a body, they can see him as he truly is. According to Philo, characteristics like goodness and mercy are part of the divine manifesting itself as the creative power, for which humans use the name 'God'.[304] This means that the manifestation of God as merciful belongs to the sphere of the material realm.[305] In that realm humans experience God as divided between a merciful 'God' and a judging 'Lord' and also as softening his judgement with mercy.[306] In truth, however, God is undivided and undiluted.[307]

Mos. I, 101, 198; II, 5, 238. For references where Philo identifies God's goodness as the cause for creation see further note 179.

300 In *Deus* 104–108, Philo writes that everything exists due to God's grace (χάρις), which he then describes as an aspect of God's goodness (similarly in *LA* III, 78). In *Virt.* 160 God is described as showing mercy and kindness to all living things. Compare also *Opif.* 21, as discussed above on pp. 75–79.

301 *Mos.* II, 61.

302 As Philo shows in *Mut.* 3, he holds everything that is apprehended by the senses to be mixed (σύγκριτος) and the divine as unmixed (ἀσύγκριτος).

303 *Deus* 77 and similarly in *Ebr.* 32.

304 *Som.* I, 163; *QE* II, 68.

305 *Fug.* 104–105.

306 As noted by Wolfson, the Stoics considered ἔλεος (mercy) an emotion (Wolfson, *Philo vol. 2*, p. 269). Herbert Frohnhofen suggests that Philo primarily rejected anger and repentance as possible emotions for God, because they are closely related to fickleness and change and Philo was foremost concerned to maintain the immutability of God (see Frohnhofen, *Apatheia*, p. 112).

307 As Philo writes in *Conf.* 171: 'God is one, but all around him he has numberless powers that benefit and protect (δυνάμεις ἀρωγοὺς καὶ σωτηρίους) everything that has come into existence.'

To sum up. Even though humans can never adequately describe God as he truly is, Philo identified two ways in which descriptions of God from the human perspective can be meaningful. One way is that they are an indication of different stages of moral progress. Humans who see God as he truly is are also completely virtuous. However, such a stage of moral perfection is impossible to attain while humans live as embodied souls. Philo was quite reticent regarding the moral progress humans can make while they live on earth. Avoidance of sin and serving God out of fear are what most people can hope to attain while they live on earth. Their fear is in a sense justified, as Philo's second way of seeing meaning in human descriptions of God shows. According to Philo, God as he is to himself would be justified in condemning the entire human race because of humans' unavoidable imperfections. However, humans while living on earth do not experience God as he truly is. They experience God's judgement as mixed with mercy, allowing them to subsist, whereas in truth God is unmixed and undivided.

2.3.3.4 Results from the analysis of Deus *51–85*

In *Deus* 51–85, Philo brings forward his view on why in the Bible human characteristics like regret, changing one's mind or becoming angry are ascribed to God. We saw in the first part of the analysis that Philo held that the Bible uses anthropomorphic descriptions of God because there simply is no other way for humans while they live in the earthly realm to gain at least some apprehension of God. Such anthropomorphic descriptions, however, can confer no truthful knowledge about God.

This result from the first part of the analysis led me to explore, in the second part, whether Philo held that these human descriptions of God can be meaningful at all. We saw how Philo proposed a twist in perspective: such descriptions confer no knowledge about God, but do reveal characteristics of the humans using them and are also meaningful descriptions of how humans experience God. We can now apply these results to the main topic of this study, and specifically to how Philo approached the anthropomorphic traits being ascribed to God implicated in the idea of God showing mercy and granting pardon.

2.3.4 Conclusions: Anthropomorphic descriptions of God and divine forgiveness

Sections from *Quod Deus Sit Immutabilis* have been analysed to find an answer to the second question of this chapter: does divine pardon imply that human actions can hurt and anger God and that God can be made to change his mind? If God is said to pardon perpetrators of evil, how can that change of attitude be understood? First of all, my analysis of *Deus* 51–85 has shown how Philo concluded that anthropomorphic descriptions of God, presenting him as becoming angry or changing his mind, do not describe God as he truly is. According to Philo, God simply *is* and humans cannot ascribe any

characteristics truthfully to him. A true perception of God is only possible when the human soul is no longer attached to a body. Embodied souls can only 'think' of God in bodily terms.

Nevertheless, according to Philo, anthropomorphic descriptions of God do have meaning. He held that God allows these descriptions to be used for him, because he wants humans to have some knowledge of who he is while they are living in the material world. Even though such bodily depictions of God are incorrect, they are useful to help humans improve their ways. God, as it were, dilutes the full truth about himself with untruths. Embodied souls are unable to receive the undiluted truth about God.

Philo introduced a shift in perspective. From the divine point of view, God can be described as simply being, with no defining characteristics at all. Anthropomorphic and diluted descriptions of God belong to the human view on God. They do not confer true knowledge about God. They are meaningful, however, for the humans who use these descriptions. The presentation of God as wrathful can help someone turn away from evil. These descriptions are also meaningful in that they describe how humans experience God. Humans, for example, experience God as limiting his justified condemnation with mercy, allowing them as imperfect beings to subsist. Such descriptions and experiences, including describing and experiencing God as forgiving, although inaccurate, are meaningful and helpful for human beings to improve their ways.

2.4 *Conclusions to Chapter 2*

Two difficulties with divine forgiveness in Philo's works relate to his doctrine of God. The first is whether Philo believed a connection between a transcendent God and the created world is possible. Two passages from *De Opificio Mundi* have been analysed to explore Philo's views on this matter. We have seen that Philo considered the connection between the transcendent God and his creation not only a possibility, but a necessary requirement for creation to subsist as beautiful and well-ordered whole, and as a necessary expression of God's benevolence.

Philo also claimed that God first created the world of concepts, before he created the material world. First in order, that is, because this intelligible world exists outside the dimension of time. It exists eternally, just as God exists eternally. The innumerable abstract concepts, that Philo also identified as ideas or powers and that together form the intelligible world, guarantee the continued existence of the concrete objects appearing in the material world. The material world is a world of change and decay; physical objects appear and disintegrate continuously in it. The concepts provide these material objects with consistent forms and qualities. The concepts connect the divine world of 'being' to the

material world of 'becoming'. Without them the material world would only be defined by change and decay, through them the material world shares in the beauty and goodness of true being.

Philo effectively transformed the personal notion of God's providential care for the world and for individual humans into a more detached process of powers and ideas used to bring creation into existence and to sustain it. Divine amnesty can clearly be identified as a part of this process, as an aspect of one of the countless powers that allow creation to subsist. In the subsequent chapter, I will explore the human side, the receiving end of divine pardon, and investigate how this aspect of God's powers functions according to Philo.

The second question explored in this chapter was: how did Philo reflect on the emotional presentation of God, including the suggestion that God changes his mind? An analysis of sections from *Quod Deus Sit Immutabilis* has provided insights into how Philo reconciled his intellectual theological outlooks with biblical statements where human characteristics are attributed to God. It is Philo's view that these biblical statements, even though they do no justice to what he believes to be the truth about God, still have a relevant function, namely to allow for humans while they live on earth to attain some approximate knowledge of God. Philo furthermore maintained that these descriptions are not meaningless. He introduced a shift in perspective, explaining that these human descriptions of God do not reveal qualities or properties of God, but rather of the humans who use them, indicating different stages of their moral progress.

When applying these findings to the concept of divine forgiveness, I can conclude that Philo regarded the statement 'God is forgiving' as an inaccurate description of God. As Philo saw it, no characteristics can be accurately ascribed to God. However, 'God is forgiving' is still a meaningful statement for Philo when we consider it from the human perspective, even though it does not comply with how God, as pure being, truly is. If a human describes God as forgiving, this can be expected to inform us not about who God is, but about the stage of moral progress of the person using that description for God. To what stage of moral progress would such a statement conform? To find an answer to this question we will have to investigate Philo's view on humans.

Both the exploration of how Philo saw the relationship between God and creation and how Philo interpreted the attribution of human characteristics to God, direct our attention towards the human recipients of divine pardon. The next logical step, therefore, is to investigate Philo's view on humans. Given that divine forgiveness is something that happens between God and humans, the focus of the next chapter will be on the following question: how can humans interact with and relate to the transcendent God?

3

Philo's view on the relationship between God and humans

3.1 Introduction

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

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

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

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

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

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

[308] See pp. 54–56.

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

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

3.2.2.1 *Paraphrase*

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

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

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

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

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

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

3.2.2.2 Analysis

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

3.2.3.1 Paraphrase

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

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

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

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

*3.2.3.2 **Analysis***

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

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

Now, there is something that sets the template or species of humans apart from all other kinds of living creatures. As Philo writes in *Opif*. 69, the template from which individual human beings will take shape contains a similarity (ἐμφέρεια) to God himself. What aspect of human beings is similar to God?[322] Not the human body, Philo emphasises in *Opif.* 69: 'neither is God anthropomorph, nor is the human body godlike.' This leaves the soul (ψυχή) and more specifically the mind (νοῦς), the leading element of the soul, which makes humans similar to God, as Philo continues in *Opif.* 69.[323] In what respect is the human mind similar to God?

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

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

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

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

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

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

324 See Chapter 2, pp. 72–75.

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

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

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

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

326 See Chapter 2, pp. 75–79.

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

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

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

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

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

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(πολλὰς ἐν αὐτῷ φύσεις ἀστροειδεῖς ἀγαλματοφοροῦντα).

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

330 See Chapter 2, pp. 57–59.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

338 *Cher.* 24.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

3.3.2 Deus *33–50: God's mind in human beings*[341]

3.3.2.1 *Paraphrase*

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

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[340] See pp. 81–84.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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343 See *Deus* 34.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

350 *LA* II, 23.

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

3.3.2.3 Analysis part 2: Form-giving force (ἕξις)

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

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

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

352 See pp. 68–80.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

3.3.2.4 *Analysis part 3: Growth* (φύσις)

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

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

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[357] Plutarch, *Stoic. Rep.*, 1054A. On Plutarch, also in comparison to Philo, see contributions in Hirsch-Luipold (ed.) *Plutarch*.

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

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

[360] *Sacr.* 98; *Her.* 114.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

365 *Gen. An.* II, 736b 20–35.

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

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

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

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366 *Gen. An.* II, 741b 37.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

379 *Anim.* 85.

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

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

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

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

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

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

[382] Seneca, *Ep.* 121, 13. See also Long, *Hellenistic Philosophy*, p. 173.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

writes:

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

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

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

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

69–88 (see pp. 106–111).

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

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

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

392 In *Tim.* 42D–44C.

393 *Tim.* 42D–43A, 90E–92C.

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

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

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

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

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

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395 *Tim.* 41–42D.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

400 *An.* III, 430a 3–6.

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

402 *An.* III, 430a 21.

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

404 *An.* III, 430a 25.

405 *An.* III, 430a 23.

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

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

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

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

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

408 *An.* III, 430a 10–20.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

415 *Deus* 3.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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gives an immortal aspect to human beings.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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material objects into the intelligible world.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

3.3.3 Conclusions: The human mind can choose its defining nature

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

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

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

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

3.4 Conclusions to Chapter 3

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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 ἐκουσίων ἀδικημάτων). Philo notes on several occasions that there are two types of evil deeds: done with or without intention (ἐκούσιος 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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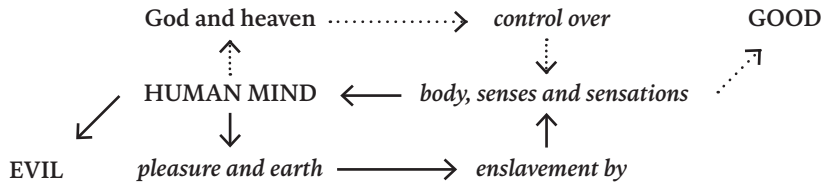
575 In *Conf.* 83–90, Philo interprets the building of the Tower of Babel and the Egyptian monuments as a metaphor for how the human soul strengthens itself in persisting in evil.

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.

5

Philo's view on divine forgiveness

5.1 Introduction

In Chapter 1, I established that seeking and obtaining divine pardon for sins can be seen as an intellectual paradox for Philo. Aspects we associate with divine forgiveness, such as going to the temple to bring a sacrifice and ask for the remission of sins, are at home in uncritical expressions of practical religion. Philo, who as an intellectual reflected on the nature of God, the world and humans, saw this practice as a conceptual challenge. When we took a preliminary glance at *Spec.* I, 235–238, the specifics of this challenge came into focus. This section from *De Specialibus Legibus* I appeared as particularly suited for an inquiry into Philo's view on divine forgiveness, because here Philo uses three words related to the semantic domain of forgiveness: συγγνώμη, ἀμνηστία and ἄφεσις. When such terms are applied to the relationship between God and humans, they imply attributing characteristics to God that an intellectual like Philo would find inappropriate, such as God being offended by human actions and able to change his mind, or the fundamental question of how the transcendent God would be troubled by human affairs at all.

In the previous three chapters these intellectual stumbling blocks were explored through an analysis of sections from Philo's treatises. These analyses resulted in the paradox formulated at the end of Chapter 4: on the one hand, Philo maintained that humans remove themselves from God when they do evil; on the other hand, he also believed that humans need God's wisdom to leave the path of evil behind and return to the right path of following good reason. How did Philo overcome the intrinsic contradiction of this scenario? Did he think some form of divine intervention was required? But any direct action or reaction from God's side, such as intervening to save humans from their self-chosen path of destruction, would contradict Philo's emphasis on God's transcendence and immutability. If this is not an option, how then would humans be able to return from evil and what would God's role be in it? With these results from the previous chapters and the new questions they brought to mind, I return to *Spec.* I, 235–238.

To answer these questions, *Spec.* I, 235–238 will now be analysed in detail. The analysis of this passage will be presented in light of its place and function within *De Specialibus Legibus* I as a whole. However, before analysing *Spec.* I, 235–238 in order to present Philo's view on aspects we associate with divine forgiveness, I need to begin with an exploration into Philo's general approach to Jewish laws. The Jewish laws and customs contained more elements, apart from the notion of divine pardon, that required explanation in the context of an intellectual approach to religion such as Philo's. Understanding Philo's general approach to such elements helps us appraise his specific approach towards divine remission of sins.

5.2 Philo's general approach to Jewish laws

The four books of *De Specialibus Legibus* contain several examples of religious customs that apparently presented Philo with an intellectual challenge and the desire to explain them to fellow-intellectuals. Customs, such as circumcision or bringing a sacrifice, belong to the sphere of daily-life religion and become problematic within the context of a well-considered framework that meets contemporaneous intellectual standards when approaching religion. In this subchapter, I want to demonstrate how Philo handled such elements in general, because Philo's approach to aspects we usually associate with divine forgiveness, such as God granting pardon to a sinner, can be expected to comply with his overall approach to give expressions of popular and daily-life religion a meaningful place within a well-considered framework. How did Philo achieve this?

5.2.1 *Philo's selection of Jewish laws and his approach in discussing them*

Philo's approach to Jewish laws very much depends upon the existence of a guiding principle for selecting the laws he wants to discuss. Is there anything like it? At first glance, the selection of laws Philo discusses in the four books of *De Specialibus Legibus* may appear as arbitrary. However, a more careful examination shows that he selected relevant laws according to the overall aim of these books, namely to convince his readers of the universal character of the Jewish laws.[596] The general argument of Philo in the four books of *De Specialibus Legibus* is to show the agreement between Jewish laws and the universal law of nature as expressed in intellectual circles.[597] This is his guiding principle. A brief comparison between Philo and other Jewish authors who made similar claims, in particular Pseudo-Aristeas and Josephus, will add depth to my analysis of Philo's approach to the Jewish laws and customs. It will also illuminate why divine pardon belongs to discussing them.

The aim of these authors was to present Judaism as an intellectually satisfying religion, claiming it to agree with the best that Greek philosophy had to offer or even to surpass it.[598] This approach had advantages as well as disadvantages.

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596 As illustrated in Chapter 2, note 173. *De Specialibus Legibus* I–IV are part of the Exposition of the Laws, for an overview of the treatises contained in that exposition see Chapter 2, note 172.

597 On the widespread notion in Philo's context of the existence of an unwritten, divine and universal law which those who aspire wisdom should follow see, for example, Hollander, 'Human Hearts', pp. 113–116 and the contributions in Runia/Sterling (eds.), *Law and Nature*.

598 For example, Josephus writes in *CA* II, 123 that the Greek and Jewish customs are mostly in agreement with each other, and that indeed this has led 'many people' to adopt the Jewish laws. Further examples are: Sap. Sal. 18,4; Sir. 18,13–14; Sib. Or. III, 194–195, 710–723 (see also Tromp, 'Idolatry', pp. 114–115 and Buitenwerf, *Sibylline Oracles*, pp. 203, 258–264 and 348–385). Philo even expresses astonishment at how non-Jews fail to see the universal truth of Jewish worship – or worse: laugh at non-Jews who accept the Jewish faith (see *Spec.* II, 164–167). Philo seems to share in the astonishment of the author of *Sapientia Salomonis*, who expresses his amazement at how

Common ground between Jewish religious beliefs and Hellenistic philosophy was found in the claim that there is only one, universal God who should not be worshipped by means of man-made idols nor be presented in anthropomorphic terms. The practice of idolatry was ridiculed and denounced by Jewish authors and some pagan intellectuals alike.[599]

At the same time, certain Jewish customs very obviously contradicted the claim of universality of Jewish institutions since they were perceived as addressing the Jewish people alone. These Jewish practices and beliefs were difficult to reconcile with what intellectuals saw as the universal law of nature.[600] The customs of circumcision, Sabbath-observance and dietary laws in particular were seen as alien, incomprehensible or downright barbaric.[601] Circumcision was a source for ridicule, Sabbath-observance was considered a sign of laziness, and the abstention from eating pork was baffling to most Greeks and Romans.[602]

Next to these intellectual stumbling blocks, many Greek and Roman intellectuals saw Jewish sacrificial worship in the temple of Jerusalem as a

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the philosophers have gathered so much knowledge and still fail to see God as the one ruler of the universe (Sap. Sal. 13, 1–9) (see also Tromp, 'Idolatry', p. 115). Philo mentions laughter at conversion (μεταβολή) as well in *QG* IV, 43. It is clear from evidence in several sources that non-Jews did join the Jewish community. Philo uses the Greek terms προσήλυτος or ἔπηλυς for such a person (*Spec.* I, 52–53, 308–309; II, 118; IV, 176; *Som.* II, 273; *Virt.* 102, 182; *Praem.* 152). This is in line with the Septuagint where προσήλυτος is used for a foreigner who joins the Jewish people (Lv. 16:29; 17:8–15; 18:26; 19:34; 20:2; 22:18; 24:21; Num. 15:14–30; 35:15; Dt. 10:19; 14:29; 26:12–13; 29:10; 31:12). Similarly, Josephus speaks of foreigners who were accepted into the Jewish community in *BJ* II, 463; V, 559–562; VII, 44–45 and describes several individual cases of converts in *AJ* XVIII, 82 and XX, 7.139. It is impossible, however, to estimate the number of non-Jews joining the Jewish community. Moreover, it is a grave mistake to use these and pagan sources to suppose that the Jews were involved in an active mission to convert non-Jews, as is shown in Will/Orrieux, *Prosélytisme*, pp. 108–115.

599 See Tromp, 'Idolatry', pp. 109–110 for an overview of Jewish critique of idolatry, and ibid., pp. 110–111 for an overview of pagan authors; see also Heinemann, *Bildung*, p. 48.

600 As Tromp writes: 'It is unlikely that the Greeks would ever have understood the conclusion Jews drew from this [i.e., the uniqueness of God and the powerlessness of images, FJT]; namely, that it was their God, the Jewish God, who was identical with the unique God. From the very start, Xenophanes had denounced just that silly chauvinism' (Tromp, 'Idolatry', p. 117).

601 Exactly because of their exotic nature some people appreciated these customs: for example, abstention from eating pork was sometimes valued as a *pars pro toto* for complete vegetarianism. Seneca describes in *Ep.* 108, 22 how he was a vegetarian for a while in his youth, during the reign of emperor Tiberius when, according to Seneca, all kinds of exotic rituals were popular among Romans. Abstention from eating pork or other meat was not an exclusively Jewish custom, but practiced by various communities (see Meyers, 'Material Culture', pp. 156–158 and Zangenberg, 'Multidimensional', p. 183). Shaye J.D. Cohen notes how circumcision came to be primarily associated with Jews in Greek and Roman sources, despite the fact that it was also known to be a practice of other peoples (cf. Cohen, 'Common Judaism', p. 76).

602 See Tacitus, *Historiae* 5, 4–5; Juvenalis, *Satyra* 14, 86–106; Horatius, *Satyra* 1.9, 70; Petronius, *Satyra* 102, 14; Martial *Epigramma* 7, 30; 11, 94; Seneca, *Ep.* 95, 47; 108, 22 (see also Goodman, *Rome and Jerusalem*, p. 367 and Gruen, *Diaspora*, pp. 48–51).

strange phenomenon too. Some philosophical schools and religious sects denounced the practice of sacrifice altogether.[603] Even those intellectuals who saw sacrifice as acceptable, brought forward objections against important aspects of Jewish sacrificial injunctions. The claim that sacrifices could be made at only one location has no parallel in Greek nor Roman thought.[604] Furthermore, the sacrifice of domestic animals was viewed with amazement by some.[605]

Any Jewish author who wanted to claim the universality of the biblical laws needed to explain the tension between this claim of universality and the perceived and sometimes ridiculed particularity of certain Jewish customs.[606] Some authors chose to simply dismiss these particular customs.[607] Others, like Philo, upheld the biblical standards and attempted to explain why these customs, despite all misapprehension by non-Jews, actually fitted well within a universal and intellectually satisfying religious framework.[608]

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603 Most notably the Pythagoreans and the Orphic cults, see Vernant, 'Théorie générale', p. 10; and Brunschwig, et al., *Le savoir grec*, p. 988; according to Long, the Stoics in general 'rejected sacrifices, temples and images' (Long, *Hellenistic Philosophy*, p. 149; and similarly in Ullucci, *Sacrifice*, p. 101); for more philosophical forms of critique on animal sacrifice, see also Sissa, *La vie quotidienne*, pp. 92–93. Geoffrey S. Kirk suggests that there might have been a trend in Greek culture of de-incarnation of the Greek gods, which implied a reduction of actual animal sacrifices (see Kirk, 'Pitfalls', pp. 79–80). The denouncement of animal sacrifice in certain intellectual circles did not mean that animal sacrifice was in overall decline, as discussed in Petropoulou, *Animal Sacrifice*, pp. 290–295; for a description of the practice and meaning of animal sacrifice in Roman everyday life see Scheid, 'Animal Sacrifice'; and Bickerman notes how the sacrificial cult in temples, including the one in Jerusalem, was a generally accepted phenomenon (Bickerman, *Jews*, p. 139). Nevertheless, intellectuals might have perceived it as messy, which could be the reason that Pseudo-Aristeas emphasises that, due to an excellent drainage-system, the Jerusalem temple is extraordinarily clean (Gordon, 'Sightseeing', pp. 276–277).

604 Petropoulou, *Animal Sacrifice*, p. 206. Sanders also notes how there were two factors that did distinguish Jewish worship from that of other Hellenistic religions: the one temple, and the cost involved in the sacrificial cult there (see Sanders, *Judaism*, pp. 49–50). Non-Jews considered it peculiar privileges of the Jews to be exempt from official sacrifices and that they were allowed to send money to the temple in Jerusalem instead, cf. Tacitus *Historiae* 5, 5 and Cicero, *PF* 28; see also Goodman, *Rome and Jerusalem*, pp. 374–375 and Cohen, 'Common Judaism', p. 77.

605 As can be deduced from Josephus' defence against Apion's accusations, in *CA* II, 137–138 and also the defence of the custom by Pseudo-Aristeas (see note 612). See also Vernant, 'Théorie générale', pp. 17–18, where Jean-Pierre Vernant explains how the sacrifice of domestic animals could be felt as especially uncomfortable, because of their close relationship with humans.

606 Trent A. Rogers writes: 'But Philo must explain how this universal Law could be transmitted to a very particular people' (Rogers, 'Universalization', p. 86).

607 For example, the allegorists Philo opposes in *Migr.* 89–93 (see also note 130); another example is Sib. Or. IV, 28–34 (cf. Sanders, *Judaism*, p. 54 and 144).

608 In his works, Philo generally emphasises the intellectual component of worship (as will be more elaborately discussed in my analysis of *Spec.* I, 235–246, see pp. 212–214). This emphasis on the intellectual component of Jewish worship should not be mistaken as representative of the general religious attitude of Jews in Philo's time. For most of them, thereby not any different from their non-

Philo addressed the allegedly problematic nature of certain Jewish customs head-on and especially selected those laws and customs for discussion that other intellectuals perceived as strange.[609] In light of the intellectual objections discussed above, it becomes evident why seeking divine pardon is part of Philo's discussion of specific Jewish customs: it implies presenting God in anthropomorphic terms and it evokes objections against the sacrificial cult. As discussed in Chapter 1, Philo often used allegory to reveal the deeper meaning of these laws and customs.[610] He applied allegorical methods to present an argument as to why they should not be denounced as strange but in fact be embraced as beneficial for all mankind.[611]

Jewish contemporaries, the focus of religion was on common ritual *practice*, rather than *reflecting* the possible meaning of those acts; cf. Sanders' description of 'common Judaism' in ibid., pp. 53, 144 and 236–237, and also Bickerman, *Jews*, p. 257 and 279, Meyers, 'Material Culture', pp. 153, 155 and 169, Zangenberg, 'Multidimensional', p. 177. Nevertheless, Philo's emphasis on the intellectual component of worship did not mean that he wanted to completely abandon the concrete practice of sacrifice (as his discussion of the sacrificial cult in *Spec.* I, 198–256 shows); compare Sir. 7:29–31; 35:4–7 (Sanders, *Judaism*, p. 253) and Sib. Or. III, 575–579 (Buitenwerf, *Sibylline Oracles*, p. 259) where the sacrificial cult is described as an integral part of the correct worship of God. In line with most other forms of intellectual assessment of sacrifice, Philo's intent is not to abolish it, but to present his readers with a proper understanding of it (cf. Ullucci, *Sacrifice*, p. 122; for further discussion of Philo's stance towards sacrifice see also Nikiprowetzky, *Études*, pp. 79–97 and Petropoulou, *Animal Sacrifice*, pp. 149–188).

609 Colson, in his introduction to *De Specialibus Legibus*, claims that no principle can be found on which Philo bases the selection of laws that he discusses in the four books of the treatise (Colson, *Philo vol. 7*, p. xi and xiii). However, Philo is very much aware of the arguments that pagan authors use to illustrate the strangeness of Jewish worship or to disqualify it, and engages those arguments in particular. He immediately begins his treatise with the often ridiculed practice of circumcision (*Spec.* I, 2); he makes great effort to explain the universal character of the sacrificial worship in the temple of Jerusalem (*Spec.* I, 65–298); he knows that the rest on Sabbath is associated with laziness (*Spec.* II, 60); he resorts to allegory to explain the seeming randomness of the dietary laws (*Spec.* IV, 95–131) and explains the logic of eating tame animals as compared to eating wild animals (*Spec.* IV, 103).

610 Philo's allegorical method is discussed in Chapter 1 (see pp. 34–42).

611 Pseudo-Aristeas offers the closest parallel to how Philo structured his exposition of Jewish customs. Both Pseudo-Aristeas and Philo begin their argument by mentioning a Jewish custom that is perceived as especially problematic, for Pseudo-Aristeas the dietary laws (*Ep. Arist.* 128), for Philo the practice of circumcision (*Spec.* I, 2). Both Pseudo-Aristeas and Philo then explain how a seemingly random or backward custom is actually beneficial to both body and soul. Pseudo-Aristeas' argument is that the dietary laws serve to keep the Jews pure in body and soul (*Ep. Arist.* 139) and, further, that because of these laws Jews eat only tame animals, and the calmness and well-disposed nature of these animals strengthens the character of those who eat them as well-balanced people (*Ep. Arist.* 145–149) – arguments that can also be found in 4 Macc. 1:34–35 and 5:25–27. Philo argues that circumcision offers protection against certain diseases, promotes hygiene, promotes the generation of wisdom and increases fertility (*Spec.* I, 4–7). Josephus, in *Contra Apionem*, rather than focusing on one Jewish custom that was perceived as strange, seeks to counter all the accusations that Apion has made against the Jews.

5.2.2 *Conclusion: Reconciling seemingly particularistic customs with the claim for universality*

In the four books of *De Specialibus Legibus*, Philo chose to discuss precisely those Jewish laws and customs that Hellenistic intellectuals perceived as strange and particularistic, seeking divine pardon being among them. He did this to convince his readers of the universal and intellectually satisfying nature of Jewish religion.[612] He presented his readers with expositions, often using allegorical methods, to support his claim that they are in fact beneficial for all mankind. With Philo's reader-oriented selection principle and general approach to Jewish laws and customs in view, I can now move to the analysis of those sections in *De Specialibus Legibus* I, where divine pardon and amnesty for sins appear.

5.3 *Philo's view on divine forgiveness*

5.3.1 *The relevance of* De Specialibus Legibus *I to this topic*

Elements we associate with divine forgiveness appear in Philo's discussion of the Jewish sacrificial cult in *De Specialibus Legibus* I. What was the place and meaning of these elements, such as bringing a sacrifice to placate God, in Philo's presentation of Jewish religion as an intellectually satisfying belief? This question will be explored through an analysis of the specific sections where aspects of divine forgiveness appear in *De Specialibus Legibus* I. As in the

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[612] Philo's intended public may have been pagan readers. It is, however, highly unlikely that these works were actually read by pagans. They served more to build and maintain Jewish self-esteem (see Tromp, 'Idolatry', p. 116 and Mélèze Modrzejewski, *Jews*, p. 67). Philo discusses the excellence of Jewish worship at length in the first book of *De Specialibus Legibus*. Three themes recur regularly in this discussion: the first is Philo's claim that the best form of worship is to serve the One True God, the Creator of all, and the One who truly exists (*Spec.* I, 20, 31, 34–35, 52, 210–211); secondly, Philo claims that the Jewish temple worship is closely linked with the structure of the Universe (*Spec.* I, 65–97, 172, 177–180); thirdly, Philo maintains that sacrifices serve the needs of humans, most importantly their need for moral improvement (*Spec.* I, 191–193, 206, 260, 288) and not the needs of God (*Spec.* I, 67, 152 , 218–219, 237, 271, 282, 294). Similarly, Pseudo-Aristeas writes in his letter that there is only one universal God whose power is present in the whole universe (*Ep. Arist.* 132) and that Moses denounced the uselessness of worshipping man-made idols (*Ep. Arist.* 135–138). The author finishes his exposition of the Jewish law with the claim that Jews only eat tame animals for the same reason why they only sacrifice tame animals (*Ep. Arist.* 170–171). He then continues his letter with the claim that the goal of life itself is to know God as the one Lord of the Universe, and that everything a human being achieves is not due to his own success, but a gift from God (*Ep. Arist.* 195). The best way to honour God is not through gifts and sacrifices, but 'with purity of soul and holy conviction,' as fitting the character of God in the most appropriate way (*Ep. Arist.* 234, translation by H.T. Andrews). Compare also Josephus, who in the second book of *Contra Apionem*, begins his exposition of the Jewish customs with the properties of the Jewish God (*CA* II, 190). He cannot be captured in any single image. He can be known through his work, the creation of the world (*CA* II, 191–192). It makes sense that God is worshipped in one temple alone, because he is one (*CA* II, 193). Josephus then continues by explaining the role of the priests and the sacrifices (*CA* II, 193–198). He also writes that the purpose of these sacrifices is not to bribe God into doing something, but to prepare human beings in order for them to receive God's gifts (*CA* II, 197).

previous chapters, the structure of the whole treatise will be presented first to find out how these sections fit in with the whole of this treatise.

5.3.2 De Specialibus Legibus *I: Structure of argumentation*

Philo's *De Specialibus Legibus* I is part of the larger body of treatises known as the Exposition of the Laws.[613] In the four books *De Specialibus Legibus*, Philo continued his exposition of the written laws he had started in *De Decalogo*. He regarded the detailed laws to be human creations stemming from the overarching divine Ten Commandments and linked each specific law to one of the Ten Commandments.[614] For that purpose, he picked out selected laws from Exodus, Leviticus, Numeri and Deuteronomy, sometimes jumping back and forth between them, sometimes adhering closer to the text of a larger body of prescriptions.[615] After discussing the specific laws in *Spec.* I–IV, Philo continued the Exposition with treatises dealing with various virtues, because he believed that following these laws leads to a virtuous life.[616] The treatise *De Specialibus Legibus* I is structured as follows.

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613 See also note 596.

614 In *Spec.* I, 1 Philo describes the Ten Commandments as the 'classes' (τὰ γένη) for 'the specific laws' (τῶν ἐν εἴδει νόμων) which he also calls 'the distinct rules' (τὰ δ' ἐν μέρει διατάγματα). The way he phrases the relation between the Ten Commandments and the specific laws is reminiscent of how he describes the relation between the species (τὸ γένος) of human beings, the genders as subclasses (τὰ εἴδη) of the species, and individual humans again as distinct members (τῶν ἐν μέρει μορφὴν λαβόντων) of each gender in *Opif.* 76. Philo held that the species were created by God directly, whereas the individual members of a species were generated by nature (cf. *Opif.* 62–64); somewhat similarly, in *Praem.* 2 he contrasts the Ten Commandments, which were spoken by God through a miraculous voice and without a human intermediary (cf. *Dec.* 32–35), with the special laws, which were uttered by a human prophet. In *Spec.* II, 1 Philo explains that in the first book he has discussed the specific laws he associated with the first two commandments and will now move on to discuss those he associates with the following three; in *Spec.* III, 8 he informs his readers that he is moving to the laws he links to the sixth commandment; in *Spec.* III, 83 he moves to the seventh, but without explicating the transition; in *Spec.* IV, 1 he summarises that in the previous treatise he has discussed the specific laws he links to the sixth and seventh commandments and will now move to the eighth; in *Spec.* IV, 41 he signals the transition to the ninth commandment; and finally, in *Spec.* IV, 78 he indicates that he will move to the tenth commandment.

615 For example, in the sections where Philo discusses how Jews worship the one and truly existing God (*Spec.* I, 12–65a) he moves back and forth through Exodus, Leviticus, Numeri and Deuteronomy; whereas in the sections discussing the sacrificial cult (*Spec.* I, 198–256), he mostly follows Leviticus, although still moving back and forth between chapters, again switching to Numeri in *Spec.* I, 247, when he discusses the Great Vow (cf. Colson's notes to these sections in Colson, *Philo vol. 7*).

616 As Philo describes in *Virt.* 1, he has discussed the virtue of righteousness in a preceding treatise now lost to us, and will discuss the virtues of courage, piety, humanity and repentance in the current treatise. He concluded the exposition with an overview of the blessings that those who follow the laws can expect as rewards and the curses that are the punishments for those who do not (*De Praemiis et Poenis*). Although Philo believed the best way to live a good life is to seek virtue for virtue's sake alone, he also maintained that this best way was not attainable by everyone and that most humans need rewards or punishments to motivate them in doing good and avoid evil (cf. *Dec.* 176–178; see also *Mut.* 50; *Fug.* 103–105, and note 297).

Introduction: The excellence of Jewish worship exemplified by circumcision.
1–11: Philo aims to convince his readers of the excellence of Jewish worship. He begins by discussing a Jewish custom that is ridiculed by many, namely circumcision. Countering the mockery, he explains the great benefits for both body and soul of this particular, often misunderstood Jewish custom.[617]

The excellence of Jewish worship: There is only one truly existing God.
12–65a: Having shown that one particularly ridiculed element of Jewish law is actually most beneficial for both body and soul, Philo continues his demonstration of the excellence of Jewish worship by explaining how Jewish law teaches that there is only one true God, the creator and ruling mind of the universe.

The correct worship of the one true God: In one temple.
65b–78: How should the one true God be worshipped? Philo argues: since there is only one God, it is logical that there is only one temple. Although in truth the whole universe is this one temple, God has also provided the temple in Jerusalem and the sacrificial system there as a concrete place for humans to worship him.

The correct worship of God: By priests excelling in body and soul.
79–116: The priests who serve the one God should excel in body and soul and maintain that state of excellence; therefore, the Jewish law provides several injunctions regarding the physique, the dress and the conduct of the priests.

The correct worship of God: By a professional priesthood.
117–161a: The priests should be able to dedicate themselves fully to the service of God, therefore the Jewish law provides them with various means of sustenance: they receive the first fruits, the temple tribute and (parts of) the sacrifices. God gives these to the priests, because he does not need them for himself.

The correct worship of God: The animals suitable for sacrifice.
161b–167: Philo zooms in on several aspects of the sacrifices. He begins by discussing which animals are suitable for sacrifice: they should be tame and docile and without blemish, reflecting the disposition of the one who brings the sacrifice.

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[617] The benefits for the soul are: a) circumcision is a symbol for the control over pleasures; b) it is a symbol for knowing oneself, especially knowing the limitations of human knowledge. The theme of the limitations of human knowledge recurs in the next larger section of the treatise (*Spec.* I, 38–41, 49–50), and Philo repeats this aspect of his argumentation at the end of the treatise (*Spec.* I, 332–345).

The correct worship of God: sacrifices for all mankind.
168–189: There are two kinds of sacrifices: those for the whole human race, and those for individual humans. The sacrifices intended for all mankind provide protection from disasters, preserving mankind. They are offered during seasonal festivals that celebrate the harmony of the universe.

The correct worship of God: Sacrifices for individuals.
190–256: From general sacrifices and the festivals Philo moves to the three types of individual sacrifices: the whole burnt-offering (τὸ ὁλόκαυστον, cf. Lv. 1–2) that expresses one's honour to God; the preservation-offering (τὸ σωτήριον, cf. Lv. 3), meant to incur blessings; and the sin-offering (τὸ περὶ ἁμαρτίας, cf. Lv. 4–5), meant to provide deliverance from evil.[618] He discusses literal and symbolical aspects of these three types and concludes with a discussion of the Great Vow, because he sees this vow as combining aspects of all three.[619] This discussion prepares the way for Philo to move from the sacrificial cult towards discussing the characteristics of the person who offers a sacrifice.

The correct worship of God: Purity of one's soul and living virtuously.
257–298: Philo explains how very important the purity is of the person's soul that is bringing the sacrifice. One's soul is purified through the scrutiny of reason, a scrutiny leading to a change of conduct, for to live virtuously is the best sacrifice one can bring.

Virtuous living: Some lessons in piety gained from Moses' speeches
299–345: Philo dedicates the final sections of the treatise to several admonitions and exhortations regarding piety from Moses' speeches, referring to Deuteronomy. According to Philo, only acknowledging the existence of God and the ideal forms brings true happiness and eternal life, while the denial of the existence of God and the ideal forms will harm one's soul and might even destroy it.

Divine pardon appears in *De Specialibus Legibus* I within the context of Philo's discussion of the universally beneficial nature of Jewish sacrificial cult (*Spec.* I, 161b–256). He first links the prescriptions about animals suitable for sacrifice to the moral qualities of the one bringing the sacrifice (*Spec.* I, 161b–167). He next explains how the Jewish sacrificial cult benefits the whole of mankind (*Spec.* I, 168–189) and then moves on to explain how sacrifices benefit individual human beings (*Spec.* I, 190–256). Divine pardon specifically comes into view when Philo discusses sacrifices 'for sins, aimed at healing what the soul has done wrong' (*Spec.* I, 197).[620]

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[618] Philo introduces the three types of individual sacrifices in *Spec.* I, 194.

[619] Philo mentions the three types of sacrifices again in *Spec* I, 247 and then proceeds to explain (in *Spec.* I, 247–256) how the Great Vow described in Num. 6, 1–12 combines the aspects of these three types of sacrifices, all together meaning that people fully dedicate themselves to God.

[620] τὴν δὲ περὶ ἁμαρτίας ἐπὶ θεραπείᾳ ὧν ἐπλημμέλησεν ἡ ψυχή.

Philo distinguishes between involuntarily and voluntarily committed wrongs and discusses aspects of the required sacrifice in turn. In *Spec*. I, 226–234, Philo discusses the rules of Lv. 4:1–35 and 5:14–19 regarding the sacrifices to receive amnesty (ἀμνηστία, 229) for involuntary sins. In *Spec*. I, 235–246, Philo focuses on Lv. 5:20–26, on what he describes as rules regarding sacrifices for voluntary wrongdoings, although they are not introduced as such in the biblical text.[621] Here, he uses three words related to the semantic domain of forgiveness: συγγνώμη, ἀμνηστία and ἄφεσις. Therefore, this passage is particularly relevant for exploring Philo's view on divine forgiveness. We will now turn to it.

5.3.3 Spec. *I, 235–246: On sin-offering for voluntary sins*

5.3.3.1 *Paraphrase*

Philo begins his discussion of how one can remedy voluntary wrongdoings with a paraphrase of Lv. 5:20–26 (*Spec*. I, 235–237). There are some notable differences between Philo's paraphrase and the biblical text. Philo emphasises the role of conscience, which is not mentioned as such in Leviticus.[622] He points out that while perpetrators may escape conviction by human judges, they will never be able to elude conviction by their conscience (συνειδός, 235). Evildoers should listen to the accusation of their conscience and acknowledge that they have done something wrong. Then, they should confess their crime, another element not present in Leviticus, and ask for pardon (συγγνώμη, 235). Philo, however, does not explain to whom the confession and the plea for pardon are to be made, an issue that will be discussed in the analysis.

Another difference compared to Leviticus is that Philo does not mention the role of the priest in the process of obtaining pardon. Instead, Philo mentions the actions required from the perpetrators: first, to propitiate (ἱλάσηται, 237) the injured party by repaying the damages done with a fifth of the value added; and then, to go to the temple and ask for remission (ἄφεσις, 237) of their sins while sacrificing a ram. However, it remains unclear in Philo's deliberations who exactly is asked to remit sin. Philo does not mention the priests nor describe the sacrifice as propitiating God. Rather, he presents these actions as verification of the perpetrator's repentance which ensures their amnesty (ἀμνηστία, 236) and emphasises how their true intentions are confirmed by the careful scrutiny (ἔλεγχος, 237) of one's soul.

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621 The word ἀκούσιος is used to describe involuntary sins in Lv. 5, however the opposite ἐκούσιος to describe a voluntary evil act does not appear in this chapter. Philo was probably inspired by Plato and Aristotle to explicitly distinguish between the opposite pair of ἀκούσιος/ἐκούσιος, for references to Plato see note 490, and to Aristotle see note 569.

622 Philo possibly takes his lead from ἡμέρᾳ ἐλεγχθῇ mentioned in Lv. 5:24. Josephus, who discusses the sacrifice for voluntary sins in *Ant*. III, 232, somewhat similarly refers to the conviction of one's conscience as follows: ὁ δὲ ἁμαρτὼν μὲν αὑτῷ δὲ συνειδὼς καὶ μηδένα ἔχων τὸν ἐξελέγχοντα κριὸν θύει.

Having discussed the steps necessary to correct voluntarily committed evil, Philo continues in *Spec.* I, 238–239 with the observation that there is a similarity between the sacrifice for voluntary sins committed against fellow humans, and those committed involuntarily against sacred objects. He explains that both offenses were probably considered forms of desecration by Moses, although the important point is that such desecrations are rectified when the evildoer returns to the better (τρόπος πρὸς τὸ βέλτιον, 238). Then Philo notes a similarity of the sin-offering to the preservation-offering and explains the logic of this similarity as follows: a preservation-offering preserves someone's health and protects him from a sickness of the body. In a somewhat similar fashion, the sin-offering preserves someone from the more grievous consequences of an unchecked sickness of the soul. Philo's intention to connect, systematise and translate the traditional regulations in one intellectual process is evident.

In *Spec.* I, 240–243, Philo then notes that there are three differences between the sin-offering and the preservation-offering and explains the logic of these three differences. First of all, the sacrifice is to remain in the temple; the reason for this is that a sin should not be broadly publicised. Second, only male priests are allowed to eat the sacrifice – the reasons for this are: to honour the bringers of the sacrifice, which is also why the priests who eat from this sacrifice need themselves to be fully without fault; and to reassure sinners that they have obtained full amnesty, for otherwise God would not allow his priestly servants to eat of the gift of the person who brought the sacrifice.[623] Third, the sacrifice is to be eaten in one day, which is explained as a symbol for people to be slow in sinning and quick to do what is good.

In *Spec.* I, 244–246, Philo concludes his discussion of the sin-offerings for both involuntary and voluntary wrongdoings by emphasising how one's intention (γνώμη, 246) is essential in defining the moral quality of an act. He goes as far as to say that evil acts committed by those who have consciously dedicated themselves to God, could in a way still be considered righteous acts; whereas righteous acts accidentally done by wicked fools (φαῦλοι, 246) in a way should still be considered evil.[624] This is reminiscent of the conclusions reached in Chapter 4 regarding the importance of the orientation of the human soul for Philo, namely to enable humans to do either good or evil.[625] In the analysis, I will discuss whether divine forgiveness is an equally important factor for Philo to achieve or regain the good orientation of the soul.

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623 Otherwise it would be bribery, as Philo explains in *Spec.* I, 277.

624 Philo's argument in these sections is quite difficult to disentangle. The theme of eating the sacrifices discussed in *Spec.* I, 240–243 brings him back to the sacrifices for involuntary sins of the high-priest and the nation, which are not to be eaten at all, but are to be burnt whole (cf. *Spec.* I, 232). This again leads Philo to identify them as whole burnt-offerings, which as he has explained in *Spec.* I, 198–211, are a symbol for the mindset of the truly virtuous, who intentionally dedicate themselves to God.

625 See my analysis of *Conf.* 60–82 (pp. 163–169).

5.3.3.2 *Analysis part 1: The presentation of divine forgiveness in* Spec. *I, 235–238*

The focus of the analysis will be on what Philo writes about forgiveness in *Spec.* I, 235–238 while paraphrasing Lv. 5:20–26. This long and grammatically difficult passage will be translated in full, as it is pivotal for this study. Philo writes:

> [235] Having framed these and similar laws regarding involuntary sins, Moses next made arrangements for those concerning voluntary sins.[626]
> He says:
> "When someone
> would lie about a partnership or about a deposit or a robbery or having found a lost property,
> and would swear – while being suspected and being put upon his oath;
> and would become his own prosecutor – being interrogated inwardly by his conscience (ἔνδον ὑπὸ τοῦ συνειδότος ἐλεγχθείς), while seeming to have escaped the conviction of his prosecutors;
> and would reproach himself for what he has denied and has committed perjury for; as well as would ask for pardon (συγγνώμη) – while straightway confessing (ὁμολογῶν) the injustice he has done,"
> [236] Moses orders that:
> "Amnesty (ἀμνηστία) can be granted to such a person, provided that he proves his regret (μετάνοια) to be sincere not just by a promise, but by actions:
> returning the deposit and what he has robbed or found or whatever he has usurped from his fellowman;
> and paying an additional fifth of its worth as consolation for the offended party."
> [237] When he has thus appeased (ἱλάσηται) the wronged person, Moses says:
> "After this,
> he should go to the temple,
> asking for remission (ἄφεσις) of the sins he has committed (ὧν ἐξήμαρτεν),
> bringing along as an impeccable advocate (παράκλητον) the scrutiny throughout his soul (κατὰ ψυχὴν ἔλεγχον), that has saved (ἐρρύσατο) him from fatal disaster, by removing a deadly disease and restoring him to perfect health."
> [238] For such a person, too, the sacrifice prescribed is a ram, just as for someone who has committed a sin against sacred matters. For Moses declared the involuntary sin in sacred matters as being equal to the voluntary sin in human matters – although it could also be that it is like an involuntary sin in sacred matters, since through his turn to the better he set right an oath which was unwisely added.

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626 Philo uses νομοθετήσας in *Spec.* I, 235 and has identified Moses as the νομοθέτης in *Spec.* I, 13–15, cf. *Spec.* I, 8, 59–60, 262. For reasons of clarity, I will add Moses' name in the remainder of the translation, although Philo does not explicitly repeat it. It is worth noting that in Lv. 5:20 God is identified as the one speaking, not Moses.

As noted in the paraphrase, Philo's divergences from the LXX text of Lv. 5:20–26 are noteworthy; I have included the Greek terms in the translation to further highlight these divergences. The concluding verse of the presentation in Leviticus also helps to highlight these differences: 'The priest will make atonement for him before the Lord, and he will be forgiven for any of all the things he has done with which he has offended the Lord' (Lv. 5:26).[627] This verse helps to identify three notable differences between Leviticus and Philo's paraphrase.

First, Philo does not mention the priest and he does not mention God in his paraphrase of the injunctions in Leviticus. Rather, Philo emphasises that the offended party is a fellow human being, who needs to be appeased through compensation (lines 17–20).

Second, the setting in Leviticus is the sacrificial cult and the term used for forgiveness (ἀφίημι, med. fut.) is the one usually associated with that setting. Philo, however, before using ἄφεσις in relation to the prescribed sacrifice (line 24), uses two different words related to forgiveness (συγγνώμη and ἀμνηστία, lines 12 and 15) which are more at home in a forensic than a cultic setting.

Philo may have found reason to present these injunctions primarily in a legal light because of ἐλεγχθῇ used in Lv. 5:24. But, if this was indeed the case, he saw the use of ἐλέγχω above all as an opportunity to introduce and expand on an element not at all present in Leviticus, which forms the third notable difference: Philo's seems to be especially interested in what is going on *inside* the wrongdoer, the internal scrutiny of one's soul by conscience (συνειδός) leading to regret and a confession of sin (lines 8–13 and 25–28).

These differences between the LXX version of Lv. 5:20–26 and Philo's paraphrase of it determine the structure of my analysis of *Spec.* I, 235–238. I will begin with the first observation and examine how Philo saw God's involvement in obtaining 'remission of sins' (ὧν ἐξήμαρτεν ἄφεσις, *Spec.* I, 237). For that purpose, I will use the results from Chapter 2 to explore what role Philo thought God has in forgiveness.

In the second part of the analysis, I will focus on the second observation and examine the role of sacrifice in achieving remission from sins, in light of what appears as a shift in focus by Philo from a sacrificial to a forensic setting, also using the results of Chapter 2.

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627 Καὶ ἐξιλάσεται περὶ αὐτοῦ ὁ ἱερεὺς ἔναντι κυρίου, καὶ ἀφεθήσεται αὐτῷ περὶ ἑνὸς ἀπὸ πάντων, ὧν ἐποίησεν καὶ ἐπλημμέλησεν αὐτῷ.

In the third part of the analysis, I will follow the lead of the third observation and investigate the human side, exploring in particular Philo's presentation of conscience in *Spec.* I, 235–246, using the results from Chapters 3 and 4.

The goal of my analysis of *Spec.* I, 235–246 is to explore whether Philo's view on divine pardon can provide a solution to the paradoxical scenario he considered evildoers to be in. According to Philo, evildoers distance themselves from God, while at the same time they need God's wisdom to stop doing evil and return to goodness. Does divine pardon help to overcome this paradox and can Philo avoid the intellectually problematic implications it evokes?

5.3.3.3 Analysis part 2: Amnesty and pardon as expressions of God's merciful power

In this part of the analysis of *Spec.* I, 235–246, I want to focus on the first observed difference between Lv. 5:20–26 and Philo's paraphrase of it. At first sight, Philo does not clarify who is asked to grant forgiveness, expressed here with the terms 'pardon' (συγγνώμη, 235), 'amnesty' (ἀμνηστία, 236 and 242) and 'remission' (ἄφεσις, 237). Philo's use of different terms related to forgiveness diverges from Lv. 5:20–26 where only one term is used: 'to be remitted' (ἀφίημι, med. fut.). As it is, Philo does not use one principal term for forgiveness in *De Specialibus Legibus* I. He uses 'remission' (ἄφεσις) in relation to the sacrificial cult, in the sections currently analysed (237) as well as in two other sections of *De Specialibus Legibus* I (190 and 215). He additionally uses 'pardon' (συγγνώμη) and 'amnesty' (ἀμνηστία).[628] In the sections currently analysed (235, 236 and 242), it remains unclear who is asked to grant pardon or amnesty. However, through zooming out from these sections into the wider context, God comes into view as the one who is asked for amnesty and the one granting pardon, although Philo does not ascribe the granting of amnesty and pardon to God directly. Instead, he presents God's merciful power as the addressee from whom amnesty can be asked and from whom pardon is to be expected.[629]

The fact that Philo attributed the divine involvement in aspects of forgiveness, namely amnesty and pardon, explicitly to one of God's powers agrees well with the conclusions of Chapter 2. God's powers were identified in Chapter

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628 In the Septuagint, 'amnesty' (ἀμνηστία) and 'pardon' (συγγιγνώσκω, συγγνωμονέω, συγγνώμη and συγγνωστός) appear only in books written in the Hellenistic age (see Sir. *prol.* 18; 3:13; Sap. Sal. 14:26; 19:4; 2 Macc. 14:20, 31; 4 Macc. 5:13; 8:22). Metzler shows that, in general, Philo's use of συγγνώμη, similarly to Josephus' use of it, fits in well with its use in Greco-Roman sources (see Metzler, *Verzeihens*, pp. 250–259).

629 Philo connects amnesty (ἀμνηστίαν) to God's merciful power (τῆς ἵλεω τοῦ θεοῦ δυνάμεως) in *Spec.* I, 229. Zooming out from *De Specialibus Legibus* I, *Spec.* II, 15 comes into view, where Philo describes mercy as one of God's powers, in relation to pardoning (συγγνούς). Zooming still further out, *Som.* II, 292 comes up, where Philo describes how people will receive amnesty when they appease (ἐξευμενισάμενοι) the merciful power of the truly existent (τὴν ἵλεω τοῦ ὄντος δύναμιν).

2 as manifestations of the concepts contained in the intelligible world. These concepts and powers were further identified as the link between the eternal and unchanging God and the material world of becoming and change. They sustain the orderly existence of the material world.[630] We saw that Philo used the powers to maintain the transcendence of God *and* at the same time was able to explain how a transcendent God can interact with creation and care providentially for the world. We also saw how Philo described God's providential care as God showing mercy towards creation.[631] Philo furthermore connected the 'merciful power' (ἵλεως δύναμις) to the title 'God' (θεός) applied to the divine, a title that identifies the divine as the beneficent creator and providential sustainer of creation.[632]

God's providential care also manifests itself in the form of divine amnesty and pardon, which Philo saw as expressions of God's merciful power. However, Philo could also describe God directly as merciful (ἵλαος) and disposed to pardon (συγγνώμων).[633] He furthermore wrote how humans – Moses in particular – prayed to God and then received amnesty and pardon from him.[634] A section from *De Vita Mosis* II is especially noteworthy: in *Mos.* II, 147 Philo writes that without propitiation through prayers and sacrifices, the divinity (τὸ θεῖον) will become agitated and inflict punishment, because of the general imperfection of created things.[635] Such a statement, when read in isolation, appears to contradict Philo's often repeated claim that God does not change or react. However, when read in light of Philo's interpretation of such descriptions of God as brought forward in *Deus* 51–85 (another insight from Chapter 2), namely that Philo applied a shift in perspective from God to humans, this apparent contradiction is resolved.

Chapter 2 demonstrated how Philo emphasised that humans during their earthly existence are never able to describe God as he truly is.[636] Nevertheless,

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630 See Chapter 2, pp. 68–81.

631 See Chapter 2, pp. 90–95.

632 For the connection between 'God' as creator and 'merciful power' (ἵλεως δύναμις), see Chapter 2, note 299. Wolfson and Zeller express a similar thought (see Chapter 1, note 100).

633 Philo describes God as merciful (ἵλεω τὸν θεόν) in *Spec.* I, 242; and in *Spec.* III, 121 he describes God as merciful and disposed to pardon (τὸν ἵλεω καὶ συγγνώμονα θεόν).

634 *Mos.* I, 184; II, 24 (where Philo writes that prayers 'propitiate the father of all,' ἱλασκόμενοι τὸν πατέρα τοῦ παντός); II, 166.

635 *Mos.* II, 147: ταῦτ' ἐπιτελέσας εὐαγῶς ἀχθῆναι κελεύει μόσχον καὶ κριοὺς δύο· τὸν μέν, ἵνα θύσῃ περὶ ἀφέσεως ἁμαρτημάτων, αἰνιττόμενος ὅτι παντὶ γενητῷ, κἂν σπουδαῖον ᾖ, παρόσον ἦλθεν εἰς γένεσιν, συμφυὲς τὸ ἁμαρτάνειν ἐστίν, ὑπὲρ οὗ τὸ θεῖον εὐχαῖς καὶ θυσίαις ἀναγκαῖον ἐξευμενίζεσθαι, μὴ διακινηθὲν ἐπιθεῖτο. In Chapter 2 I have discussed that Philo, when describing creation as prone to sin, means that it is lacking perfection because it is always 'becoming' and never truly being (see especially pp. 61–67 and note 213).

636 See my analysis of *Deus* 51–85 in Chapter 2, pp. 85–95.

Philo regarded such inaccurate human descriptions of God as meaningful, because they help humans to morally improve themselves. He connected different presentations of God to different stages in moral progress: the least perfect humans serve God out of fear, they see him as the judging ruler, to which the name 'Lord' (κύριος) belongs; the more perfect ones see God as the beneficent creator, to which the name 'God' (θεός) belongs, and serve him to incur blessings; the most perfect souls, who are scarcely found upon earth, see God as he truly is (ὁ ὄντως ὤν) and serve him out of love.

What do these insights from Chapter 2 imply for Philo's descriptions of God as merciful and disposed to pardon, as wrathful and inflicting punishment, or as changing from one state to the other as the result of prayer and sacrifice? They imply that when Philo described God in this way, his intention was not to describe changes in the divine itself, but to indicate different ways by which humans perceive, experience and approach the divine. These different perceptions, experiences and approaches of God will enable all humans to progress morally.

How does this work? As Philo saw it, if someone chooses evil over good, God's providential care will manifest itself as divine punishment in the form of all kinds of curses befalling the evildoer.[637] Philo argued that these curses may appear as something evil to that person, but in fact it is better to see them as warnings aimed at guiding the evildoer back to good sense.[638] When people realise that they have done evil, Philo even advised them to actively seek divine punishment, rather than to be abandoned by God, because the latter will leave them a slave of the material and perishable world.[639] The aim of punishment is pedagogic and beneficial, namely the betterment of the person being punished.[640]

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637 In the second half of *De Praemiis et Poenis*, Philo provides a long list of the curses that befall someone who persists in doing evil. As was discussed in Chapter 4 (on pp. 184–190), Philo considered the punishments that will befall a person doing evil, as an expression of God's providential care, working as an almost mechanical system that God has included in creation, where the ultimate penalty for persisting in evil is the death of the soul.

638 Compare *Congr.* 177–179; *Fug.* 206–207; *Virt.* 75; *Praem.* 163. Philo explains that one should be happy when God sends punishments as warnings, for it provides someone with the opportunity to return to good sense. In *Abr.* 104, Philo goes as far as to say that God can send virtue to torture someone in his soul, because to someone who is unjust, the call to justice is experienced as something painful.

639 See *Det.* 144–146, here the punishment that God sends is his reason (τὸν ἑαυτοῦ λόγον) manifesting itself as conscience that scrutinises the soul – the manifestation of the logos as conscience will be further discussed below (see pp. 214–221).

640 In *Legat.* 7, Philo therefore writes that God's punitive power can be considered as beneficial, as it is intended to lead offenders to wisdom, or at least those who observe how the offender is punished.

Philo considered the acknowledgement of divine punishment for what it is, namely an expression of God's providential care for creation and a pedagogical measure to better one's ways, as a first step in moral progress.[641] The perception and experience of God as a wrathful Lord belongs to this first step. When evildoers indeed improve their ways, their moral progress will allow them to perceive and experience God in a new way: namely as merciful and disposed to pardon. By changing their ways and repenting from their evil ways, God will appear to transform for them from a punishing Lord into a forgiving God.[642] This does not mean that Philo believed God would ever change; instead, Philo maintained that the evildoers have changed. They have changed from humans consciously choosing to do evil into humans regretting this choice, realising the foolishness of their ways, realising they have ignored God and now turning to God for help to return to good reason.[643]

Evildoers who do not change, will not experience the transformation in their perception and experience of God. They will only experience God as a wrathful Lord, but never as a forgiving God. As a consequence, if they persist in choosing evil and do not repent, they cannot be pardoned.[644] They will continue to experience the unavoidable consequences of their intentional choice for evil.[645] Evildoers in their delusions may even mistakenly see such bad consequences as desirable.[646] Only when they return to good sense can they begin to see these consequences for what they actually are. Philo appealed to his readers to recognise when they follow the path of evil and turn away from it, by identifying the consequences of following that path as being punished by God.

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641 See *Spec.* II, 163 and IV, 6 where Philo presents the various actions of God towards someone who does evil as measures to correct the person involved that increase in intensity, ranging from warnings which should put the sinner to shame, to punishments which should instil fear.

642 A similar change not in who God is, but in how humans perceive and experience God, as wrathful when they do wrong and again merciful when they repent, is described as part of Plato's philosophical outlooks as well in Bordt, 'Zorn', especially p. 151.

643 Compare how in *Mos.* I, 147 Philo identifies the Egyptians who joined the exodus with people who through punishments have converted to the truth.

644 Philo discusses at length in the conclusion of *Spec.* I, 324–345, how no one can join the correct and beneficial beliefs regarding God as long as they keep adhering to their mistaken beliefs.

645 As with mercy and pardon, Philo held that God does not inflict penalties on evildoers directly. Curses and penalties are also applied through God's powers: God's justice and the ruling power, both connected to 'Lord' (κύριος) as the name for the divine. Philo held this view for two reasons. First, because, according to him, God cannot have direct interaction with the material world. Second, Philo saw punishments as somewhat evil, since they cause damage or inflict pain, and he held that God cannot be connected to something evil (cf. *Dec.* 176–178; *Conf.* 180–182).

646 The treatise *De Confusione Linguarum*, analysed in Chapter 4, provides quite a few examples of evildoers who mistake what is actually a punishment for something that is to be desired, such as those who rush to welcome the flood of sensations, which will eventually drown and destroy the soul (*Conf.* 30 and 70–72), or those who believe that being able to achieve everything the mind comes up with is something desirable, whereas in fact it means that someone is being abandoned by God (*Conf.* 164–167).

Philo saw different perceptions of God as belonging to different stages in human moral progress and uses such presentations as encouragement for his readers to change for the better and to increasingly perceive God as he truly is.[647] He saw both punishment and pardon as expressions of God's powers and regarded these powers as different ways in which humans perceive and experience God. When evildoers are punished by God, they experience the kingly and ruling power identified with the name 'Lord'; if they then repent from the evil they commit, they will experience divine pardon, which is connected to the beneficent and creative power identified as 'God'.[648] Each step forward in moral progress also means that humans perceive God more and more as he truly is. Therefore, Philo considered the perception of God as merciful, compassionate and disposed to pardon, although still not completely accurate, as closer to how God truly is than the perception of God as a wrathful Lord, which is also why he can describe God as preferring pardon over punishment.[649]

To sum up. God's involvement in divine forgiveness can first of all be understood as having created pardon and amnesty as aspects of one of his countless powers that together sustain the material world and form God's providential care for creation. Philo saw the effects of divine providential care more or less as an inevitable system that God has included in creation. God is not personally involved, so to speak, in the day-to-day care of the material world. His involvement works through his powers. Amnesty and pardon are aspects of these powers, in particular aspects of God's merciful power.

However, Philo also described God directly as merciful and more inclined to pardon than towards unrelenting punishment. We saw how such descriptions of God do not imply for Philo that there is any imbalance within God. Rather, these different descriptions of God belong to different human perceptions of God, indicating different stages of moral progress. Philo could describe God as more inclined to pardon, because the human experience of God as the beneficent and creative power brings humans closer to how God truly is, rather than when they experience him as a wrathful Lord.

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647 Cf. *Spec.* I, 242–243, 299–300.

648 As discussed in Chapter 2 (see especially note 217 and 290), Philo saw the names 'God' (θεός) and 'Lord' (κύριος) as the names for God's two chief powers. He explains in *Spec.* I, 307 that the name 'God' belongs to the beneficent (εὐεργέτις) and creative manifestations of the divine, and 'Lord' to the punitive (κολαστήριος) and ruling manifestations.

649 Philo writes in *Spec.* II, 196 that God prefers pardon (συγγνώμη) over punishment (κόλασις), due to his gracious nature, and in *Deus* 74–76 he describes how God mitigates his judgement. Further places where Philo describes God's nature as gracious are *Fug.* 99 and *Spec.* II, 23. Similarly, Philo can describe God as taking pity and being compassionate (ἔλεον καὶ οἶκτον λαμβάνει) towards people in need (immigrants, orphans and widows) in *Spec.* I, 308–310.

In this part of the analysis of *Spec.* I, 235–246, I have discussed two terms associated with divine forgiveness, namely pardon (συγγνώμη) and amnesty (ἀμνηστία). The third term associated with divine forgiveness appearing in these sections, namely 'remission of one's sins' (ὧν ἐξήμαρτεν ἄφεσις, 237), has not yet been discussed. What does this remission entail according to Philo? This will be the topic of the next part of the analysis.

5.3.3.4 *Analysis part 3: Sacrifice as an expression of being remitted from sins*

Having discussed pardon and amnesty as expressions of God's merciful power in the previous section, I now want to focus on the second observed difference between Lv. 5:20–26 and Philo's paraphrase of it. In his paraphrase, Philo mentions remission (ἄφεσις) from sins after pardon and amnesty, which is remarkable, because in Lv. 5:20–26 only remission (with ἀφεθήσεται, in vs. 26) is mentioned as an aspect of what we call forgiveness. In *Spec.* I, 237, as well as in other places in *De Specialibus Legibus* I, Philo uses ἄφεσις in relation to sacrifice.[650] Therefore, my approach will be to explore Philo's view on 'remission from one's sins' in relation to his view on sacrifice.

Philo puts 'remission from one's sins' (ὧν ἐξήμαρτεν ἄφεσις) forward in *Spec.* I, 235–246 as part of his discussion of the meaning of certain sacrifices prescribed in the Bible. As was discussed in the introduction to this chapter, the sacrificial system of the Jewish religion presented Philo with an intellectual challenge.[651] He felt the need to explain the reasons for this sacrificial system, since it conflicted with his more intellectual views on the divine. The sacrificial system would seem to imply once more that human characteristics are attributed to God. In the case of sacrifices, God might be misunderstood to act like a human king, who can be placated through gifts and whose benevolence can be bought. However, according to Philo, it is unthinkable that God could be bribed. To avoid creating the impression of God being bribed, Philo applied the same shift of focus from God towards humans that we already encountered in Chapter 2 when I examined anthropomorphic descriptions of God in the Bible.[652] He shifted the epistemological focus from God towards the human person bringing the sacrifice, and similarly from God granting remission from sins to the one whose sins are being remitted.

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650 See *Spec.* I, 190, 215. In *Mos.* II, 147, Philo also mentions ἄφεσις in relation to sacrifice. In other treatises, he connects ἄφεσις to the jubilee year (see *Sacr.* 121–122; *Det.* 63; *Migr.* 32; Congr. 89, 108–109; *Mut.* 228; *Spec.* II, 39, 122 and possibly 176) and this connection to the jubilee year leads Philo to associate the number 50 with ἄφεσις. Philo uses ἄφεσις in a more general meaning of 'release' or 'liberation' in *Det.* 144; *Her.* 273; *Mos.* I, 123; *Spec.* II, 67; *Flacc.* 84; *Legat.* 287.

651 See pp. 195–199.

652 See the analysis of *Deus* 51–85 in Chapter 2 (see pp. 84–96).

What does this shift of focus entail? In several instances in *De Specialibus Legibus* I, Philo makes clear that God himself does not actually need sacrifices. God does not need anything from creation.[653] Nevertheless, God has provided humans with the sacrificial system to accommodate the human need to bring sacrifices.[654] As Philo expresses repeatedly throughout *De Specialibus Legibus* I, sacrifices do not benefit God in any way, they are appropriate and beneficial for the humans who bring them. Sacrifices neither influence nor change God in any way either; instead, Philo sees them as a sign of positive changes that took place in the person who offers the sacrifice.[655] He relates these changes for the better in particular to a transformation in the offerer's thinking: incorrect thoughts (that have led to incorrect words and actions) have been removed and replaced by correct thoughts, as the following examples from *De Specialibus Legibus* I show.

Instances of sacrifices symbolising changes towards better thoughts can readily be found in *De Specialibus Legibus* I. For example, Philo presents the requirement to sacrifice in the one temple in Jerusalem as an expression of the correct belief that God is one and not many.[656] He interprets the ordinances for the whole burnt-offering in particular as allegoric references to those whose mind controls their irrational part and is filled with good thoughts and judgements, leading to best actions and a clear conscience.[657] The whole burnt-offering furthermore symbolises the deliberate commitment of someone to serve God.[658] It is a sign of someone truly understanding that God is the only existent and the beneficent creator and sustainer of creation.[659]

What light do Philo's views on sacrifice shed on his thoughts on remission from sins? Philo maintained that a sacrifice should not be seen as a placating gift to God or a fine that someone needs to pay to be released from further punishment. Rather, it is a symbol of the state of mind of the person bringing the sacrifice, signifying that the mind has been cleared from wrong beliefs and is now filled with the correct beliefs. In other words, a sacrifice does not lead to remission from any sins. Rather, it is a testimony that the remission from sins – that is, the purging the human mind from wrong beliefs, has been achieved.

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653 *Spec.* I, 67, 152, 191–193, 206, 218–219, 237, 260, 271, 282, 294; a similar argument can be found in Plato, *Eut.* 14E–15A.

654 *Spec.* I, 67.

655 Zeller discusses how Philo reinterprets the sacrificial cult as primarily an expression of thankfulness in Zeller, *Charis*, pp. 119–125.

656 *Spec.* I, 67.

657 *Spec.* I, 202–203.

658 *Spec.* I, 205.

659 *Spec.* I, 209.

To sum up. Philo held that sacrifices do not benefit God, but are instead a symbol of the mindset of the one who brings the sacrifice. A quote from *Spec.* I, 277 serves as a concise illustration of Philo's shift of focus from God to humans.[660] Here, Philo writes that:

Not the quantity of the victims sacrificed is valued by God, but the completely clear rational spirit of the one bringing the sacrifice (τὸ καθαρώτατον τοῦ θύοντος πνεῦμα λογικόν).

The shift of focus encountered in Chapter 2 regarding anthropomorphic descriptions of God can be recognised in how Philo the significance of sacrifices from God towards humans. The sacrifice does not change or influence God, neither does God receive anything through sacrifice. Instead, a sacrifice is testimony to a change for the better in the one offering it – that is, testimony of 'the completely clear rational spirit of the one bringing the sacrifice.'[661]

This insight introduces a new question: if the change does not take place in God's mind, but in the humans bringing sacrifices, what exactly happens with them? How is the purging of wrong beliefs achieved, if it is not accomplished through sacrifice? How does someone's rational spirit become completely clear? For, as discussed in Chapter 4, according to Philo, humans do evil because their ability to reason has become polluted by wrong thoughts and irrationality.[662] This question brings us to the final part of the analysis of *Spec.* I, 235–246, where I will discuss the role of conscience.

5.3.3.5 Analysis part 4: Conscience as an expression of the special connection between God and humans.

In the previous section, we saw how Philo maintained that the true and proper meaning of bringing a sacrifice is that, ideally, it signifies that those who bring the sacrifice now think and act rationally, because their mind is purged from wrong beliefs. This purging from wrong beliefs constitutes the 'remission from sins'. How is this purging from wrong beliefs achieved, according to Philo?
I will explore this question in light of the third observed difference between Philo's paraphrasing of Lv. 5:20–26 and the original verses in the Septuagint.
I observed that Philo introduces an element in his paraphrase that is not present in Leviticus, namely the focus on what is going on *within* the evildoer's soul. The specific agent of these processes is what Philo calls the conscience (συνειδός, 235).

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[660] In the larger context of *Spec.* I, 257–298 Philo discusses many specifics of the sacrificial requirements and repeats throughout this discussion that these sacrifices are symbols for the purity of the soul of the one bringing the sacrifices (for references see note 653).

[661] Similarly, in Sir. 7:8–9 the uselessness of making sacrifices while continuing to do evil is emphasised, and in 34:23 how the sacrifices themselves do not bring forgiveness.

[662] See the first part of my analysis of *Conf.* 14–59 (pp. 149–155).

What is the role of conscience, according to Philo?[663] He presents conscience in *Spec.* I, 235–246 as an inescapable prosecutor and judge. Sinners can escape conviction by human judges, because humans can be deceived.[664] However, they are inevitably confronted with a judge they cannot escape from, a judge that resides within themselves, this judge Philo calls 'conscience'.[665] Why one cannot escape the conviction of one's conscience becomes evident when we see how Philo connected conscience to God.

How is conscience connected to God? The connection is not immediately clear in *Spec*. I, 235.[666] But Philo wrote more often about conscience, and elsewhere in his extant treatises the connection between conscience and reason, and between conscience and God becomes more explicit. For example, conscience is identified by Philo with the 'true man' – that is, reason.[667] Reason can function as a thorough examiner (ἔλεγχος) that interrogates the soul.[668] Philo notes that

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663 For a fundamental study of Philo's concept of conscience, especially how it fits well within his general intellectual context shared by Jewish and non-Jewish authors see Nikiprowetzky, 'L'élenchos', a more recent discussion of Philo's concept of conscience is Bosman, *Conscience*.

664 Cf. *Spec.* I, 235. Similarly, in *Mut.* 195–198 Philo writes that evil people use an abundance of words to deceive human judges and escape conviction. That humans can be deceived, is in line with Philo's repeated emphasis on the limitations of human knowledge, for example in *Spec*. I, 44, and also as discussed in the previous chapters (see especially my analysis of *Deus* 51–85, pp. 85–90).

665 The sinner 'would become his own prosecutor – being interrogated inwardly by his conscience,' αὐτὸς ἑαυτοῦ γένηται κατήγορος, ἔνδον ὑπὸ τοῦ συνειδότος ἐλεγχθείς (*Spec.* I, 235). As noted in the paraphrase of *Spec*. I, 235–246 (see also note 622) the internal accusation of one's conscience is not present in Lv. 5:20–26.

666 Richard T. Wallis discusses whether conscience in Philo's view is an immanent or transcendent feature of human beings in Wallis, 'Conscience'. In this article, Wallis provides many useful references to sources that can illustrate Philo's intellectual context regarding conscience. He furthermore suggests solving the possible conflict between the immanent and transcendent nature of conscience in human beings, by comparing it to how Aristotle presents the functioning of reason in humans: as the passive immanent mind being activated by transcendent active thought. Wallis concludes (on p. 214): 'Philo's doctrine of conscience could similarly have postulated two entities, the "irradiation" being man's inherent possession (as at *Dec.* 87), but remaining a mere potentiality until actualised by the divine Logos.'

667 *Det*. 22. Here Philo also explains that 'true man' (ὁ πρὸς ἀλήθειαν ἄνθρωπος) is another name for the mind capable of articulated speech and reasoning (ἠρθρωμένης καὶ λογικῆς διανοίας) (compare *Fug.* 131). Philo continues in *Det*. 23 how the 'true man' – that is, the capacity for rational thought – resides in every human soul. When necessary, a human's reason functions as judge, witness or accuser, convicting humans unseen and from within (ἀφανῶς ἡμᾶς ἔνδοθεν ἐλέγχει). Philo presents this scrutiniser (ἔλεγχος), this accuser and judge in *Dec*. 87 as a 'birth-fellow' and 'house-mate' present in every human soul. Such passages of Philo on the internal accusations of conscience, are somewhat reminiscent of Socrates mentioning of having to confront a 'close relative' of his 'who lives in the same house,' and who continually confronts Socrates (ἀεί με ἐλέγχοντος) (see Plato, *Hipp. Maj.* 304D). Arendt identifies this 'close relative' with conscience, emphasising that it is an innate feature of humans, rather than the (external) voice of God (see Arendt, *Mind*, pp. 190–191), a view critically discussed and elaborated upon by Mika Ojakangas in Ojakangas, 'Conscience'.

668 *Det*. 24.

the Bible ascribes such interrogation to God, for example in Gn. 4:9 when God asks Cain about his brother. Of course, since Philo saw God as omniscient, he did not believe that he would pose such a question to learn anything he did not already know. Instead, Philo interpreted it as an interrogation by divine reason in the form of conscience, i.e., one's inner voice that benefits those being questioned, so that they get to know themselves better.[669] He held that the scrutiny of conscience is not a direct activity of God, rather it is a manifestation of divine reason within a human being.

The connection between conscience and divine reason explains the inevitability of the confrontation with one's conscience. Philo held that divine reason pervades the whole of creation.[670] It is the medium through which God applies his providential care across the whole of creation, as it manifests itself in countless powers that sustain it.[671] One of these manifestations is the voice of conscience within humans. This conscience is a faculty of human reason, but remains connected to God, as it is connected to divine reason that permeates the whole creation.[672]

Philo used several metaphors, inspired by the Bible, to describe the activities of conscience. In *Spec.* I, 235, and elsewhere, Philo presents conscience in a forensic light, performing various roles that are part of a trial: that of the prosecutor and judge interrogating the suspect, collecting and presenting evidence, accusing and convicting the perpetrator.[673] Unlike human prosecutors and judges, however, conscience can neither be bribed nor deceived, and it will not stop its pursuit of justice. It will pursue the evildoer unrelentingly until justice is done.[674] Another metaphor that Philo applied elsewhere in his treatises to conscience is that of the (high-)priest, performing the task of meticulously identifying signs of potentially life-threatening diseases.[675] Both these

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669 *Det.* 58–59. Philo applied – again – a similar twist of perspective that was discussed regarding sacrifices (see pp. 212–214): the scrutiny of conscience does not benefit God, only the one being scrutinised, just as sacrifices do not benefit God, but only the one bringing them.

670 Cf. my analysis of *Deus* 33–50 in Chapter 3 (see pp. 112–138).

671 Cf. my analysis of *Opif.* 6b–12 in Chapter 2 (see pp. 56–67).

672 The special connection between the human mind and divine reason was discussed in Chapter 3 (see especially pp. 105–112 and 124–137).

673 In addition to *Spec.* I, 235–236, see also *Opif.* 128; *Post.* 58–59; *Dec.* 87–91; *Virt.* 206; *Flacc.* 7.

674 See also *Conf.* 121–126, where evildoers are constantly warned and rebuked by their conscience and compare *Flacc.* 145, where Philo describes how someone who flees is constantly harassed by his conscience.

675 Philo writes in *Deus* 125–126 about the 'examiner' (ἔλεγχος) present in every healthy soul. It shows to the soul which of its deeds are contrary to 'right reason' (ὀρθός λόγος), the soul 'then perceives itself to be foolish, licentious, unjust and full of stains.' Philo further (in *Deus* 135) compares this examiner to the priest who enters a house to inspect for signs of leprosy. In *Fug.* 117–118 Philo identifies conscience with the high-priest; in *Gig.* 52 he identifies the high-priest with divine reason.

metaphors share the element of bringing to light what would otherwise remain unnoticed and therefore irremediable.[676]

These metaphors explain how Philo thought conscience works in the process of achieving 'remission from one's sins' (ὧν ἐξήμαρτεν ἄφεσις) and what this remission means. In light of these metaphors, for Philo, being remitted means that conscience will stop its torment of incessant accusations and will begin to clean and heal the soul. It is not that the examination of conscience goes without pain, but the goal is always beneficial and pedagogical. Those who listen to its voice allow God's wisdom to purify and enlighten their minds.[677] Philo therefore associated the scrutiny of conscience with the study of philosophy, as both are aimed at the improvement of one's character to be able to lead a more virtuous life.[678] As soon as one heeds the warnings of conscience, the process of 'remission from sins' can begin – that is, the cleaning and healing of the soul as it is purged from wrong beliefs and filled with correct ideas.[679]

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676 *QG* IV, 202b. Light appears regularly in connection to conscience, see, for example, *Post.* 58–59; *Ios.* 68; *Fug.* 27; *Som.* I, 90–91. Conscience is presented as a manifestation of wisdom in *Congr.* 151 and *Fug.* 5–6. The light implied in this process is the intellectual light of reason and wisdom – in *LA* III, 49 Philo writes that for this reason only the mind can be subjected to the scrutiny of conscience. For the connection between reason and the intellectual light see also Chapter 2 (pp. 68–82) and Chapter 3 (pp. 124–137).

677 Only when sinners accept all the judgements of their conscience does their conscience become clear – 'without deceit or disguise' as Philo puts it in *Praem.* 163. Furthermore, Philo emphasises in *Spec.* I, 282 that only God can truly clean the soul; a thought which agrees well with the fact that Philo maintained that humans can only scrutinise and purify their minds when they orient themselves towards God, as we saw in Chapter 4 where the role of God in attaining wisdom was discussed (see pp. 159–162).

678 As Philo writes in *Opif.* 128, the seventh day of each week is reserved by Moses for the purpose of the study of philosophy and the scrutiny of conscience. In his commentary on *Opif.* 128, Runia summarises Philo's concept of conscience as 'an internal monitor which accompanies the person in all his thoughts and actions, examining and judging them in the light of reason and commandments of the Law (for Philo there is no absolute distinction between these two sources of ethics)' (Runia, *Creation*, p. 298 and compare also *Mos.* II, 215–216).

679 In *Spec.* I, 219, Philo compares sleeping to the process by which the liver cleans the blood. Similarly, Philo equals atonement to the cleansing of the soul in *Spec.* I, 228, 259, 282. As Philo further explains in *Spec.* I, 219, sleep helps to clean the soul in order for it so see, as if in a mirror, the concepts most clearly (see also *Som.* I, 79–84). When the senses function properly, they allow the human mind to see the reflection of the intelligible world as a manifestation of God's creative powers in the material world (see *Dec.* 105; *Migr.* 105). Backgrounds in Plato (for example in *Rep.* 508D) for this idea of reflection of the truth which the human mind can perceive are discussed in Stead, 'Knowledge of God', p. 235. Helleman describes how Philo held that ideally the human mind should be a 'faithful reflection of its original' in Helleman, 'Deification', p. 63; as discussed in Chapter 3, humans then achieve their purpose in becoming an 'image of God' (see pp. 105–111).

Right reason and the soul will then be reconciled and inner peace will be restored.[680] Yet, evil deeds will leave their mark on the soul like scars.[681]

The cleaning and healing of the soul can, according to Philo, only begin when evildoers listen to their consciences. As long as they choose to ignore their conscience and the voice of right reason, they continue to suffer the grave consequences of that choice.[682] As discussed in Chapter 4, they ultimately risk the 'death of their soul' – that is, losing the special connection with God, the ability for right reason.[683] They then become defined by the decay of the material realm alone. Philo warned that anyone remaining on the path of evil will end in ruin (φθορά), with their sensations applying the fatal stroke.[684] The illnesses of the soul will progress from difficult to cure to completely incurable.[685] Philo appealed to his readers to instead listen to their consciences and allow God's wisdom to restore the rule of right reason in their soul.[686]

If evildoers do listen to their consciences, they then undergo a process of shame (αἰδώς) and a regretful change of mind (μετάνοια). Shame is a sign that someone has come to realise that nothing can be hidden from God.[687] Shame ensues

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680 Compare Bosman's description of Philo's view on reconciliation (Bosman, *Conscience*, p. 186): 'Reconciliation in this regard is directed at restoring inner harmony and order, bringing processes back under the control of the λόγος/νοῦς.'

681 Philo describes how the soul of the repentant still contains scars (οὐλαί) of its earlier wrongdoings (ἀρχαίων ἀδικημάτων) in *Spec.* I, 103; a similar thought of wrongdoings scarring the soul, but without the mention of repentance, can be found in Plato *Gorg.* 524C–E (cf. Colson, *Philo vol. 7*, p. 620); for a discussion of how Plato in the *Gorgias* relates the scarring to the soul to its internal interrogation by the ἔλεγχος see Edmonds III, 'Whip Scars'.

682 In *Deus* 181–183, Philo presents his interpretation of the story of Balaam as an example of someone who completely ignores the internal scrutiny of divine reason in his soul. Left unchecked, Balaam's folly (ἀφροσύνη) eventually completely overwhelms him (ἐπικλύζω, pass.) (*Deus* 181, see also *Mut.* 170).

683 Compare how Philo describes in *Spec.* II, 27 how someone who ignores God will also be ignored by God. Without God, sins become incurable (see *Cher.* 2; *Det.* 149; *Fug.* 84). Winston describes (in Winston, *Logos*, p. 40) how Stoics could similarly warn to not pass a 'point of no return' in doing wrong. The meaning of the 'death of the soul' is discussed in Chapter 4, in the analysis of *Conf.* 83–106 (see pp. 184–190): when the soul dies, one is completely abandoned by good reason.

684 *Deus* 183.

685 Therefore, in *Spec.* I, 239, Philo describes 'sickness of the soul' (νόσον ψυχῆς) as much more dangerous than those of the body.

686 Philo concludes in *Deus* 183 with the appeal to his readers to take the example of Balaam as a serious warning, and to 'attempt to maintain the goodwill of the judge within.' As he writes in the last sentence of *Quod Deus Sit Immutabilis*, the goodwill of the judge within will be maintained by anyone who gives heed to the accusations of conscience, instead of making an effort to ignore them. A similar incentive to abandon the ways of evil, to be purified by water and ask God for forgiveness can be found in *Sib. Or.* IV, 62–67.

687 *Fug.* 5–6, 160; *Som.* I, 90–91; *Prob.* 124; in *Ios.* 47–48 and 215 Philo describes several outward signs of the conscience's internal conviction (and in 230 he describes how Joseph's brothers attempt to avoid looking like they have been convicted by their conscience).

because sinners now view their deeds and thoughts in light of divine reason and become aware of their ignorance and ill judgement.[688] Being ashamed means sinners begin to accept the judgement of their conscience, which has constantly tried to show them that a deed or thought is actually evil.

The regretful change of mind means, according to Philo, that someone accepts the insight provided by right reason into the evil nature of their acts and thoughts.[689] In Chapter 4, I discussed how, according to Philo, evil deeds have their roots in evil or wrong thoughts.[690] When evildoers begin to listen to the voice of their consciences, they begin to realise how wrong their thinking and acting have been. This leads to shame and regret. Philo may speak of this process of repentance, of realising the error of one's ways, also in terms of a conversion. Conversion at its core means to turn around from wrong thoughts to correct thoughts.[691] Repentance and conversion indicate that a person accepts correct thoughts and listens to the voice of right reason.

According to Philo, repentance in a way transforms the intentionality of an evil act. As also discussed in Chapter 4, for Philo, the conscious decision to willingly do something evil is what makes an act truly evil.[692] As also discussed in the previous chapter, only humans are capable of committing such voluntary evil and only humans can be blamed for the evil they choose to do. When humans repent, they do so because they now allow the light of God's wisdom to shine on their decisions and reveal them to their insight. The result is shame and regret: with hindsight they realise the folly of their acts and wish they had not done what they did. In a way the intentionality of the act is transformed: if evildoers were able to go back in time, they would now make a different choice.[693]

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688 See *Som.* I, 90–91, where Philo compares God to the sun revealing everything hidden, which results in evildoers repenting from their evil opinions. See also *Som.* II, 292, where Philo describes repentance as something comparable to sobering up from intoxication, those who experience this 'will feel ashamed and reproach themselves because of what they have done wrong while they were led by ill-judging judgement' (see also *Deus* 126).

689 Philo's concept of repentance is elaborately discussed in Winston, 'Repentance', Wilson, *Virtues*, pp. 359–362 and Lambert, *Repentance*, pp. 155–171.

690 See the first part of my analysis of *Conf.* 83–106 (pp. 171–177).

691 Compare *Spec.* I, 51 and 227, where he describes how people 'set sail' (μεθορμίζω, used in 51 and 227) for piety (εὐσέβεια, 51) and a blameless life (ζωὴ ἀνυπαίτιος, 227); see also, for example, *Virt.* 182, where Philo writes that 'the proselytes' (by which Philo means those who have repented from the delusions and ignorance that once controlled their actions, as he has described in *Virt.* 180–181) 'immediately become prudent, self-controlled, modest, civilised, good, philanthropic, honourable, just, confident, truth-lovers, superior to the influence of money or desire.' Other examples are *Mos.* II, 167–168; *Praem.* 15–21, 162–163.

692 See the second part of my analysis of *Conf.* 83–106 (pp. 177–184).

693 The aspect of having to regret one's decisions was an important reason why repentance was not held in high regard by Plato, Aristotle or the Stoics; good persons carefully consider their actions beforehand and know how to avoid having to regret them afterwards, as discussed with references

However, changing one's thoughts and intentions alone does not suffice: sinners need to verify their change of thinking by a change in their speech and acts. Philo stressed that the process of repentance cannot remain an internal affair only. He adhered to the view that wise persons should exhibit congruency in their thoughts, words and actions.[694] Sinners must first accept the judgement of their conscience in their thoughts. However, what must then follow is a verification of their repentance in words: they need to make an outspoken confession of their sins.[695] Next, sinners should verify their repentance through their actions, completing the harmony of thoughts, words and actions. According to Philo, persons who only say they have changed their ways for the better, but refuse to change their actions, are mad.[696]

The actions that Philo mentioned as required to verify one's repentance may vary. Overall, however, he held that people who have repented from wrong thoughts and returned to the ways of wisdom should in the future act in a manner expected from the wise. He described such actions in terms similar to those generally used in his intellectual context for wise behaviour, for example, in acting prudently, honourably and philanthropically.[697] When dealing with specifics of Mosaic Law, as is the case in *Spec.* I, 236–237, Philo also mentioned specific actions prescribed by the law: compensating the victim and offering sacrifice. He considered these specific actions as concrete examples of the more general attitude of the wise. To compensate the victim for one's sin is a concrete

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in Billings, *Platonism*, pp. 84–85, Winston, 'Repentance', p. 29, Metzler, *Verzeihens*, pp. 198–199 and Fulkerson, *No Regrets*; on the interaction between intellectual and religious notions as sin, repentance and the role of conscience in the Hellenistic age see also Bickerman, *Jews*, pp. 268–279. Philo agreed that regret and shame ideally should be avoided (cf. Bosman, *Conscience*, pp. 177–178), however, he also saw that ideal as unattainable when humans live in the material realm (cf. *Fug.* 104–105; Virt. 177; see also my analysis of *Deus* 51–85, on pp. 90–95). While humans live in a body their knowledge is inherently limited, making repentance necessary. Philo therefore considers repentance a virtue (cf. *Virt.* 175–186) and equates it to being free from sin (*Spec.* I, 187), because it is an expression of acknowledging the limitations of human abilities and the consequent dependence of humans on God. As discussed in Chapter 4, Philo believed such an acknowledgement to be essential if someone wants to become wise (see pp. 159–162).

694 Philo establishes an explicit connection between repentance and the congruency of thoughts, words and actions in *Virt.* 183–184; for Philo's general emphasis on the congruency of thoughts, words and actions see also note 534. Roskam also brings forward how for Philo true remorse implies a change in behaviour (see Roskam, *Virtue*, p. 169).

695 According to Philo's statements in *Praem.* 163, this confession serves as an incentive for other people to change their ways. This outspoken confession is an extension of the warning or educational character of punishments. In *Spec.* I, 241, however, Philo makes it clear that the sin should not be broadly advertised, to protect the reputation of the sinner.

696 In *Fug.* 159–160, Philo compares such a person to someone who is sick, but pretends to be healthy, which will result in him becoming even more sick.

697 Philo describes the attitude of those who have repented and converted in *Virt.* 182 (see note 691). Righteous conduct was an important virtue in Philo's intellectual context, as described with references in Buitenwerf, *Sibylline Oracles*, p. 200.

and specific example of the generally just and humane attitude that one may expect from the (now) wise person. And, as discussed in the previous part of my analysis of *Spec*. I, 235–246, bringing sacrifice was also considered by Philo primarily as a symbol of one's wise insights.[698] The emphasis for Philo is on the improvement of people's mentality, rather than on the actual sacrifice.[699]

To sum up. Philo saw conscience as a manifestation of the innate human ability to reason, an ability given by God to humans, connecting them to his own reason and wisdom. Even though doing evil removes someone from God, a connection to God remains, as right reason manifests itself as the voice of conscience. Conscience will point out to humans that their deeds are evil. It will do so in steps of increasing intensity: from giving warnings, to accusing and rebuking someone, transforming even into punishment, tormenting someone, but all the time with the beneficial intent to change someone's way to the better. The intent of conscience is to motivate sinners to turn away from evil and orient themselves towards God's wisdom and right reason again.

If sinners listen to the voice of their conscience, which is the voice of divine reason within them, the process of remission of their sins may begin: punishments will stop and their soul begin to be cleansed and healed. This process of cleansing and healing first begins in one's thoughts. It involves shame and a fundamental change of mind. One is healed from thinking the wrong thoughts to thinking the correct thoughts, which is the basis to turn from committing wrong acts to doing good. The process of restoration is complete when thoughts are accompanied by correct words and actions. Confessing the evil one has done and following that confession up with wise behaviour verifies that one has truly changed from evil to good. Receiving remission from sins means that this process of transformation, this change towards goodness, has been completed.

5.3.3.6 *Results from the analysis of* Spec. *I, 235–246*

The analysis of *Spec*. I, 235–246 was structured around three notable differences between Philo's paraphrase of Lv. 5:20–26 and the original verses in the

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698 See pp. 212–214.

699 Note how in *Praem*. 163, where Philo also describes the restoration of right reason using terminology comparable to what he writes in *Spec*. I, 235–246, Philo does not mention bringing a sacrifice, illustrating how sacrifice is not essential for him to ensure divine pardon. He writes: 'So, if they accept these powers as aimed at warning, instead of as aimed at destruction; and feeling ashamed with a completely changed soul; indeed reproaching themselves for going astray; declaring and also confessing every sin – first towards themselves, with a mind cleansed to the point where the conscience is without deceit or disguise; then also out loud, for the betterment of the hearers – they will receive goodwill from the saviour, the merciful God (εὐμενείας τεύξονται τῆς τοῦ σωτῆρος καὶ ἵλεω θεοῦ), who has provided the species of man with a special and most great gift, the kinship with his own reason, on the archetype of which the human mind was created.'

Septuagint. These differences led me to explore how Philo saw the role of God and the role of sacrifices for sinners to be granted pardon and amnesty, and also what Philo believed should happen in the soul of the evildoer for sins to be remitted. This exploration led to the following results:

First of all, we have seen that, according to Philo, God's involvement in granting pardon and amnesty to sinners consisted in having created pardon and amnesty as aspects of the merciful power, one of the countless powers God created to sustain creation. At the same time, Philo could also describe God himself as merciful and more inclined to pardon than to wrath and punishment. Such descriptions of God do not imply that Philo held God to be imbalanced or susceptible to change. Rather, such descriptions of God refer to progressive stages in how humans can perceive and experience God. Humans who do evil will experience God as wrathful and punishing. As they make moral progress, for which God in his goodness allows them time, they will experience God as merciful and forgiving. However, such an experience of God as merciful and forgiving, although more accurate, is still not the same as perceiving God as he truly is.

Secondly, Philo held that God contributed to the process of achieving remission from sins in having provided humans with the sacrificial cult. Philo presented bringing sacrifices as tangible confirmation of the sinner's change for the better and not as something that could influence or change God. Sacrifices serve the human need for such tangible confirmation. They do not serve God's needs, because God needs nothing. When humans bring sacrifices, this confirms that their mind has been purged from foolish, irrational and evil thoughts.

Thirdly, according to Philo, God provided humans with the means to purge their mind from wrong thoughts in having created them with the ability for reason. This purging of one's mind will happen when evildoers listen to their conscience, a manifestation of divine reason within every human soul. Conscience is an inescapable persecutor and judge, which will warn, accuse, rebuke and even torment sinners within their soul, always with the aim of making them change their ways. Evildoers who listen to their conscience will go through a process of shame and repentance. This process is essential for leaving the wrong thoughts that have led to evil actions behind and allowing God's wisdom to fill them with correct thoughts leading to good words and actions. In a way, this process will in hindsight change the intentionality of one's evil deeds: originally having done them voluntarily, sinners now wish they had not done them, regretting their earlier choice to do evil.

All in all, God in his goodness provided humans with all the means necessary to keep them on the good way or return to it. He created pardon and amnesty as aspects of the merciful power to sustain creation and allow humans the

opportunity to abandon their evil ways. Moreover, God created humans with the ability for right reason which will manifest itself as the voice of conscience when they have committed evil and will guide them back to God's wisdom when they listen to their consciences. Their souls will then be purged from wrong and evil thoughts and they will be restored to right reason. God has also given the sacrificial cult to humans, accommodating the human need for tangible confirmation of their change for the better.

5.4 *Conclusions to Chapter 5*

This final chapter began with a recapitulation of the intellectual challenge divine forgiveness presented to Philo. These challenges were explored in Chapters 2 to 4 and with the results from this exploration in mind, we returned to *Spec.* I, 235–238, one of the more substantial passages in Philo's works, where he writes about divine forgiveness of sins, using the words pardon (συγγνώμη), amnesty (ἀμνηστία) and remission (ἄφεσις). Before analysing these sections, I have explored Philo's general approach to the Jewish laws, because elements of these laws presented Philo with intellectual challenges similar to those of divine forgiveness.

Philo's general approach in discussing the Jewish laws was shown to be comparable to that of other Jewish authors who claimed that the Jewish law was in complete agreement with the universal law of nature which all humans should follow. To substantiate this claim for universality, Philo explicitly focused on those Jewish laws and customs that were perceived as the most peculiar and therefore had been criticised. To defend them, Philo argued that such laws and customs were in fact beneficial not only for Jews alone, but for all mankind. Demonstrating the universal benefit of these laws and customs supports his general argument for the universality of the whole Jewish law and the overall intellectual soundness of Jewish religion.

Does divine amnesty have a meaningful place in what Philo saw as a universal and intellectually satisfying form of religion? The analysis of *Spec.* I, 235–246 provides the elements for a positive answer to that question. Philo avoided what he, and other intellectuals alike, considered inappropriate implications of divine forgiveness: presenting God as emotional, subject to change and impressionable, even prone to being bribed through sacrifices. How did Philo achieve this? One element is that he distinguished between how God truly is and how humans perceive his activity in creation. God, as he truly is, is immutable and does not involve himself directly in human affairs. He is not actually angered by human evil nor does he change his mind when he pardons the evildoer. Rather, Philo presented divine amnesty and pardon as aspects of God's merciful power, one of the innumerable powers God created to sustain creation. Mercy, and by implication pardon, is even essential for creation to

remain in existence. Mercy means that God allows something inherently less perfect than himself to remain.

Furthermore, Philo emphasised that the distinction between God and his powers belongs to how humans perceive God. In truth, however, God is one and indivisible. Humans also perceive a hierarchy in God's powers. God can be perceived as more inclined towards pardon and mercy than to punishment and wrath. Philo further emphasised how the variance in perceptions of God is the result of different stages in human moral progress, not of an actual imbalance in God himself. Humans doing evil will perceive God as wrathful and punishing; when they improve their ways, they will perceive God as merciful and forgiving. Although this perception of God is more accurate, it is still removed from perceiving God as he truly is.

In this way, Philo avoided presenting God in ways commonly denounced by intellectuals. He shifted the perspective from how God truly is to how humans perceive God and he applied the same shift with regard to sacrifices. He emphasised that sacrifices cannot influence God. God has provided the sacrificial cult to humans, because he knows that humans need tangible rituals and symbols. God himself, however, needs nothing from creation. Offering sacrifices is above all a human expression of thankfulness and honouring God. They are a testimony of more correct thoughts and judgements having entered into someone's mind – for example, that a person has understood that there is only one God who is the creator and sustainer of the world.

How can evildoers clear their mind from wrong ideas and gain true knowledge instead, according to Philo? It became apparent that being remitted from sins, an aspect we associate with divine forgiveness, forms an important element in how humans can leave behind evil and turn to goodness instead. However, God is again not directly involved in the remission from sins. Rather, it is achieved by means of the innate human ability to reason. According to Philo, God, when he created humans, provided them with the ability to share in his own reason and wisdom. When humans do evil, their ability to reason will manifest itself as the voice of conscience. Conscience informs, warns or accuses them of the evil they are doing. Evildoers should listen to their consciences. When they do so the process of being remitted from sins can begin: the consequences of doing evil will stop and the mind will be cleansed by God's wisdom from wrong and evil ideas, replacing them with goodness and right reason. The cleansing of the mind is accompanied by shame, because evildoers now realise how evil and foolish they have been. It also involves a fundamental change of mind: abandoning the wrong ideas that have led them to commit the evil acts and allowing themselves to reorient towards the correct ideas instead.

Finally, Philo pointed out that the cleansing of the mind from wrong ideas that have led to acts of evil can only be completed if it is accompanied by a change in words and in actions. The change in words is verified by a confession of the sins one has committed. The change in acts is verified in behaving in a way that is fitting for someone who is growing in wisdom: compensating the victim of one's evil acts and bringing a sacrifice as testimony of one's change for the better.

For Philo, divine pardon and amnesty as aspects of God's merciful power mean that such a change for the better is possible for those who do evil, even though in doing evil they remove themselves from God's right reason. He emphasised God's inclination towards pardon as an incentive for his readers to leave evil behind and allow God's wisdom to help them grow in virtue. No divine intervention is necessary to liberate humans from evil, because God has initially created all the means necessary for this liberation to happen. It happens when humans listen to their God-given ability for right reason that manifests itself as the voice of conscience when they commit evil. If they learn from their consciences, right reason will reassert itself and allow humans to again patiently train themselves on the way to wisdom.

The results from the analysis of *Spec*. I, 235–246 and the conclusions of this final chapter provide the final pieces of the puzzle that allow me to propose an answer to the overall question of this study: what did Philo mean when he writes that evildoers obtain divine pardon? I will therefore move on to the summary and general conclusions of this study.

6

Summary and conclusions

6.1 *Aim and focus of the study*

This study investigated the meaning of divine forgiveness in the thought of Philo of Alexandria. In Chapter 1, the Introduction of this study, I began in the present age with Hannah Arendt's view on forgiveness, because she reflected on this fundamental concept like few other modern, non-theological authors. She saw forgiveness as a Jewish invention, unknown in Greco-Roman culture, introduced into that culture by Jesus and further propagated by his followers. This view required some refinement, as was shown by a brief comparison between divine forgiveness in the context of the Bible and early Judaism and that of Greco-Roman culture. Aspects we associate with divine forgiveness, such as praying and sacrificing in order to placate God or the gods when having sinned, were part of the daily-life religiosity of Jews and non-Jews alike in the Hellenistic age. Although known in Greco-Roman culture, seeking pardon from a deity was rejected by intellectuals, who considered it inappropriate when applied to the divine, because the eternal gods cannot change their minds, have no emotions nor can they be troubled by human affairs.

Did Philo, as a Hellenistic intellectual, share in the common intellectual disregard for seeking divine pardon? Could he still encourage his readers to seek God's pardon when they have done evil, while he at the same time explained to them that God cannot be hurt nor angered by human evil or made to change his mind? Or should he call upon his readers to stop sacrificing in Jerusalem because it is nonsense to expect God to change his mind over evildoers and pardon them? How did he resolve the contradictions resulting from the confrontation between daily-life religious practice and truly honouring God in an intellectually sound way? These questions make the investigation of divine forgiveness in his thought such a fascinating topic: what meaning can such a popular but intellectually questionable notion have for a Hellenistic intellectual like Philo?

To be sure, divine forgiveness was not a prominent theme in Philo's thought, nor can he be seen to discuss it as a well-defined concept. However, throughout his works he used terms taken from the semantic domain of divine forgiveness. Not surprisingly, Philo wrote about seeking and receiving divine pardon (συγγνώμη), amnesty (ἀμνηστία) and remission (ἄφεσις) from sins when discussing the Jewish sacrificial cult in *De Specialibus Legibus* I in particular. But even beyond such discourses on rituals and religion, terms like 'pardon' and 'amnesty' do occasionally occur in other treatises as well. Did Philo only use them because he found them in the Bible? Or was he taking them seriously in the sense that they indeed have something meaningful to say about God and his relationship with humans? Insight into Philo's method in developing his thought provides an answer to these questions.

Philo developed his thought in a way shared by other intellectuals of his age. They developed and presented their arguments based on interpretations of ancient texts they considered authoritative, thereby using methods that intellectuals – were they Jewish or not – came to consider standard when discussing the heuristic value of traditional lore. Like interpreters of Homer's epics or Egyptian myths, Philo was convinced that the laws of Moses were meaningful and that they – if correctly understood and interpreted – were even far superior to all other human wisdom. In order to counter objections on the basis of Moses' simple language and – from a philosophical viewpoint – his insufficiently sophisticated concept of God, humans and the world, Philo, like many of his intellectual contemporaries, applied allegorical techniques to reveal what he considered to be the deeper meaning hidden under the surface of Mosaic Law. Philo applied his interpretive strategies to every aspect of Mosaic Law that he discusses. He considered all of it to be meaningful, because he believed that Moses, the divinely inspired law-giver, did not use any words without reason.

To express the deeper meaning of Moses' laws, Philo not only shared commonly accepted methods with his contemporaries, but also a vocabulary in which ideas from various philosophical traditions merged and interacted, sometimes contrasting and sometimes in an attempt to express their convergence. Although it is helpful to retrace these ideas to their original tradition in order to better understand them, it is less fruitful to try and assign Philo to a particular philosophical tradition. Instead, we should recognise that various ideas interact in Philo's thought and explore what they each contribute to the characteristic amalgam of his own special blend of philosophical and religious ideas.

Philo developed his thought in a conscientious, well-conceived way. Therefore, the claim that Philo only mentioned seeking divine pardon because he found it in the Bible without giving it much further thought, is unfounded and does little justice to Philo's seriousness as a thinker. Instead, the question should be asked: what place and meaning does divine pardon have within Philo's overall philosophical outlook? To find an answer, a preliminary reading of *Spec*. I, 235–238 helped us identify a number of problematic implications the notion of 'divine forgiveness' might have in an intellectual context. These were transformed into five questions:

- Forgiveness implies a relationship, but how can the transcendent God relate to and interact with creation at all?
- Does divine pardon imply that human actions can hurt and anger God and that God can be made to change his mind?
- How can humans interact with and relate to the transcendent God?
- Why would and could humans, as creatures of the supreme good God, intentionally do evil?

- What are the consequences of committing evil for the wrongdoer and how would and could those consequences involve God to remedy them?

Each of these questions was explored through close reading of sections from Philo's treatises. The first two questions were discussed in Chapter 2, the third question in Chapter 3 and the fourth and fifth questions in Chapter 4. The results from these chapters were then confronted with a detailed analysis of *Spec*. I, 235–238 in Chapter 5, to answer the main question of this study: what is the meaning of divine forgiveness in the thought of Philo of Alexandria? So, where has this approach brought us?

6.2 *Divine forgiveness and Philo's doctrine of God*

In Chapter 2, the study started with the intellectual challenges related to Philo's doctrine of God implied in the notion of 'divine forgiveness'. The sheer idea of evildoers seeking and receiving divine pardon presented Philo with two fundamental intellectual challenges. First, it implies interaction between God as forgiver and human evildoers as the ones wishing to obtain forgiveness. Before focusing on the possible relationship between God and humans, I analysed Philo's discussion of aspects of the creation story of Gn. 1 in *Opif*. 6b–36a to see whether he thought interaction between the transcendent God and creation was possible at all. Second, divine forgiveness implies that God can be offended by human actions, but can also be pacified and moved to grace, a notion which does not seem to fit in with Philo's concept of divine immutability. I explored this matter by analysing *Deus* 51–85, Philo's interpretation of the statement that God became angry in Gn. 6:7.

As a result of analysing these passages, we saw that Philo considered a relationship between the transcendent God and creation not only possible, but even essential. Without God as the source of true and stable existence, the perceptible world could not exist as a beautiful and well-structured whole. In Philo's mind, God provides stable existence to the perceptible world through the intelligible world. The intelligible world is created by God as he conceives of the immaterial concepts that sustain the continued existence of the material world. For Philo, these concepts encompass all aspects of creation that we might call 'abstract' like: time and space, forms and qualities of things, species of living creatures, invisible processes like growth or the turn of the seasons, and more. He used two words in particular to indicate these concepts: 'ideas' (ἰδέαι) and 'powers' (δυνάμεις). Philo saw these ideas and powers as expressions of God's goodness and mercy, because through them God graciously grants meaningful existence to the perishable material world, a world inherently less perfect than himself.

At the same time, we saw in Chapter 2 that Philo considered all human expressions of God as fundamentally flawed and limited. Human statements about God do not express God's reality, but only what humans with their limited abilities perceive of him. Therefore, human statements about God are indicative of the characteristics, especially moral qualities, of the humans expressing them, rather than of the real qualities of God. In particular, Philo explained descriptions of God as 'emotional' or 'changing his mind', as indicating changes not in God himself but in the way how humans perceive God. Such changes in perception are the result of changes in the humans involved: when humans do evil, they perceive God as a wrathful Lord, but when they repent and commit themselves to doing good, they perceive God as a beneficent and forgiving God. The human perception of God can change, but God will never change.

Exploring Philo's use of this shift of perspective from God to humans inevitably brought us to the next major step in the investigation of the place and meaning of divine forgiveness in Philo's thought. After looking at God in Chapter 2, we need to ask: how are humans able to perceive and contemplate God at all? What does Philo have to say about humans and their relationship to God?

6.3 Divine forgiveness and the relationship between God and humans

Having discussed how Philo believed God and the whole of creation were related and could interact, Chapter 3 was dedicated to the exploration of Philo's view on the relationship between God and humans in particular. Again, I explored this matter through analysing passages from Philo's works. I focused on *Opif*. 16–25 and 69–88, where Philo examines what it means that humans were created 'after the image of God', as stated in Gn. 1:26–27; and on *Deus* 33–50, where Philo explains the statement that 'God bethought himself' in Gn. 6:6 and its relevance for understanding the nature of humans.

According to Philo, humans as created beings are connected to God in the same, general way as the whole of creation is connected to God. Philo was convinced that God created everything in existence first as concepts existing eternally in God's mind. Among these innumerable concepts, God created the concept of the human species and like all other concepts this concept also exists eternally in God's mind. This is how everything in existence, including human beings, is connected to God in a general way. However, Philo believed humans can become connected to God in a more direct way, because of their ability to reason. This ability allows humans to perceive the concepts underlying physical objects, reaching as it were into God's mind. Humans then perceive how God's spirit pervades the whole of creation to maintain its order, in the form of form-giving force, growth, life-giving force and in intelligent beings such as humans, in its purest form, namely as the ability to reason.

The ability to reason allows humans to think what God thinks, their mind becomes enlightened through the intellectual light of God's wisdom, reflecting it like a mirror for as much as it is able. This ability is limited, however. Humans can never receive God's wisdom in full. Not only is the human ability to reason limited, this ability can be misused as well. Instead of allowing it to be filled with divine wisdom and to think what God thinks, humans are prone to let their ability to reason be highjacked by their irrational and unpredictable impulses. They then think and act irrationally, thereby sinking down to the level of animals instead of fulfilling their purpose by becoming like God. Why, however, would humans choose irrationality over rationality? This question was discussed in Chapter 4, where I focussed on the human ability to do evil.

6.4 *Divine forgiveness and the human ability to do evil*

The next question to explore, then, deals with two aspects of Philo's view on humans. First we need to ask: how could humans, as creatures of a good God, ever turn away from him and commit evil? Then the question arises: what are the consequences of doing evil and how could human evil affect the immutable and impassive God? These matters were explored in Chapter 4 by analysing Philo's discussion of aspects of Gn. 11:1–3 in *Conf.* 14–106.

Philo maintained that the ability to do evil was part of the creation of humans because God wanted to grant them a unique gift, namely freedom of choice. Only when humans have the option to do evil can they consciously decide to do good. Freedom of choice also means that only humans receive praise when they choose to do good and blame when they choose to do evil.

The ability to do evil implies two elements: the irrational part of the human soul and the all-receiving nature of the human mind. Philo did not consider each element in itself to be intrinsically evil. The irrational part of the human soul allows the soul to interact with the body and with its earthly environment. This interaction is not only essential for survival, but it also enables humans to appreciate the beauty and harmony of creation, which is the first step towards perceiving the existence of the Creator. The all-receiving nature of the mind allows it a choice in what to receive and what not. Even though these two elements are not evil in themselves, they were still not created by God directly. Instead, according to Philo, he commanded subordinate powers to create them, so that God is only responsible for the good humans do and never for the evil they might commit.

These two elements make humans amenable to unintentional evil. The irrational part of the soul must be controlled by reason for it to function properly. The all-receiving nature of the human mind means that humans need guidance in choosing which thoughts are beneficial and which are evil. Humans

need God's wisdom to be able to control the irrational part of their soul and also to distinguish between good and evil thoughts and acts. For most humans – except for a lucky few to whom God grants wisdom by nature – achieving control over the soul's irrational part and knowing how to distinguish between good and evil involves a lifelong process of learning and training. However, Philo emphasised that the irrational part of the soul is inherently unpredictable and can lead even the most philosophically trained person to stumble and do evil. Therefore, it is essential that humans acknowledge their vulnerability and never rely on their own abilities alone to become wise and virtuous.

Truly blameworthy evil ensues when humans refuse to stay on this path, choose to neglect their weakness and dependence on God's wisdom and instead act on the input from their body and influences from their earthly environment alone. Their minds are then flooded with evil impulses and thoughts, leading to confusion and all kinds of evil acts. The consequences of such a choice are grave. The human soul becomes increasingly removed from God and true existence, and is more and more defined by what is perishable alone. The ultimate consequence is the 'death of the soul', meaning that the soul is defined only by what is perishable and loses its special connection to God, namely the ability for true and right reason.

Does the human choice for evil affect God? To be sure, Philo did not believe such a choice for evil could ever affect God, hurt him or stir him to anger. The human choice for evil only involves God in an indirect way. When humans choose evil, they diverge from the goal God has intended for humans. God, being good, is benevolent towards the whole of creation including humans. Humans do best when they are defined by rationality, not irrationality, and by true and eternal existence, not destruction. The choice for evil also involves God indirectly, because humans need God's wisdom to return to good sense. This leads to a paradoxical situation: how can humans receive God's wisdom to return to good sense, if through choosing evil they have turned away from God?

With this paradoxical scenario in full view, we arrived at Chapter 5, where I explored the aspects of divine forgiveness as Philo presents them in *De Specialibus Legibus* I, in particular in sections 235–248.

6.5 *Final conclusion: Divine forgiveness in Philo's thought*

What, then, is the place of seeking and receiving divine pardon in Philo's thought? I explored this question in Chapter 5 by analysing *Spec.* I, 235–248, where Philo discusses the obligations in Lv. 5:20–26 for someone who has knowingly committed evil. My analysis provided the following answer: when evildoers obtain divine pardon, this means that the rule of good reason is restored in their mind.

What makes this form of pardon *divine*? How is this restoration of the rule of good reason connected to God? First of all, it is 'divine' because it is a manifestation of God's goodness: according to Philo, divine amnesty is an aspect of the processes and powers that God graciously already installed in creation to sustain it, granting it a share in true being, beauty and goodness. Divine amnesty is essential for the continued existence of the material world, because the fact that God shows mercy towards it means that he allows it to remain in existence despite its inherent imperfection.

Moreover, divine pardon is particularly essential for the human race to remain in existence. God created humans with the ability for right reason, a gracious gift that creates a special connection between God's reason and the human soul and allows humans to do good. However, God also graciously gave humans the freedom to choose between good and evil. This choice has fundamental implications: doing good incurs praise and connects humans to true existence, doing evil incurs blame and could ultimately lead to the destruction of the human race. If humans remain committed to evil, they eventually destroy the defining element of human beings, namely the rational part of the soul, thereby severing the special connection between God and humans and consequently between humans and true existence. Humans, however, cannot leave this path of evil on their own, they need God's wisdom to achieve this. At the same time, the tenets of God's transcendence and immutability exclude any direct activity from God to intervene and 'save' human evildoers. However, according to Philo, God provides evildoers precisely through divine amnesty with the means to reorient themselves to his goodness and wisdom. How does this work?

When humans commit evil, the voice of good reason – the special connection between God's reason and the human soul – will manifest itself in the form of conscience. Conscience tries to show evildoers the error of their ways. It will do so with increasing intensity, moving from gentle warning to rebuking and even tormenting the soul. Such torment of the soul already constitutes one form of punishment for doing evil, but Philo also warns that evildoers will experience punishment in the form of a variety of curses that befall them. Philo saw such punishment as 'divine' in that he considered it the logical consequence for doing evil and as such as an expression of the righteous order God had installed in creation. Such divine punishment is above all intended to lead evildoers to repent and change their ways for the better.

If evildoers recognise the curses that befall them for what they are, begin to listen to their conscience and acknowledge that they have done wrong, the rule of right reason will be restored in their mind. God's wisdom will purge their minds from wrong ideas, the accusations of their conscience will cease and inner peace will be restored. This purging process can be described as 'being remitted from sins': the stains that doing evil has left on the soul are cleansed.

The result is that the human soul can, like a clean mirror, once more reflect the intellectual light flowing from God. In addition, reason and the soul are reconciled. When again put under the rule of reason, the irrational forces in the soul will be kept at bay so that they may perform their useful functions. The senses will once again report truthfully to the mind, so that humans may contemplate God truthfully and in peace and in that way progress on the road towards true wisdom.

When humans think the good thoughts again, they will also speak the right words and do the correct deeds – that is: behave in a wise and virtuous way. One specific way in which Philo thought humans can act virtuously and wisely, is when they bring sacrifices to God. Philo presented bringing a sacrifice, when done with the correct intent, as an act through which evildoers confirm their change for the better. Through it, they acknowledge that they now see that they have committed evil and they express their thankfulness towards and dependence upon God, because he has provided the means to leave evil behind. Material sacrifice itself is not a prerequisite for achieving remission from sins, God has only provided the sacrificial cult as a concession to the human need for concrete acts to confirm that remission from sins has been achieved.

Someone may stumble and fall again. According to Philo, humans, as long as they reside in the body, always run the risk of falling back into wrong thinking and wrong behaviour. All humans should be aware of this risk and put time and effort in philosophical training, to strengthen their ability to distinguish right from wrong, and in the scrutiny of their conscience, to allow right reason to correct them when wrong thoughts have entered their minds. Philo argued that God has provided the process of forgiveness in creation precisely for this reason, to always allow human beings to return to good sense and resume their progress on the way to wisdom. God knows that a human being – while in the body – may be on the road towards perfect knowledge, yet never reaches the end and therefore needs and deserves a second chance. Philo saw divine amnesty as an inherent aspect of creation allowing humans that second chance, and not as a contingent activity depending on direct interaction between God and humans.

Philo did warn that if one remains committed to evil, right reason could permanently withdraw from someone's soul. When right reason leaves the human soul, it loses its connection to true and eternal existence and is defined only by what is perishable. According to Philo, a soul in such a state is no longer living, it has died. Of course, Philo appealed to his readers to not let it come to this.

This brings us to the end of this study. Can divine pardon, seeking and obtaining divine remission of one's sins, have a meaningful place within the well-considered thought of a Hellenistic intellectual? This study shows that

in the case of Philo of Alexandria the answer to this question is affirmative. Yes, divine amnesty has a meaningful place within Philo's thought, while he managed to avoid implications he and other contemporary intellectuals considered inappropriate. He saw divine pardon as a vital manifestation of God's goodness, allowing humans to purge their minds from the evil thoughts that have overwhelmed them and caused them to commit evil, to reestablish the control of good reason and welcome God's wisdom to form their thoughts, words and acts, so that they think, speak and act rationally, as their Creator intended them when he created humans in his own image.

Abbreviations

Abbreviations

Philo

Abr.	*De Abrahamo*
Aet.	*De Aeternitate Mundi*
Agr.	*De Agricultura*
Anim.	*De Animalibus*
Cher.	*De Cherubim*
Conf.	*De Confusione Linguarum*
Congr.	*De Congressu Eruditionis Gratia*
Cont.	*De Vita Contemplativa*
Dec.	*De Decalogo*
Deo	*De Deo*
Det.	*Quod Deterius Potiori Insidiari Soleat*
Deus	*Quod Deus Sit Immutabilis*
Ebr.	*De Ebrietate*
Flacc.	*In Flaccum*
Fug.	*De Fuga et Inventione*
Gig.	*De Gigantibus*
Her.	*Quis Rerum Divinarum Heres*
Hyp.	*Hypothetica*
Ios.	*De Iosepho*
LA	*Legum Allegoriae*
Legat.	*Legatio ad Gaium*
Migr.	*De Migratione Abrahami*
Mos.	*De Vita Mosis*
Mut.	*De Mutatione Nominum*
Opif.	*De Opificio Mundi*
Plant.	*De Plantatione*
Post.	*De Posteritate Caini*
Praem.	*De Praemiis et Poenis*
Prob.	*Quod Omnis Probus Liber Sit*
Prov.	*De Providentia*
QE	*Quaestiones et Solutiones in Exodum*
QG	*Quaestiones et Solutiones in Genesin*
Sacr.	*De Sacrificiis Abelis et Caini*
Sob.	*De Sobrietate*
Som.	*De Somniis*
Spec.	*De Specialibus Legibus*
Virt.	*De Virtutibus*

The edition used for Philo's works is that of Colson in the Loeb Classical Library.

Biblical books

Gn.	Genesis
Ex.	Exodus
Lv.	Leviticus
Num.	Numeri
Dt.	Deuteronomy
Neh.	Nehemiah
Job	Job
Ps.	Psalms
Prov.	Proverbs
Isa.	Isaiah
Jer.	Jeremiah
Ez.	Ezekiel
Dn.	Daniel

Deutero-canonical, Pseudepigrapha & Dead Sea Scrolls

1 En.	1 Enoch
1 QS	Community Rule Scroll
2 Bar.	2 Baruch
4 Macc.	4 Maccabees
CD	Damascus Document
Ep. Arist.	Letter of Aristeas
Jub.	Jubilees
Pr. Man.	Prayer of Manasseh
Ps. Sal.	Psalms of Solomon
Sap. Sal.	Wisdom of Solomon
Sib. Or.	Sibylline Oracles
Sir.	Jesus Sirach

Josephus

AJ	*Antiquitates Judaicae*
BJ	*De Bello Judaico*
CA	*Contra Apionem*

Plato

Cleit.	*Cleitophon*
Eut.	*Eutyphron*
Gorg.	*Gorgias*
Rep.	*De Republica*
Symp.	*Symposion*
Phd.	*Phaedo*
Phdr.	*Phaedrus*
Phil.	*Philebus*
Tht.	*Theaetetus*
Tim.	*Timaeus*

Aristotle

An.	*De Anima*
Cael.	*De Caelo*
Gen. An.	*De Generatione Animalium*
Eth. Nic.	*Ethica Nicomacheia*
Eth. Eud.	*Ethica Eudemia*
Met.	*Metaphysica*
Part. An.	*De Partibus Animalium*

Other ancient sources

Adv. Math.	Sextus Empiricus, *Adversus Mathematicos*
Adv. Phys.	Sextus Empiricus, *Adversus Physicos*
Did.	Alkinoos, *Didaskalikos* (*De Doctrina Platonis)*
Diss.	Epictetus, *Dissertationes*
DK	Hermann Diels & Walther Krantz, edd., *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, 1906–1910
DL	Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae et Sententiae Philosophorum*
Enn.	Plotinus, *Enneades*
Ep.	Seneca, *Epistulae*
Il.	Homer, *Illiad*
Kühn	Karl G. Kühn, ed., *Claudii Galeni Opera Omnia*, 1821–1833
LCL	The Loeb Classical Library
ND	Cicero, *De Natura Deorum*
Off.	Cicero, *De Officiis*
PF	Cicero, *Pro Flacco*
Plac.	Galen, *De Placitis Hippocratis et Platonis Libri*
Pyrrh. Hyp.	Sextus Empiricus, *Pyrrhoniae Hypotyposes*
Quaest. Conv.	Plutarch, *Quaestiones Convivales*
Quaest. Nat.	Plutarch, *Quaestiones Naturales*
Stoic. Rep.	Plutarch, *De Stoicorum Repugnantiis*
SVF	Hans von Armin, ed., *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta*, 1905–1924
Tim. Loc.	*Timaeus Locrus*
Virt. Mor.	Plutarch, *De Virtute Morali*

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Samenvatting

Samenvatting van 'Philo van Alexandrië over goddelijke vergeving'

God of de goden bewegen tot het vergeven van zonden, bijvoorbeeld door gebed of het brengen van offers, was een bekend fenomeen in de alledaagse religiositeit van Joden en niet-Joden in de Hellenistische en Romeinse tijd. Tegelijkertijd kon het zoeken van goddelijke vergeving rekenen op weinig enthousiasme onder intellectuelen, omdat de gedachte dat goden kwaad konden worden vanwege menselijke misstappen of weer mild gestemd met behulp van offers niet paste bij hun filosofische kijk op het goddelijke. Ware goden veranderen niet van gedachten, zijn geen speelbal van emoties en kunnen niet beïnvloed worden door menselijke handelingen, was de gedachte.
De Joodse Philo van Alexandrië was een intellectueel die leefde in de eerste helft van de eerste eeuw van de gangbare jaartelling. Aansluitend bij het intellectueel discours van zijn tijd, stelt hij God voor als het waarlijk zijnde, onveranderlijk en onlichamelijk. Tegelijkertijd schrijft hij in zijn overgeleverde traktaten over goddelijke vergiffenis (συγγνώμη), amnestie (ἀμνηστία) en kwijtschelding of verlossing (ἄφεσις) van zonden. Dat gebeurt met name wanneer hij de Joodse offercultus bespreekt in *De Specialibus Legibus* I, maar ook elders in zijn traktaten komen termen verwant aan goddelijke vergeving voor. Philo had diep respect voor de Bijbel als bron van wijsheid en woog welhaast ieder woord uit de gedeeltes die hij besprak. Daarom doet het geen recht aan Philo's methode wanneer verondersteld wordt dat hij termen verwant aan goddelijke vergeving gedachteloos gebruikte omdat hij ze nu eenmaal aantrof in de Bijbel. Evenmin wordt recht gedaan aan de consciëntieuze wijze waarop Philo zijn gedachten vormde, wanneer gesteld wordt dat hij dusdanig eclectisch was, dat hij zich nauwelijks bewust was van mogelijke contradicties in wat hij naar voren bracht.
De centrale vraag van deze studie is daarom: welke betekenis had goddelijke vergeving in het denken van Philo van Alexandrië? Om deze vraag te beantwoorden zijn aspecten verkend van Philo's denken over God (hoofdstuk 2), over de relatie tussen God en mensen (hoofdstuk 3) en over de menselijke mogelijkheid tot het doen van kwaad (hoofdstuk 4). De inzichten van deze verkenningen zijn gebruikt om te verstaan wat goddelijke vergiffenis volgens Philo betekende (hoofdstuk 5). De aspecten van Philo's denken zijn verkend aan de hand van een integrale close-reading van gedeeltes uit Philo's traktaten.

Goddelijke vergeving veronderstelt een relatie tussen God als degene die vergeeft en de mens aan wie iets vergeven wordt. Is een dergelijke relatie en interactie tussen de transcendente God en een geschapen wezen mogelijk volgens Philo? Om deze vraag te beantwoorden is eerst gekeken naar welke mogelijkheid tot relatie en interactie er volgens Philo is tussen de transcendente God en de gehele geschapen werkelijkheid. Deze relatie en interactie blijkt niet alleen

mogelijk te zijn volgens Philo, maar zelfs essentieel voor het voortbestaan van de geschapen werkelijkheid. De geschapen tastbare werkelijkheid kan alleen voortbestaan als geordend en harmonieus geheel omdat de onderliggende concepten, die bijvoorbeeld de kenmerkende eigenschappen van levende wezens en levenloze objecten bepalen, eeuwigdurend bestaan in Gods gedachten. Met behulp van deze concepten, door Philo hoofdzakelijk 'ideeën' (ἰδέαι) en 'krachten' (δυνάμεις) genoemd, schenkt God blijvende zin en samenhang aan de vergankelijke materiële werkelijkheid. Dit als uiting van zowel Gods goedheid, omdat hij zo 'zijn' en orde schenkt aan chaotisch 'niet-zijn', als Gods genade, omdat hij zo iets laat bestaan wat inherent minder volmaakt is dan zijn eigen volmaakte zijn. De voorstelling van God als 'waarlijk zijnde' roept de vraag op welke betekenis het toeschrijven van emoties en andere menselijke kenmerken aan God volgens Philo kon hebben. God kan dan immers geen emotionele veranderingen doormaken of van gedachten veranderen. Toch zag Philo betekenis in dergelijke antropomorfe beschrijvingen van God. Deze beschrijvingen kunnen volgens Philo nooit kenmerken van het wezen van God weergeven, omdat het kennen van dergelijke kenmerken buiten het bereik van het menselijk denken ligt. Wel geven ze kenmerken weer van de mensen die dergelijke antropomorfe beschrijvingen van God gebruiken. Ze zijn met name tekenend voor de morele vooruitgang die mensen kunnen doormaken. Mensen die slechte dingen doen ervaren God als een wrekende Heer, maar wanneer ze hun wegen beteren zullen ze God ervaren als welwillend en vergevend. De menselijke ervaring en bijbehorende tekening van God kan veranderen, God zelf verandert uiteraard volgens Philo niet. Philo verlegde voor wat betreft de betekenis van antropomorfe beschrijvingen van God het perspectief van God naar mensen: over God zeggen deze beschrijvingen niets, over de mensen die ze gebruiken des te meer.

De verschuiving in perspectief van God naar mensen vormt een passende opmaat naar de volgende stap in de verkenning van de betekenis van goddelijke vergeving in het denken van Philo: hoe dacht Philo over de relatie tussen God en mensen? In Philo's denken blijken God en mensen op een algemene en een specifieke manier met elkaar verbonden te zijn. De algemene manier ligt in het verlengde van de wijze waarop God verbonden is met de gehele geschapen werkelijkheid. Ook mensen bestaan als een idee, als het concept 'mensheid', in Gods gedachten. Ieder individueel en materieel mens ontstaat als een soort afdruk, een afbeelding, van dit concept in ongevormde materie, zoals alles wat bestaat ontstaat als afdrukken van concepten in materie. Tussen het oorspronkelijk concept en iedere individuele afdruk bestaat een altijd aanwezige en onverwoestbare band waardoor iedere individuele afdruk zijn kenmerkende eigenschappen ontvangt en behoudt.
De specifieke manier waarop God en mensen volgens Philo met elkaar verbonden zijn hangt samen met wat in zijn ogen de meest kenmerkende eigenschap van mensen is, namelijk dat zij de mogelijkheid hebben tot rationeel denken. Wanneer mensen rationeel denken wordt hun geest voor zover die bevatten kan

gevuld met de goddelijke ratio en valt het menselijk denken samen met Gods gedachten. Zij doorzien dan hoe de aan constante verandering onderhevige tastbare wereld gedragen wordt door de onveranderbare, en daarmee werkelijk bestaande, werkelijkheid van concepten – door Philo ook wel de 'alleen denkbare wereld' (κόσμος νοητός) genoemd. De manier waarop de tastbare werkelijkheid gedragen wordt door de in Gods gedachten bestaande concepten wordt door Philo ook beschreven als manifestaties van Gods geest (πνεῦμα). In deze manifestaties zit een hiërarchie. Om te beginnen manifesteert Gods geest zich in alles wat bestaat als een kracht die de kenmerkende vormen en eigenschappen geeft. Vervolgens vormt Gods geest in wat groeien de kracht die deze groei mogelijk maakt. In levende wezens, zowel mens als dier, vormt Gods geest dan de kracht die de zintuigelijke waarneming mogelijk maakt. Tot slot manifesteert Gods geest zich in meest pure vorm in rationele wezens door rationeel denken mogelijk te maken.
De mogelijkheid tot rationeel denken vormt de specifieke manier waarop God en mensen volgens Philo verbonden zijn. Echter, in tegenstelling tot de altijd aanwezige algemene band tussen God en mensen, is deze specifieke band soms wel en soms niet aanwezig afhankelijk van of de mogelijkheid tot rationaliteit wel of niet gerealiseerd wordt. Mensen delen de mogelijkheid tot rationaliteit met de sterren. Wel bestaat tussen sterren en mensen volgens Philo een essentieel verschil: sterren zijn per definitie rationeel, terwijl rationaliteit voor mensen een keuze is. Die keuze maakt dat mensen gelijk kunnen worden aan hemelse wezens, door te kiezen voor rationaliteit, of zich kunnen verlagen tot een dierlijk bestaan, door te kiezen voor irrationaliteit.

Maar waarom zouden mensen bewust kiezen voor irrationaliteit en waarom heeft God hun deze keuze überhaupt gegeven, te meer wanneer Philo duidelijk maakt dat de keuze voor irrationaliteit leidt tot het doen van het kwade? Is God dan verantwoordelijk voor het kwaad dat mensen doen? Dit is volgens Philo uiteraard niet het geval. De mogelijke keuze voor het kwaad geeft aan mensen keuzevrijheid. Dit is een goede gave van God die hij alleen aan mensen heeft gegeven. Keuzevrijheid maakt dat mensen te prijzen zijn wanneer ze kiezen voor het goede maar schuldig zijn wanneer ze kiezen voor het kwade.
De keuze voor het kwaad wordt mogelijk gemaakt door twee elementen in de menselijke ziel: het eerste is het irrationele deel van de ziel en het tweede het gegeven dat de menselijke geest open staat voor zowel goede als kwade ideeën. Philo beschouwde deze twee elementen niet als intrinsiek slecht. Sterker nog, beide zijn in principe nuttig en goed. Het irrationele deel van de menselijke ziel stelt die ziel in staat te interacteren met het lichaam en de aardse omgeving, zodat de mens kan overleven, de schoonheid van de schepping waarderen en zo de Schepper zelf op het spoor komen. Het openstaan voor zowel goede als kwade ideeën stelt de mens in staat te kiezen tussen beide. Hoewel beide elementen dus niet in zichzelf slecht zijn, laat volgens Philo God het concrete scheppen ervan over aan ondergeschikte machten, om zo te garanderen dat God alleen di-

rect verbonden is met de menselijke mogelijkheid het goede te doen en slechts indirect met de menselijke mogelijkheid tot het kwade.
Deze beide elementen brengen mensen de mogelijkheid bewust te kiezen voor het kwaad, maar ze maken ook dat mensen onbedoeld kwaad kunnen doen. Het irrationele deel van de ziel moet onder de controle van de ratio staan wil het goed functioneren. Daarnaast hebben mensen begeleiding nodig om te kunnen beoordelen of een idee goed of slecht is. Goddelijke wijsheid stelt mensen in staat tot beide: controle over het irrationele deel van de ziel en het goed afwegen van ideeën. Slechts enkele mensen hebben Gods wijsheid van nature, voor verreuit de meeste mensen geldt dat ze alleen door het beoefenen van filosofie steeds meer goddelijke wijsheid verkrijgen. Een essentieel element in de beoefening van filosofie is wat Philo betreft de onderkenning van de menselijke beperkingen en afhankelijkheid van Gods wijsheid. Wanneer mensen te zeer op hun eigen vermogens vertrouwen, lopen ze onherroepelijk het risico te vervallen tot het doen van het kwade, vooral omdat het irrationele deel van de ziel onvoorspelbaar is.
Volle verantwoordelijkheid en daarmee schuld dragen mensen wanneer ze weigeren het risico tot het onbedoeld doen van het kwade te onderkennen, of erger: bewust kiezen voor het kwaad. Ze doen dat door na te laten zich te richten op Gods wijsheid en door in plaats daarvan alleen op hun eigen vermogens te vertrouwen. Zulke mensen geven zich helemaal over aan de zintuigelijke indrukken met als gevolg dat hun geest totaal overspoeld wordt en het irrationele deel van de ziel de overhand krijgt. Hierdoor vormen zich velerlei kwade ideeën in de geest die leiden tot allerlei vormen van slechte daden. De bewust gekozen oriëntatie op de lichamelijke werkelijkheid betekent een toenemende verwijdering van Gods werkelijkheid en daarmee van het 'werkelijk zijnde'. De menselijke ziel is dan almaar minder verbonden met dat wat werkelijk bestaat en wordt almaar meer gekenmerkt door vergankelijkheid. Het ultieme risico wat Philo betreft is dat de ziel alleen nog gekenmerkt wordt door vergankelijkheid omdat alle goddelijke ratio eruit verdwenen is. Philo noemt dit de 'dood van de ziel'. Philo stelt zijn lezers de ultieme dreiging van de 'dood van de ziel' als waarschuwing voor ogen om het zover niet te laten komen. In plaats van te volharden in het kwaad moeten ze het irrationele deel van de ziel weer onder controle zien te krijgen. Om die controle te herstellen is Gods wijsheid onmisbaar. Tegelijkertijd is de essentie van het doen van het kwade volgens Philo dat mensen zich bewust van Gods wijsheid hebben afgekeerd en zich hebben overgegeven aan de stortvloed aan zintuigelijke indrukken die hen steeds verder van de goddelijke wijsheid afbrengt. Goddelijke vergeving blijkt de oplossing te bieden voor dit probleem.

Goddelijke vergeving herstelt de controle van de ratio over het irrationele deel van de ziel zodat mensen weer in staat zijn het goede te doen. Dit werkt als volgt. Wanneer mensen kwaad doen manifesteert de goddelijke ratio in de menselijke ziel zich in de vorm van het geweten. Het geweten maakt hun dui-

delijk dat wat ze doen slecht is en roept hen op almaar indringer wijze op om te stoppen met het kwaad dat ze doen, zelfs zo dat volhardende kwaaddoeners dit als een kwelling ervaren. Deze kwelling door het geweten beschouwde Philo als een vorm van bestraffing. Maar volhardende kwaaddoeners zullen niet alleen door hun geweten gekweld worden, ze zullen bij wijze van bestraffing getroffen worden door velerlei vormen van rampspoed. Philo zag deze bestraffingen als logische consequenties volgend uit de keuze voor het kwaad en daarmee als uitingen van de rechtvaardige orde die God in de schepping gelegd heeft. Straf is zo alleen indirect verbonden met God en bovenal pedagogisch van aard, namelijk bedoeld om kwaaddoeners tot inkeer te brengen.
Inkeer vindt plaats wanneer mensen luisteren naar de stem van hun geweten. Ze zullen dan onderkennen dat wat ze gedaan hebben slecht is. Daarom gaat inkeer samen met schaamte over wat men gedaan heeft en over hoe men zich heeft laten beheersen door verkeerde impulsen en gedachten. Door te luisteren naar de stem van hun geweten stellen mensen Gods wijsheid in staat om hun geest te reinigen van de verkeerde invloeden. Deze reiniging is wat Philo verstaat als 'verlost worden van zonden'. Zo gereinigd, kunnen mensen zich weer laten leiden door Gods wijsheid, zich weer oefenen in deugdzaam leven door almaar meer de goede gedachten te denken, de juiste woorden te spreken en het goede doen.
Het brengen van een offer aan God zag Philo als deel van dit weer doen van het goede. Het offer is niet noodzakelijk voor het realiseren van goddelijke vergeving, dat wil zeggen de reiniging van de menselijke geest van verkeerde gedachten en het herstel van de controle van de ratio over het irrationele deel van de ziel. Echter, het is een zichtbaar teken waarmee kwaaddoeners aan God, zichzelf en hun omgeving laten zien dat ze tot bezinning gekomen zijn. Niet God, maar mensen hebben behoefte aan dergelijke zichtbare tekens en om mensen tegemoet te komen heeft God de offercultus ingesteld.
Philo zag goddelijke vergeving als een uiting van Gods goedheid, zo goed als bestraffing wat hem betreft een uiting is van Gods rechtvaardigheid. Beide betekenen echter geen direct ingrijpen van God in de schepping. Gods betrokkenheid bij beide is dat hij ze als processen in de schepping heeft gelegd om kwaaddoeners de mogelijkheid tot inkeer te bieden. Straf is bedoeld om kwaaddoeners tot inkeer te bewegen, vergeving geeft kwaaddoeners de hoop dat inkeer en herstel van de controle van de ziel door de ratio mogelijk is. Wanneer kwaaddoeners tot inkeer komen zal hun ervaring van God veranderen van een straffende Heer in een vergevingsgezinde en welwillende God. Dit is niet omdat God verandert, maar omdat de kwaaddoener veranderd is. Op deze manier is Philo erin geslaagd goddelijke vergeving een zinvolle plaats te geven in zijn denken, terwijl hij tegelijkertijd de in zijn intellectueel milieu als onwenselijk geziene implicaties, zoals het toeschrijven van emoties en verandering aan God, heeft weten te vermijden.

Curriculum Vitae

Fulco Jedidja Timmers werd geboren op 29 november 1977 te Noordwijkerhout. Van 1989 tot 1995 volgde hij het Voorbereidend Wetenschappelijk Onderwijs (gymnasium), eerst aan het Christelijk Lyceum te Almelo daarna aan het Stedelijk Gymnasium te Breda. Van 1995 tot 2000 studeerde hij aan de Faculteit der godgeleerdheid van de Universiteit Leiden. Hij legde het doctoraal examen in de godgeleerdheid af op 17 mei 2000, met als hoofdvak Judaïca en als bijvak Nieuwe Testament. Gedurende het cursusjaar 2000–2001 studeerde hij aan het Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies en behaalde hij het Diploma of Jewish Studies, erkend door de Universiteit van Oxford als een Master of Arts. Van oktober 1999 tot november 2001 werkte hij als programmeur voor QS Quality Services te Dordrecht en van november 2001 tot april 2007 bij de ASVZ (later Carante) Groep te Sliedrecht, eerst als applicatiebeheerder, daarna als coördinator applicatiebeheer en projectmanager. Gedurende deze tijd volgde hij naast zijn werk van september 2002 tot augustus 2004 in voltijd de Kerkelijke Opleiding aan de Universiteit Leiden. Deze opleiding rondde hij op 27 augustus 2004 met goed gevolg af, met als hoofdvak Dogmatiek. Vanaf april 2007 tot augustus 2011 werkte hij bij ORTEC te Gouda als senior projectmanager en senior business consultant. Vanaf september 2011 tot september 2021 diende hij als predikant in de Protestantse Kerk in Nederland, eerst verbonden aan de Protestantse Gemeente Roosendaal en vanaf 2016 aan de Protestantse Wijkgemeente Open Hof, te Rotterdam. Vanaf september 2021 werkt hij te Utrecht als programmaleider lokaal kerk-zijn bij de Dienstenorganisatie van de Protestantse Kerk in Nederland. Hij is getrouwd met Elma en vader van Marie en Fieke.

Colophon

Philo of Alexandria
on Divine Forgiveness

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