

The image and its prohibition in Jewish antiquity

Epstein



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Philo of Alexandria on the second commandment

SARAH PEARCE

IN THE HISTORY of thinking about the second commandment, a special place must be reserved for the Jewish intellectual Philo of Alexandria. Writing in the first half of the first century CE, Philo is the author of the earliest extended commentary on the second commandment to have come down to us from antiquity.¹ This commentary forms part of an exegetic treatise best known by its Latin title *De Decalogo* (*On the Decalogue*), in which Philo sets out to explain some of the problems and questions posed by Scripture in recording the revelation of the Ten Commandments. The result is a remarkable work, which aims to persuade its readers of the supremely rational character of the commandments, above all as seen from the perspective of Greek *paideia*. Within this context, Philo's *De Decalogo* may also be seen as the first known attempt to answer the question, why the second commandment? What is the purpose of the prohibition against the making and worship of images? Why does it have a place within the Decalogue? What exactly does it prohibit, and whom does it address? Who benefits from its observance? What are the consequences of not observing it? Philo's response is constructed from a powerful combination of Greek philosophy, Jewish Scripture and tradition, and an appeal to lived experience that offers a rare and precious glimpse of the realities of Philo's Alexandria and the challenges of observing the second commandment in that context.

My purpose in this chapter is to offer an analysis of Philo's explanation of the second commandment in *De Decalogo*. In significant respects, the discussion will cover relatively unexplored territory. Quite undeservedly,

the treatise as a whole remains much neglected, its finest exposition to date the brief commentary of Valentin Nikiprowetzky, published in 1965.² Furthermore, while Philo is widely acknowledged as an important source for interpreting the second commandment, and for thinking about visual images and art in general, few scholars have tackled either subject in any detail, as the following brief review will indicate.

Both in his monumental work on Jewish art and its non-Jewish influences, *Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period*, and in his major studies of Philo, Erwin Goodenough emphasizes the complex character of Philo's attitude towards the plastic arts, insisting that Philo's vehemently hostile statements about the use of images to represent or worship the divine, based on the second commandment, should not be seen as extending to a general denunciation of art. For Goodenough, Philo's 'considerable liking for art' is an important factor in defining the Alexandrian as representative of a Hellenistic Judaism that contrasted sharply with the supposedly anti-iconic culture of Palestine in the period from the Maccabees to the fall of the Temple in 70 CE.³ It is fair to say that Goodenough's interest in this context is largely in the evidence for Philo's positive approach to art, and not in his interpretation of the prohibition of images. Harry Wolfson likewise emphasizes the relatively narrow scope within which Philo applies the prohibition of images, arguing, however, that Philo's approach aligns him not only with other representatives of Greek-speaking Judaism, such as the author of the *Wisdom of Solomon*, but also with rabbinic interpreters of the prohibition.⁴ In art, as in other areas, Wolfson insists on Philo's close connection to the Hebrew-speaking traditions of later rabbinic Judaism. In the fullest account of the issue to date, Karl-Gustav Sandelin focuses on Philo's 'ambivalence' towards statues, which he can evaluate both negatively and positively, as an expression of an irreconcilable inner conflict between Jewish monotheism and aniconism, on the one hand, and his enthusiasm for the culture of the Graeco-Roman world, on the other. In this model, Philo's Jewish distinctiveness is seen as close to being lost, overwhelmed by the non-Jewish ideas that he wished to claim for Judaism.⁵

Other relevant studies include brief discussions of Philo in the context of early Jewish interpretations of the second commandment. Joseph Gutmann, a leading pioneer of the history of Jewish art, confirms the conclusion of earlier scholars that Philo's statements about the visual arts 'cannot be used to establish an antagonism towards images on the part of Judaism'; Philo's philosophical conception of the second commandment differs 'radically' not only from anti-iconic attitudes within Scripture but also from the realities

associated with the majority of first-century Jews and the Jerusalem Temple of his own day. Gutmann does not say so explicitly, but his conclusions appear to imply that Philo's interpretation of the second commandment has little to do with the real world of living Judaism. Philo's evidence, though discussed in the briefest terms, offers important support for Gutmann's wider thesis that 'a rigidly and uniformly anti-iconic attitude on the part of the Jews remains as much a myth as the Procrustean bed on which Jewish art history has so often been made to lie'.⁶

Though rightly valued as an important account of Jewish sources on the second commandment in antiquity, Gutmann's study does not cover the fundamental stage in the history of the commandment's interpretation for Greek-speaking Jews: namely, the versions of the Decalogue in Greek Exodus and Deuteronomy, translated from the Hebrew in the third century BCE, in early Ptolemaic Alexandria, as part of the Greek translation of the Mosaic Scriptures known traditionally as the Septuagint (LXX).⁷ A number of important articles and studies have since remedied that omission, beginning with an influential article by W. Barnes Tatum, who argues that, in choosing the word εἴδωλον, 'idol', to translate the key term for the object whose making and worship is prohibited, the Greek translators of the second commandment constructed the latter as 'a polemic against idols, not images'; and 'as not against all images but as against images representative of alien deities'.⁸ On this view, the LXX supports Gutmann's challenge to the idea of an essentially aniconic normative Jewish tradition. Gutmann's account of a flourishing Jewish art culture in antiquity, however, is based primarily on evidence for figurative art produced by Jews post 70 CE; as Robert Hayward has observed, 'at the time the LXX translators were working, such art seems not to have been a Jewish concern'.⁹ Philo, the great interpreter of Jewish Scripture in Greek translation, is seen by Barnes Tatum as following LXX in interpreting the commandment 'in a polemically anti-idolic and not in an anti-iconic manner', even though he 'fail[s] to reflect LXX language' in his 'summaries of the Second Commandment'. For Barnes Tatum, Philo's 'failure' to use the LXX word εἴδωλον in the context of the second commandment probably reflects an 'apologetic' agenda, resulting in Philo's decision to use other Greek terms which allow him to speak of images of the divine within a Platonic framework.¹⁰ Whether Barnes Tatum is correct in interpreting the LXX version of the second commandment as a polemic against idols but not images is open to question, as Hayward's recent analysis of the question has shown.¹¹ What of Philo and his relationship to the LXX version of

the second commandment? In the discussion to follow, I will argue that, in important respects, Philo's interpretation of the second commandment is indeed rooted in his primary source, a Greek version of the Decalogue and the wider context of Jewish Scripture. What has been missing thus far in scholarship on Philo and his attitude towards art and the second commandment is serious attention to the fact that Philo approaches these subjects, first and foremost, as a creative exegete of Scripture.

De Decalogo as a commentary on Scripture

As with all Philo's commentaries on Scripture, the primary text on which *De Decalogo* is based is the LXX translation of the Torah. Philo regards the Greek Torah as having the same inspired authority as the Hebrew original. When Philo quotes Scripture, the citations often differ from the LXX as it has come down to us in later manuscripts.¹² Some of Philo's citations point to his having used other translations, and, on occasion, quoted from memory. Other divergences from LXX may be due to what Roger Arnaldez calls Philo's 'légères libertés' with the scriptural text, adjusting it to the needs of his commentary, or indeed to adjustments made by others in the process of transmitting Philo's text.¹³ In the case of *De Decalogo*, however, Philo makes relatively little use of scriptural citation. The treatise includes only one explicit citation of the commandments themselves: οὐ μοιχεύσεις, οὐ φονεύσεις, οὐ κλέψεις, 'You shall not commit adultery; you shall not kill; you shall not steal' (*Decal.* 36 = LXX Exod. 20:13–15; Deut. 5:17–19). In this case, the text of the two different forms of the Decalogue, in Exodus and Deuteronomy, is the same. In other cases, including the second commandment, there are differences between the two forms of the Decalogue, both in the Hebrew and in the Greek. Did Philo follow LXX Exodus or LXX Deuteronomy, or did he draw on elements of both? In a useful study of Philo's text of the Decalogue, Innocent Himbaza has shown that the meagre evidence allows for several possible conclusions: that Philo used a text similar to that underlying the Nash Papyrus, or that he cited the Decalogue from memory, combining the different versions of the text in Exodus and Deuteronomy.¹⁴ Philo's *De Decalogo* includes no extended quotations of the second commandment. Our only evidence for Philo's citation of a text of this commandment comes from the *Allegorical Commentary*, in which he quotes a form of the very final part of the commandment, referring to the divine retribution that awaits those who hate God: in this case, Philo cites a form of Exod. 20:5/Deut.

5:9 that is close to but exactly matches neither LXX translation (*Sobr.* 48).¹⁵ In sum, we do not know exactly what was Philo's text of the second commandment. Since, however, there is relatively little significant variation in the LXX manuscript traditions of the Decalogue, we may be confident that in the main ancient witnesses to the tradition, we have something very close, if not identical to, Philo's source.

Our final preliminary task, before moving on to Philo's commentary, is to offer a brief introduction to the LXX versions of the prohibition of images (Exod. 20:4–6; Deut. 5:8–10), beginning with the opening statements of the Decalogue according to LXX Exodus:

2 I am the Lord your God, who led you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. 3 There shall be for you no other gods but me.

4 You shall not make for yourself an idol [οὐ ποιήσεις σεαυτῷ εἰδῶλον (LXX Deut. 5:8, carved object [γλυπτόν])],¹⁶ or a likeness of anything [οὐδὲ παντὸς ὁμοίωμα] whatever is in the sky above, and whatever is on the earth below, and whatever is in the waters beneath the earth. 5 You shall not prostrate yourself before them [in worship] [οὐ προσκυνήσεις αὐτοῖς] and you shall not serve them [οὐδὲ μὴ λατρεύσης αὐτοῖς]; for I am the Lord your God, a jealous [ζῆλωτής] God who pays back the fathers' sins upon the children up to the third and fourth generation, for those who hate me, 6 and enacts kindness to thousands, for those who love me and for those who keep my commandments. (LXX Exodus 20:2–6; cf. LXX Deut. 5:6–10)

In their rendering of the prohibition of images, the translators of LXX Exodus and Deuteronomy seem to have been working independently of each other, to judge from a number of variations, most of which are, however, of minor significance. For the most part, both translations represent a close match for the words, style and idiom of the traditional Hebrew text. The key verbs for the prohibited act – forbidding the making (οὐ ποιήσεις) of cult objects, and of bowing down in adoration (οὐ προσκυνήσεις) before them and serving them (οὐδὲ μὴ λατρεύσης) – are all standard translation choices for their Hebrew equivalents in the Torah.

The prohibition of making 'an idol'

The major difference between the two versions in the LXX tradition concerns the designation of the first prohibited object (Exod. 20:4/Deut. 5:8). In the traditional Hebrew text (MT) of Exodus and Deuteronomy, the prohibition of making images designates the first prohibited object as a **לְבָב**, 'graven image' (MT Exod. 20:4; Deut. 5:8). The cognate verb **לִבַּב**

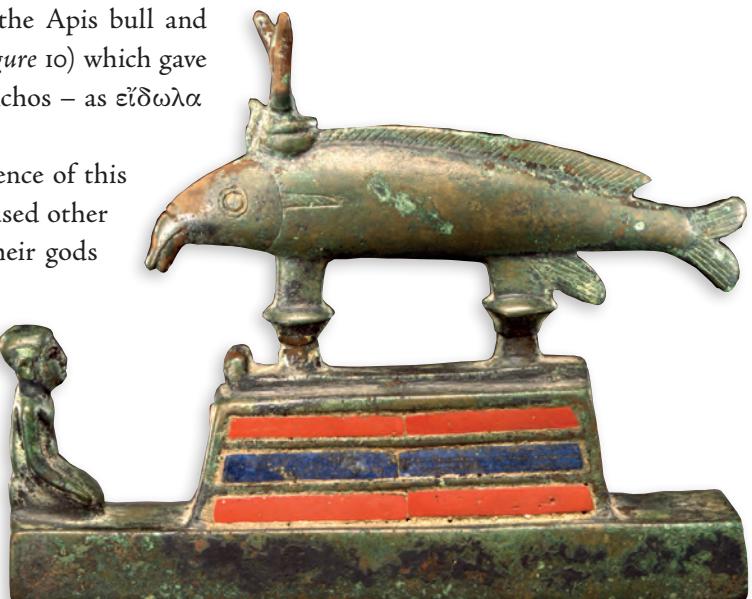
means ‘to hew’ such things as the tablets on which the Ten Commandments were written (Exod. 34:1), or ‘to sculpt’ an object out of materials such as wood or stone.¹⁷ The noun probably originated as shorthand for פֶל וּמְכָה, an image of wood or stone, which was given shape by hewing or cutting (פָסַל), and became a general term for cultic image.¹⁸ In LXX Exodus (followed by LXX Deut. 5:8 Ms. B),¹⁹ the equivalent Greek term is εἴδωλον, which is usually translated in this context as ‘idol’. It has often been noted that εἴδωλον is an unusual translation choice for פֶל. Within the entire Greek Bible corpus, singular εἴδωλον represents singular פֶל only here.²⁰ In LXX Deuteronomy’s version of the prohibition, and in all other contexts in the Greek Torah, Hebrew פֶל is represented by γλυπτόν, ‘a carved object’, which represents a good match for the Hebrew.²¹

Why εἴδωλον in LXX Exodus? In classical and Hellenistic Greek, εἴδωλον has a relatively wide semantic range: a phantom; an unsubstantial form; an image reflected in water or a mirror; an idea or an image in the mind, including the false phantoms of the mind described by Plato; or a likeness.²² Prior to the translation of the Torah into Greek, however, we do not know whether εἴδωλον was well known as a designation of an object of cult or even of a concrete image of a deity; our evidence for this sense of the word in non-Jewish sources comes from the later Hellenistic and early Roman period. From the second century BCE on, there is some evidence for the use of εἴδωλον by non-Jewish Greeks to refer to images of the gods erected in temples.²³ And in the Egyptian context, both papyri and literary sources, including Plutarch’s valuable description of Egyptian religion, refer to the living sacred animals of the Egyptian temples – including the Apis bull and the sacred ‘sharp-nosed’ fish (*figure 10*) which gave its name to the city of Oxyrhynchos – as εἴδωλα of particular deities.²⁴

There is relatively little evidence of this kind, however; Greeks mostly used other terms to designate images of their gods (a point to which we shall return with Philo), and, for understandable reasons, seem largely to have avoided associating their gods with a word used of phantoms, illusory objects, and things

10 Votive statue. Egypt, bronze with lapis lazuli and red glass, c. 500 BCE. A worshipper prostrates himself before the sacred oxyrhynchos ('sharp-nosed') fish, wearing the crown of the goddess Hathor, whose cow-horns surround the sun disk.

Courtesy of Michael C. Carlos Museum of Emory University. Photo by P. Harholdt.



without real substance.²⁵ It is precisely these senses of εἴδωλον that seem to have made it the most favoured term for designating cultic images in the LXX and much of the literature of Hellenistic Judaism. In the Greek Torah alone, εἴδωλον renders a total of seven Hebrew terms, all associated with objects of cult – teraphim, ‘worthless things’, ‘dungy things’, foreign gods, figured or carved objects, ‘vapidities’ – all belonging to foreign peoples but forbidden to Israelites.²⁶ Robert Hayward has argued in a brilliant analysis of this issue that the LXX translators’ choice of εἴδωλον may have begun with its use in rendering Hebrew נֶבֶל, ‘vapour, breath’, representing the ‘vapidities’ associated with the things worshipped by those who follow ‘No-gods’ (Deut. 32:21), and which subsequently came to be associated in other contexts with other prohibited objects of cult.²⁷ In any case, εἴδωλον is clearly a word which must have resonated strongly with the Jewish readers of the Greek Torah, probably, as Hayward argues, because it was already part of their discourse about the gods of other peoples:

The translators have selected a Greek word which must already have had currency among contemporary Jews as a term of disparagement for pagan cult objects. These may appear solid, even beautiful: in reality, they lack substance, and constitute mere appearances, phantoms. This lack of substance may be represented by the word εἴδωλον; and its appearance in the Decalogue serves to underline its importance as a paradigmatic term, summarizing all that is bogus and vacuous about manufactured cult objects.²⁸

‘or a likeness of anything’ (*οὐδὲ παντὸς ὁμοίωμα*)

Both LXX Exodus and Deuteronomy follow a Hebrew text that matches MT Exodus וְכֹל הַמּוֹנָה, ‘and any form’, or ‘and any likeness’.²⁹ The conjunction in ‘and any form’ (missing in MT Deuteronomy) probably serves to explain further what is meant by בְּכָל; that is, ‘a sculpted image *and* any form’.³⁰ Images of all living beings, in all parts of the cosmos, are included in the prohibition.³¹ The same point is, if anything, clearer in the LXX formulation, ‘a likeness of anything’. Greek ὁμοίωμα, ‘likeness, image’, is the standard rendering of Hebrew תְּמוּנָה in the LXX Torah.³² In Exodus and Deuteronomy, the word תְּמוּנָה (LXX ὁμοίωμα) is always associated with the prohibition of making a physical *form* of the Deity. The point is elaborated in Deuteronomy, which insists that, at the moment of God’s revelation of the commandments, nothing was seen: ‘you heard the sound of words but perceived no form [תְּמוּנָה] ... you saw no form [תְּמוּנָה] when the Lord spoke to you at Horeb’ (Deut. 4:12, 15).³³ In the Deuteronomic tradition, the formless nature of the theophany serves as rationale for a

detailed interpretation of the prohibition of any physical representation of God, forbidding the making of a sculpted image (**לְבָשׂ**) of any likeness (**תְּנַשֵּׁה**) of a statue (Deut. 4:16), repeatedly emphasizing that what is forbidden is the making of the *form or likeness* (**תְּנַשֵּׁה**) of any living being: human, terrestrial animal, winged bird, reptile or fish (Deut. 4:16–18).

The prohibition's rationale: 'for I am the Lord your God, a jealous [ζηλωτής] god' (LXX Exod. 20:5)³⁴

In the Greek Torah, ζηλωτής always represents the equivalent of Hebrew אֲנֹכִי, and always refers to God in contexts that deal with the Deity's refusal to tolerate the worship of foreign gods or images. In non-Jewish sources, a ζηλωτής is a zealous admirer or follower; in applying the same word to a God who is 'jealous' of any rivals, the LXX translators introduced a new sense to the Greek word.³⁵ It is the Deity's self-presentation as a 'jealous' God, demanding complete faithfulness, which provides the motive for observing the prohibition of images. The limited scope of divine retribution, which extends only to the third and fourth generations, contrasts with God's 'kindness [ἔλεος]',³⁶ the faithfulness with which God acts on behalf of an infinite number of those who keep faith and observe the commandments.³⁷

Philo on identifying the 'second' commandment

In *De Decalogo*, Philo's goal as an exegete, as announced at the beginning of this treatise, is 'to give full descriptions [ἀκριβώσω] of the written laws' (*Decal.* 1). One aspect of this concern for ἀκρίβεια, by which Philo means the fullest possible exposition of the Ten Commandments, includes the significance of their order as proof of their fundamental logic and coherence. A prerequisite of such an exercise, of course, is to identify the division of the statements in Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5 into ten commandments. But this is no simple task. While the Torah refers to the revelation of 'Ten Words' (Exod. 34:28; Deut. 4:13; 10:4), it does not number them. One of the innovations of Philo's *De Decalogo* is that it introduces, for the first time, a system that explicitly gives numbers to the Ten Commandments. Within this scheme, the first prohibition of the Decalogue – 'There shall not be any other gods for you besides me' (LXX Exod. 20:3par.) – is counted as 'the first and most sacred of the commandments' (*Decal.* 65), while the 'second commandment' (*Decal.* 82) is concerned with the prohibition of images

(LXX Exod. 20:4–6par.). This division of the first two commandments is assumed throughout *De Decalogo* (*Decal.* 51; 156) and Philo's treatment of the Decalogue in other contexts. While much effort is given to justifying the order of the commandments, their numbering is not explained, a factor which suggests that Philo, although the first to record it, is dealing with a traditional scheme. Philo's order is known to later interpreters, including Josephus and some Talmudic traditions;³⁸ the conventional rabbinic tradition, however, reckons the first positive statement of the Decalogue ('I am the Lord your God, who led you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery', Exod. 20:2; Deut. 5:6) as the first commandment, identifying the second commandment with both the prohibition of other gods and the prohibition of images.³⁹

Philo's *De Decalogo* is also our earliest evidence for the tradition that the Ten Commandments, which, according to scriptural tradition, were written on two stone tablets, were divided into two sets of five.⁴⁰ The second commandment belongs to the first set, which 'begins with God the Father and Maker [ποιητής] of the all' (*Decal.* 51).⁴¹ God is the common denominator of the first five, an idea that is easily derived from Scripture, in which the name of God appears in each of the first five commandments (as numbered by Philo), while the second set is concerned with duties towards human beings. Both sets of five, Philo insists, are 'excellent and useful for life'. More specifically, both 'open up broad highroads leading to one goal', providing safe and steady passage for the journey of the soul, which 'always aims at the most excellent [τὸ βέλτιστον]' (*Decal.* 50). Thus, by virtue of its setting within the Decalogue, the second commandment is, from the outset, associated with the fundamental themes of God as source and creator of all things, and of the soul's migration towards the highest good.

In introducing the exposition of the first two commandments, Philo begins with the following statement, setting out the justification for their position at the beginning of the Decalogue:

We must examine with perfect accuracy [μετὰ πάσης ἀκριβείας] each of the oracles, giving cursory treatment to none of them. The excellent origin of all existing things is God, just as piety is the source of all the virtues. It is most necessary to go through these two things first. (*Decal.* 52)⁴²

In other words, in the order of existing things, God has first place; and in the order of virtues, as Philo understands them, piety has the highest rank.⁴³ These, then, are the reasons why God and piety are the subjects of the first two commandments of the Decalogue.

The second commandment in relation to the first

Another key aspect of the quest for the most accurate interpretation of the commandments is to demonstrate their underlying coherence and connection to each other. Philo begins this task by defining the relationship between the first and second commandments, apparently drawing on a traditional Jewish scheme, which recognizes a kind of sliding scale of impiety, ranking cosmic-centred piety as less offensive than the worship of manufactured images.⁴⁴ According to Philo, the first commandment concerns itself with ‘the monarchy by which the cosmos is governed’.⁴⁵ What it prohibits (“There shall be for you no other gods but me” (LXX Exod. 20:3)) is the great and near-universal ‘delusion [πλάνος]’ by which people have reckoned the cosmos – or parts of it – to be gods (*Decal.* 52–65). Philo’s take on this, which aligns the ‘delusion’ with elements of Stoic cosmology, treats the first commandment as a lesson that we human beings should not worship the cosmos with which we share in common ‘one Father, the Maker [ποιητής] of the all’.⁴⁶ In contrast to the Uncreated Creator, the cosmos has come into being and is corruptible, even if it has been made immortal by the providence of the one who made it (προνοίᾳ τοῦ πεποιηκότος).⁴⁷ Such are the rational foundations, argues Philo, for a prohibition that commands exclusive recognition of the one supreme God.⁴⁸ Belief in such ‘gods’ is completely wrong: ‘How could it be otherwise?’ Philo declares rhetorically, since those who deify the cosmos give honour to what is essentially a subject, and not to the one who rules the cosmos (*Decal.* 66).

However, the second commandment, in focusing on the prohibition of images, deals with those who have committed an even greater offence;

those who have fashioned [μορφώσαντες], each according to their liking, wood, stone, silver, gold, or similar materials [ὕλαι], and then filled up the inhabited world with images [ἀγάλματα], wooden figures [ξόανα], and the other things wrought by human hand [χειρόκμητα], whose craft-workers, sculpture and painting, have caused great harm [ἔβλαψαν] in human life.
(*Decal.* 66)

As we shall see, this will prove to be a key statement, in which Philo sets out the main themes of the argument on which he will expand in great detail in the main part of the commentary.

What is prohibited, according to Philo?

The notion of the *shaping* (μορφώ) of matter is central to Philo’s interpretation of the prohibition. He refers in this opening statement to those

‘who have fashioned [οἱ μορφώσαντες]’ images from material substances (ὕλαι) (*Decal.* 66). In a later stage of his discussion of the second commandment in *De Decalogo*, Philo will use the same terms in underscoring as irrational the behaviour of image-makers who pray and sacrifice to their own creations: they would have done better, he declares in that context, to worship the tools ‘by which the materials were fashioned [δι’ ὃν ἐμορφώθησαν αἱ ὕλαι]’ (*Decal.* 72). The error of worshipping objects that have been fashioned from material substances is also highlighted at the very beginning of *De Decalogo*. There Philo sets out to offer solutions to problems posed by the scriptural narrative of the revelation at Sinai, the first of which is the question of why Moses – in contrast to the legislators of the Greek and Roman world – promulgated his laws not in the cities, but in the depths of the wilderness.⁴⁹ One reason for this decision, and, according to Philo, the primary consideration, was the corruption of cities, infected with impiety:

This contempt for divine things is evident to those who can see things more acutely. For by means of painting and sculpture they have given shape [μορφώσαντες] to countless forms, which they have shut up in sanctuaries and shrines; and, after building altars to statues of stone and wood and similar kinds of images, have assigned Olympian and divine honours to all these lifeless objects. (*Decal.* 7)

Philo borrows from Plato’s *Republic* the notion that painting and sculpture represent the corruption of the *polis* in contrast to an ideal human state of original simplicity.⁵⁰ It is also clear from several explicit statements in Philo and other Jewish authors that they saw in Plato’s distrust of painters and sculptors, and their exclusion from the ideal state, a rationale for the second commandment’s prohibition of images.⁵¹ μορφώ, however, is not Plato’s word; nor is it a significant word in other philosophical works prior to Philo and does not become so until the later Platonists. What therefore is the significance of Philo’s choice of the verb μορφώ, ‘to fashion’, to designate the prohibited activity of making cult images?

Not only is μορφώ not the word used to designate the prohibited activity of making images in the LXX formulations of the prohibition – ‘You shall not make’ (οὐ ποιήσεις, LXX Exod. 20:4; Deut. 5:8) –; but this verb does not appear at all in LXX,⁵² and rarely in other Jewish sources of Philo’s era.⁵³ Even the related noun μορφή occurs relatively little in LXX, usually referring to the appearance of a human face.⁵⁴ However, Philo’s connection of μορφώ with idolatry and the avoidance of material conceptions of God does correspond to the use of μορφή in two passages

from the LXX. Echoes of the Sinai revelation are clear in the account of Job's dialogue partner, Eliphaz, of a theophany in which he 'saw' a voice, but 'there was no form [μορφή = Hebrew *המונָה*] before my eyes' (LXX Job 4:16). Several aspects of Philo's polemical description of idolatry in *De Decalogo* show a particularly close resemblance to Second Isaiah's portrayal of the stupidity of idolatry, including the account of the workman who, having made a piece of wood into the form (μορφή = Hebrew *הבנִית*) of a man, sets it up to be worshipped as a god (LXX Isa. 44:13, cf. 44:9–20). Although we have no evidence for Philo's citation of either text, we know from other examples of his LXX quotations that he was familiar with the Greek translations of Isaiah and Job.⁵⁵ Taken together, the evidence suggests that it is very likely that Philo was familiar with LXX texts that associated 'form [μορφή]' with qualities *not* possessed by God, and with the worship of material images.

We will learn more, however, of the significance of Philo's application of μορφώ to the second commandment through a brief consideration of the wider context of Philo's use of μορφώ. This reveals that, when applied to *human activity*, μορφώ always refers to the prohibited activity of shaping cult objects; but in contexts where μορφώ has a positive significance, it refers to the *divine shaping of creation*.⁵⁶ So, for example, in Philo's philosophical treatment of the question of how to think of the world's creation from a pious perspective, he states that it is fitting that God should 'give form to the formless [τὰ ἄμορφα μορφοῦν]' (*Aet. 41*). And in another distinctively philosophical context, in which Philo focuses on the transcendent and unchanging nature of God, he explains that because the divine Being has no physical qualities, those who understand the nature of God correctly do not represent it with form (μὴ μορφώσαντες αὐτό) (*Deus 55*).⁵⁷ For Philo's careful readers, the application of μορφώ to the human activity of fashioning cult images was, it seems, meant to underscore the irrational and improper nature of such conceptions of divinity. This, then, is the essential point: it is not fitting that human beings, who have been formed through the working of divine power, should themselves try to give form to divinity.

Shaping material into images: defining the prohibited objects

One of the most striking aspects of Philo's account of the second commandment in *De Decalogo* is that it includes *none* of the terms for the prohibited objects described in the LXX formulations of the prohibition:

- an ‘idol [εἴδωλον]’ = Hebrew פָּסָל (LXX Exod 20:4; Deut. (B) 5:8);
- a ‘carved object [γλυπτόν]’ = Hebrew פָּסָל (LXX Deut. 5:8);
- a ‘likeness of anything [παντὸς ὁμοίωμα] that is in the sky, above, or of what is on the earth, below, or of what is in the waters, underneath the earth’ (LXX Exod. 20:4; Deut. 5:8).

In other contexts, Philo uses the term εἴδωλον in ways that indicate his thorough familiarity with the variety of meanings associated with this word in Greek literature and philosophy.⁵⁸ He knows the use of εἴδωλον for a material copy of a human figure;⁵⁹ as a designation of the phantom-like image of a human being that inhabits the underworld or of other phantom-like objects;⁶⁰ as a mental image of things or ideas;⁶¹ or simply as the appearance of someone or something.⁶² Following Plato, Philo uses εἴδωλον to represent the unreal and illusory in contrast to the truth, or false and deceitful images within the mind that divert it from right thinking and the practice of virtue.⁶³ In contrast to LXX usage, however, Philo never uses εἴδωλον of cult objects, except when quoting directly from the LXX.⁶⁴ In those contexts, Philo always reads εἴδωλον figuratively, as a symbol of false understanding;⁶⁵ representing the opposite of those true and substantial realities that are ‘engraved [ἐστηλευμένα]’ in the mind of the wise;⁶⁶ or as identified with the insubstantial phantoms of wealth and glory and the fake divinities of the myth-makers.⁶⁷ However, εἴδωλον makes no appearance either in Philo’s extended account of the second commandment in *De Decalogo* or in any of his summary definitions of the commandment in this or other treatises.⁶⁸

As for the other terms for the prohibited objects according to LXX Exod. 20:4 and Deut. 5:8, both γλυπτόν and ὁμοίωμα are exceptionally rare in Philo, with only one example of each word attested in his entire corpus. Thus, in Leg. 3.36, Philo cites Deut. 27:15 in a formulation very close to that of LXX Deuteronomy, referring to the curse pronounced on the person who makes ‘a sculpted or molten object [γλυπτὸν καὶ χωνευτόν], the work of a craftsman’s hands’, and then hides it;⁶⁹ read allegorically, the γλυπτόν represents the soul’s treasuring of false conceptions of God ‘as the graven images [γλυπτά] are, of this or that kind, God the Being that is without being’.⁷⁰ As for the term ὁμοίωμα, which appears in both LXX Exod. 20:4 and Deut. 5:8, the only example of Philo’s use of this word is in a citation from Deuteronomy’s account of the theophany at Sinai: ‘You heard a voice of words, and saw no likeness [ὁμοίωμα] but only a voice’ (*Migr.* 48 = LXX Deut. 4:12). Philo’s comments in that context do not discuss the

meaning of ὄμοιώμα, but focus rather on the idea that God's words were 'seen' at Sinai, which, interpreted allegorically, means that God's words are interpreted by the power of sight within the mind.⁷¹ Philo knows the LXX usage of all these terms as applied both to idolatry and to the theophany at Sinai, but chooses not to use them in describing the objects whose making and worship is prohibited by the second commandment.

Turning now to the description in *De Decalogo* of the prohibited objects, the first thing to note is Philo's emphasis on the material quality of these objects, as he lists the materials to be fashioned into cult images: 'wood, stone, silver, gold, or similar materials [ὅλαι]' (*Decal.* 66). This list of specific substances corresponds directly to the chief materials from which, according to biblical tradition, the making of gods is strictly prohibited for Israelites; these are the materials from which the gods of other peoples are made.⁷² Within the traditions of the Torah, the Book of Deuteronomy, in particular, warns against the practice of the Egyptians and other neighbouring peoples, 'their abominations and their idols, objects of wood and stone, silver and gold' (Deut. 29:16); the punishment awaiting those who fail to observe the laws of Moses is service to 'other gods made by human hands, objects of wood and stone' (Deut. 4:28).⁷³ Philo does not explain the addition of 'similar materials [ὅλαι]' to the traditional list here in *Decal.* 66, but a similar interpretive move is found in *Spec.* 1.22, where, interpreting 'You shall not make with me gods of silver and gold' (Exod. 20:23), he argues that the prohibition of using the best substances available to a sculptor, silver and gold, must *a fortiori* also exclude the use of any inferior substances as well. By refraining from explaining this point in *Decal.* 66, Philo perhaps indicates his assumption of his readers' acceptance of an existing tradition; in any case, it has the effect of extending the scope of the prohibition to allow no loophole for the fabrication of gods from substances not mentioned as prohibited in the Torah.⁷⁴

Philo further elaborates on the nature of the prohibited objects, when he describes their makers as having 'filled up the inhabited world [*καταπλήσαντες τὴν οἰκουμένην*]' with a variety of cult objects (*Decal.* 66). First to be listed are 'images and wooden figures', represented in Greek as ἀγάλματα and ξόανα, standard designations in the Graeco-Roman world – though not in the Greek Bible⁷⁵ – for statues sculpted from materials such as stone or wood.⁷⁶ Towards the end of his discussion of the second commandment, as it relates to the deification of human-made objects, Philo also refers to worship of the ἀφίδρυμα, the cult object, which he describes, polemically, as imprisoned in its temple (*Decal.* 74).

Mention of the ἀφίδρυμα, in particular, resonates with the realities of Philo's world: the use of this term for a cult object is concentrated precisely in Philo's era.⁷⁷ Overall, then, the language of *De Decalogo* for the objects prohibited by the second commandment avoids the terms in which the Greek Torah frames the prohibitions of Exod. 20:4 and Deut. 5:8, using instead the familiar, standard terms for cult objects of the Graeco-Roman world of his own day.⁷⁸ This is surely a clear strategy for actualizing the commandments for a new generation. Philo is 'an exegete for his time', updating the words and conceptions of Jewish Scripture, and seeing them as directly addressing the realities of the world in which he lived.⁷⁹

Things 'wrought by hand' (*χειρόκμητα*)

To the ἀγάλματα and ξόανα, Philo adds 'the other things wrought by hand' (*χειρόκμητα*) (*Decal.* 66). As with the materials, so too with the products of their fashioning, Philo indicates the broad scope of the second commandment. His use of the term *χειρόκμητα*, 'wrought by hand', suggests more than a simple statement of the obvious.⁸⁰ *χειρόκμητος* recalls the adjective *χειροποίητος*, 'handmade', which is always associated in LXX with prohibited cult objects.⁸¹ *χειρόκμητος*, on the other hand, has much more distinctively philosophical connotations, particularly associated with Aristotle, who, for example, contrasts the perfect accuracy of the spherical shape of the cosmos as unsurpassed by anything manufactured (*χειρόκμητον*) or within the range of human perception.⁸² In Diogenes Laertius' account of Aristotle's conception of the incorporeal nature of God, the *χειρόκμητα* represent artificial bodies manufactured by craftworkers as distinct from natural bodies that are the work of nature.⁸³ Philo also identifies this term with Aristotle when he praises the philosopher for denouncing the 'terrible atheism' which, citing Aristotle, recognizes no difference between 'hand-wrought works (*χειρόκμητα*)' and 'that great visible god' which is the cosmos.⁸⁴ Philo adopts the same term in his own explanation of the parts of the cosmos as moulded by divine power, not by human skill; they are not *χειρόκμητα*.⁸⁵ So far as we may judge from what survives of Greek writings in antiquity, Philo uses *χειρόκμητος* with much greater frequency than any other ancient author, and, in applying it to manufactured cult objects, invests the word with a distinctively polemical sense, directed against idolatry. Above all, in Philo's writings, the *χειρόκμητα* are the cult objects prohibited by the second commandment and Mosaic tradition in general; indeed, they are

a defining element in Judaism's prohibition of cult images.⁸⁶ To sum up, in Philo's terms, *χειρόχυμητος* is a key term in the definition of what is prohibited in the second commandment, articulating the prohibition of cult objects in terms drawn from philosophical discourse about the divine origins of the cosmos.

The universal harm caused by image-makers and their arts

According to *Decal.* 66, image-makers have filled the inhabited world with their 'hand-wrought objects', things created by painting and sculpture (*πλαστικὴ καὶ ζωγραφία*), which have caused great harm to human life (*μεγάλα ἔβλαψαν*). Philo's first task, in setting out the reasons for the second commandment, is to define and explain the nature of the offence it proscribes: this he elaborates in terms of the terrible damage done to the souls of those who regard manufactured images as gods (*Decal.* 67–69). This section forms the first part of an argument that develops in three stages, in which Philo builds up a vivid picture of those who deify and worship manufactured images as utterly mad and irrational. It is on these grounds that Philo seeks to persuade his readers of the rational foundations of the second commandment.

First, idolatry is wrong because it disables the rational mind. Such, essentially, is Philo's first argument for the reasons underpinning the second commandment. It may be significant that, in the summary statement of *Decal.* 66, Philo uses the verb *βλάπτω* to designate the damaging action of the arts that produce the forbidden images. *βλάπτω* often functions in Philo's writings, as here, to describe spiritual harm, the damage that passions and vices inflict on the soul, and prevent it from attaining true conceptions of God.⁸⁷ Elaborating the damage caused by idolatry, Philo speaks of its practitioners as having 'gouged out [*ἐκκόπτω*] the 'best support of the soul': 'the proper conception of the ever-living God' (*Decal.* 67). Because of such irreparable damage, the migration of souls to their proper destination (the knowledge of God) is impossible; they remain, as Philo puts it, forever 'like boats without ballast', never able to make harbour or find safe anchorage in the truth (*Decal.* 67). Such a miserable state of self-induced spiritual blindness constitutes a just punishment, Philo argues, apparently interpreting the threat of divine retribution associated in Scripture with the rationale for the second commandment. Philo's approach to divine punishment is consistent with his Platonic conception of God as the cause only of good and not of harm – a theological principle which often

leads him to reinterpret the Torah's prescriptions of divine punishment as a state of misery, justly inflicted at God's command, but not directly by God.⁸⁸ The argument is constructed primarily in philosophical terms: idolatry is seen as an impediment to the migration of the rational soul; the 'blindness' of idolatry as the loss of 'the eye of the soul', a characteristically Philonic borrowing of this expression from Plato and Aristotle to designate the reasoning part of the human being which, for Philo, is alone capable of 'seeing' the truth, above all of comprehending the incorporeal God.⁸⁹ By failing to understand ($\epsilon\nu\nu\nu\omega$) what even a child knows, the idolaters, Philo argues, show themselves incapable of grasping this universal truth:⁹⁰ that the craftsman is older and more powerful than the product of his craft (*Decal.* 69). In philosophical terms, the point is commonplace. Such mockery, however, particularly the comparison to 'witless infants' of those who worship images as gods, has close parallels in both Jewish and non-Jewish sources of the late Hellenistic/early Roman period.⁹¹

Continuing with the folly of idolatry, Philo approaches the second stage of the argument by underlining the lack of logic in the image-worshippers' behaviour. If such people really were to sin properly, Philo suggests rhetorically, then they should give divine honours to the sculptors and painters instead of regarding their creations – the $\pi\lambda\sigma\mu\alpha\tau\alpha$ and $\zeta\omega\gamma\rho\alpha\phi\eta\mu\alpha\tau\alpha$ – as gods; but the reverse is the norm, illustrated by a strikingly visual description, conjuring up the poverty and misfortune of artists contrasted with the wealth – purple, gold, silver, and other precious ornaments – added to their lifeless creations. Such paradoxical behaviour is held out as testimony to the horror that is idolatry (*Decal.* 70).⁹² The excessive scrutiny given to the social rank and bodily perfection of priests deemed fit to serve the image cults suggests that we are invited to think of the lack of proper scrutiny given to the images themselves (*Decal.* 71).

If the latter is bad, however, there is worse ($\pi\alpha\gamma\chi\alpha\lambda\epsilon\pi\o\nu$) to come,⁹³ Philo argues (*Decal.* 72). In the third stage of the argument, he adopts the strategy of appealing directly to his own testimony: 'I know [οἶδα] of some of these image-makers [$\pi\epsilon\pi\o\iota\eta\chi\o\tau\omega\eta$]', declares Philo, 'who pray and sacrifice to their own creations' (*Decal.* 72). The message of Philo's rhetoric is clear: we, the audience, are invited to draw ever closer to acknowledging the truth of Philo's position.⁹⁴ The folly of such image-worshippers is mocked with deep irony: the artists would have done better to worship ($\pi\ro\sigma\kappa\omega\nu\epsilon\nu$) their own hands, or, should they not wish to seem guilty of self-love ($\varphi\iota\lambda\omega\tau\iota\alpha$), then they should bow down to 'the hammers and anvils and chisels and pincers and the other tools by which their materials

were shaped (έμορφώθησαν)' (*Decal.* 72). Philo seems to be deliberately playing with the language of the LXX formulations of the second commandment: the description of the image-makers, οἱ πεποιηκότες (*Decal.* 72), recalling the LXX prohibition, οὐ ποιήσεις, 'you shall not make'; and the mockery of their prostrating themselves in adoration, προσκυνεῖν (*Decal.* 72, repeated in *Decal.* 76), before those images, recalling LXX Exod. 20:5par., οὐ προσκυνήσεις αὐτοῖς, 'you shall not bow down to them'.⁹⁵

Philo continues to spell out the state of such 'demented people [οἱ ἀπονοηθέντες]' in the form of a dialogue, in which he adopts as the common starting point the principle, indebted to Platonic tradition for its formulation, that 'the best prayer and the goal of happiness [τέλος εὐδαιμονίας]', the philosophers' *telos*, is to become like God [ἡ πρὸς θεὸν ἐξομοίωσις'] (*Decal.* 73).⁹⁶ Speaking in the person of dialogue partner, Philo appeals to an imaginary audience of image-worshippers to follow this principle in their practice:

Pray, therefore, to become like [ἐξομοιωθῆναι τοῖς ἀφιδρύμασιν] your images, that you may enjoy supreme happiness, with eyes that see not, ears that hear not, nostrils which neither breathe nor smell, mouths that cannot speak or taste, hands which cannot take or give, feet which cannot walk, with no activity in any of the other parts of your body, but, as if in prison, kept in your temple under watch and guard, night and day drawing in the smoke of the sacrifices, because that alone is the one good that you imagine for your images [ἀφιδρύματα]. (*Decal.* 74)

Surely, Philo reckons, turning to address another imagined audience, the rational onlooker, idolaters would hear him as inviting them to curse themselves; their predicted reaction must surely condemn them. It follows, he concludes, that there can be no greater proof of the impiety so prevalent among human beings who acknowledge gods of such a nature that they would in fact refuse to pray to become like them (ὅμοιοι) (*Decal.* 75). While the agreed goal of assimilation to God is formulated in Platonic terms as ἐξομοίωσις,⁹⁷ Philo's assault on what he constructs as the lunacy and impiety of worshipping lifeless idols to which no one would wish to assimilate comes straight out of the biblical prophets and psalms and their development in later Jewish literature and its long lists of the lifeless features of idols.⁹⁸ Philo's rhetorical interrogation of the would-be idolater, in particular, adapts the curse-like formulas of the psalms – 'Let those who make them [idols] be made like them [ὅμοιοι αὐτοῖς γένοιντο οἱ ποιοῦντες αὐτά], and all who trust in them' (LXX Pss. 113:8; 134:18).⁹⁹

After deploying so many argumentative strategies by way of justifying the second commandment's prohibition of images, Philo concludes this part of the discussion by formulating the prohibition for the first time as an imperative:

Let no one, therefore, who has a soul worship a soulless thing [μηδεὶς οὖν τῶν ἔχόντων ψυχὴν ἀφύγω προσκυνείτω], for it is completely absurd that the works of nature [τὰ φύσεως ἔργα]¹⁰⁰ should turn themselves to the service of hand-wrought things [χειρόκμητα]. (*Decal.* 76)

Here Philo articulates the imperative, prohibiting the worship of manufactured images – μηδεὶς ... προσκυνείτω – with precisely the verb used in LXX Exod. 20:5 and Deut. 5:9: οὐ προσκυνήσεις. With Philo, however, the direct second-person singular command of the biblical prohibitions is transformed into something more like an exhortation, addressed to every person in possession of a soul. The notion of the prohibition as a universal law is further underlined by Philo's formulation of it in terms which, while they nod to Plato, are a commonplace of natural law theory: the soul, which should naturally rule, must not submit to what is soulless, which by nature should be ruled.¹⁰¹

Egyptian animal worship

In the second major part of his treatment of the second commandment in *De Decalogo*, Philo moves to another example of the deification of things that are 'without soul [άψυχος]', namely animals, which, following Aristotle, he defines as lacking the rational soul that distinguishes human beings from non-human animals.¹⁰² With the worship of animals as gods (*Decal.* 76–80), we also come to another reality that filled Philo's Egypt, even in the city of Alexandria: the veneration of sacred animals, living and dead, and of their cult images.¹⁰³ Philo uses the language of law to introduce the Egyptians as subject not only to the accusation (ἔγκλημα) that is common to all lands – the worship of material images – but also to another that is peculiar to them:

In addition to statues and images, they have also bestowed divine honours on irrational animals, bulls and rams and goats, and created for each some mythical fiction of wonder. (*Decal.* 76)

Why has Philo included animal worship among the things prohibited by the second commandment? The position of animal worship at the bottom of the scale of impiety matches the Hellenistic Jewish model that seems to

have influenced the structure of Philo's treatment of the first and second commandments, moving from the least bad offence, cosmic piety, to the worst, animal worship.¹⁰⁴ As for the specific connection of animal worship to the second commandment (which seems to be original to *De Decalogo*), Philo may have read the biblical formulations of the commandment as suggesting that living creatures, as well as their images, should be included under the prohibition of the making of likenesses of anything in heaven, earth and water, and of bowing down to them or serving them.¹⁰⁵ He may also have seen a connection in Deuteronomy's repeated warnings against trusting in any 'likenesses' of God, including those of living beings drawn from every part of the cosmos:

And you shall guard your souls with great care, because you saw no likeness [όμοίωμα] on that day, when the Lord spoke to you in Horeb, on the mountain, from the middle of the fire. Do not break the law and do not make for yourself any sculpted likeness [γλυπτὸν ὄμοίωμα], any image [εἰκών], a likeness [όμοίωμα] of male or female, a likeness of any animal of those which are on the earth, a likeness of any winged bird which flies under the sky, a likeness of any reptile which creeps on the ground, a likeness of any fish which is in the waters under the earth. (LXX Deut. 4:15–18)

Even Philo's decision to focus on Egypt may be partly influenced by this context, in which the warnings conclude by exhorting the Israelites to remember the miracle of their liberation from Egypt, 'the iron furnace': those who have been freed from Egypt to become God's people must not serve or worship any other.¹⁰⁶ Philo's ideas about animal worship are also profoundly shaped by the view of idolatry as a form of worship contrary to the natural order. In the case of inanimate images, it is wrong that the human being, with a rational soul, should worship what has no soul, and that objects manufactured from material and corruptible substances should be given the divine honours that are due only to the incorporeal God. The same principle applies to animal worship; although, as will become apparent, it is seen as representing a different kind of subversion of the natural order.

The veneration of sacred animals in traditional Egyptian religion took many forms. It is clear, however, that in *De Decalogo* Philo is thinking of the cults of living animals, rather than the cultic use of images of animals, or the mummified remains of sacred animals. Philo may also have known that the liturgy of traditional Egyptian religion could describe these living sacred animals as the εἴδωλα of the gods, a further connection to the LXX formulation of the second commandment. In singling out bulls, rams and

11 Mummified crocodile. Egypt, bone and linen, late period (664–332 BCE). A living crocodile seems to have been treated as the image of the crocodile god Sobek in some Faiyum temples of the Graeco-Roman period, but it was the crocodile mummy that represented the god during festival processions.

Courtesy of National Museums Liverpool.

goats, he begins the attack on animal worship with examples of some of the best-known, high-status animal cults in Ptolemaic and Roman Egypt, such as the Apis bull of Memphis and the ram of Mendes. Philo insists from the outset that the devotees of animal worship, like the image-makers, have fabricated the divinity of their ‘gods’: they have ‘led them [$\pi\alpha\rho\alpha\gamma\eta\chi\alpha\sigma\iota\upsilon$] to divine honours’ (perhaps a mocking reference to these ‘gods’ on leads); and, like the idolatrous artists with their piles of materials for making ‘gods’, the Egyptians are said to have ‘created gods [$\varepsilon\kappa\tau\varepsilon\theta\varepsilon\iota\omega\kappa\alpha\sigma\iota\upsilon$]’ from a multitude of beasts.¹⁰⁷ Traditions associated with the animal cults are dismissed as mere ‘mythical fiction’, one of the chief characteristics, along with idolatry, of Philo’s view of paganism.¹⁰⁸ Philo also makes much, in this context, of the need to reject utilitarian justifications for the animal cults, which, as we know from Herodotus and Plutarch, had won a degree of sympathy among some prominent Greek thinkers. In contrast with the kind of support for spiritualized interpretations of the animal cults that appear, for example, in Plutarch’s account of Egyptian religion, Philo insists that justifications of animal worship based on the usefulness to human beings of creatures like the ox or the ram are inadequate. Such interpretations, he argues, fail to explain the Egyptians’ devotion to animals that represent the complete opposite of anything that might benefit human beings. The Egyptians, Philo insists, have ‘gone much further [$\pi\rho\sigma\upsilon\pi\varepsilon\theta\beta\acute{\alpha}\lambda\lambda\o\nt\epsilon\varsigma$]’ in their devotion to sacred animals, returning to the theme that, in comparison with the rest of the world, the Egyptians have made exceptional progress in impious behaviour.¹⁰⁹ In taking this stand, Philo aligns himself clearly with the distinctively outsider views found in Greek and Roman authors who constructed Egyptian piety as dangerous fanaticism.¹¹⁰ In the argument put forward in *De Decalogo*, the extreme character of traditional Egyptian religion is seen in its adherents’ devotion to the most savage of all animals – lions, crocodiles (figure 11) and the venomous asp.¹¹¹

We are offered a glimpse here of the real Egypt in Philo’s description of the temples, sacrifices and processions associated with Egyptian animal



cults, which, as we know from other evidence, were a hugely important and popular part of the religious life of Graeco-Roman Egypt. But Philo mentions them only to highlight the excessive character of Egyptian religion in honouring the most savage of animals with such elaborate rituals. The point is further underscored in Philo's use of the common distinction between tame and wild animals to stress the nature of these ferocious wild animal gods (*Decal.* 78), another nail in the coffin of the utilitarian argument for animal worship.¹¹² From the things given by God to benefit human beings, earth and water, the Egyptians, so Philo argues, have carefully chosen to worship animals – the fiercest and most savage of all – that can be of no benefit to humans.¹¹³ Such behaviour, in Philo's perspective, is a perversion of the divine plan for the relationship of animals towards human beings.¹¹⁴ In sum, there is *no reason* for worshipping the animals venerated by the Egyptians; Philo knows the arguments for the reasonableness of the animal cults, but rejects them on the grounds that Egyptians deliberately worship animals that bring them no benefit at all, and represent instead the complete opposite of the proper conception of God and divine providence.

Having dismissed attempts to rationalize the animal cults, Philo's attack focuses next on persuading the reader of the absurdity of animal worship, the same tactic that he used earlier in the discussion of the second commandment to undermine the validity of image-centred worship. He reinforces this negative evaluation of animal worship with a detailed list of examples, drawn from the three categories of earth, sky and water, listed in the second commandment:

Indeed, they have deified many other animals too, dogs, cats, wolves, and among the birds, ibis and falcons, and fish too, whole bodies or just bits of them. Could there be anything more ridiculous [*καταγελαστότερον*] than this? (*Decal.* 79)

All these animals, and more, have well-known counterparts in the Egyptian animal cults – jackal-headed Anubis (figure 12); the wolf of Lycopolis and the dog of Cynopolis; the cat deity Bastet; Horus the falcon; the ibis farmed on an industrial scale for its worshippers; and the 'sharp-nosed' fish, its distinctive feature associated with the legend that this fish swallowed the penis of Osiris after his body was dismembered by Seth and thrown into the Nile.¹¹⁵ Drawing on long-standing traditions of Greek and Roman satire, Philo invites his readers to agree with him, in adopting an explicitly outsider perspective on animal worship, that strangers landing in Egypt for the first time will 'die with laughing', before, that is, this

12 Life-size portrait of deceased youth, being introduced by the jackal-faced Anubis, god of the dead, to the mummified Osiris. The portrait of the human figure combines Roman and Hellenistic Greek elements; the setting is traditionally Egyptian. Water-based pigment on linen, c. 140–180 CE; provenance unknown, probably Saqqara.

Louvre, Paris/The Bridgeman Art Library



native delusion ($\tau\tilde{\nu}\phi\sigma\varsigma$) has made its home in their minds (*Decal.* 80). Behind the rhetoric, we see Philo's acknowledgement of the reality of the immense popularity of the animal cults in Roman Egypt among the descendants of Greeks and Romans who had settled in Egypt. As in the case of the manufactured images of the gods, condemned in the first part of Philo's interpretation of the second commandment, so too the sacred animals are seen as profoundly dangerous because of their seductiveness. Egyptian animal worship is defined as belonging to the species of $\tau\tilde{\nu}\phi\sigma\varsigma$, which, from the very beginning of *De Decalogo*, Philo presents as the cause of many evils, not least the bringing of 'divine things into utter contempt' through idolatry (*Decal.* 6–9).¹¹⁶

In Philo's final comments on animal worship in relation to the second commandment, he adopts the perspective of those who know what 'proper learning [$\pi\alpha\iota\delta\varepsilon\iota\alpha$] is, who, he insists, regard the animal cults with amazement and see this practice for what it really is: 'the veneration of things that are quite the opposite of venerable' (*Decal.* 80).¹¹⁷ If, as Philo says, the wise 'pity' animal-worshippers, it is because they understand the damage that the worshippers inflict on their own souls,

regarding them, as is natural, as being more wretched than the animals they honour, their souls transformed into those animal natures, so that as they prowl around they seem to be wild beasts in human form. (*Decal.* 80)

As Valentin Nikiprowetzky observes, in commenting on this passage, Philo has adapted Plato's doctrine of *metempsychosis*, the idea of the transmigration of souls into animal bodies, in which the choice of animal reflects the moral behaviour of the soul in its previous embodiment.¹¹⁸ On this basis, Philo can speak of the wicked as beasts in human form.¹¹⁹ But the more important influence, I suggest, is the biblical doctrine, already articulated so vividly in this treatise in Philo's mockery of image-worshippers: those who worship lifeless idols become like them. Just as image-worshippers have destroyed the rational soul, so too the animal-worshippers have lost the 'eye of the soul' that made them human: they have become without reason, like the 'irrational animals' whose cults they serve.

The purpose of the second commandment

In contrast to the threat of punishment with which the biblical formulations of the second commandment conclude, Philo's version of the prohibition closes with a positive statement, asserting that the prohibition of 'all such

deification [ἐκθέωσις] from the sacred legislation' calls on human beings to honour the one God who truly exists.¹²⁰ As at the beginning of his treatment of the second commandment, so now at the end, Philo underscores its connection with 'the first and most sacred of the commandments, to acknowledge and honour the one supreme God' (*Decal.* 65). As a final answer to the underlying question 'Why the second commandment?', Philo tackles the problem of why an all-sufficient (*αὐταρκέστατος*) Deity should demand exclusive honour among human beings. For Philo, it is axiomatic that God needs nothing; the second commandment's call to honour God does not benefit God, but is directed towards the good of human beings. In this perspective, the second commandment should be seen as a blessing, an expression of God's benevolent providence towards the entire cosmos and its inhabitants. In his final summing up, Philo leaves behind the polemic and mockery of his assault on idolatry and animal worship to frame the divine purpose behind the second commandment in profoundly universal terms:

[God] wished to guide the human race, wandering as it does on roads that are no roads, towards a road from which none can wander, so that by following nature they might find the most excellent of goals, knowledge of the truly existent, who is the first and most perfect good, from whom, as from a fountain, each of the particular goods is showered upon the cosmos and on those within it. (*Decal.* 81)

Like all the commandments of the Decalogue, the second commandment, when 'fully' understood, offers safe passage for the journey of the soul (*Decal.* 50), and it is meant for the whole human race. To observe this commandment is 'to follow nature', a characteristically Philonic adaptation of the Stoic definition of the *telos* to the Law of the God of Israel. For Philo, the Law of Moses is the copy of the universal Law, but the author of this copy is the Deity who revealed the Ten Commandments at Sinai.¹²¹ Philo's definition of 'the most excellent *telos*' as 'the knowledge of the truly existent' represents his profound conviction that the way to God is through intellectual activity: when the mind is guided along the road of wisdom, it will reach the goal that is 'the recognition and the knowledge of God'.¹²² The second commandment opens up that road to all endowed with reason. In approaching God through the activity of the mind, and not through conceptions of God based on material substances, human beings can also become more like God, who is 'the absolutely pure and unadulterated intellect of the universe'.¹²³ In Philo's God-centred intellectualism, as David Runia observes,

not only is man, in gaining knowledge of God, better able to become like him, but also by being engaged in the very act of thinking he pursues the activity that most nearly characterizes the activity of God and so actually does become like him.¹²⁴

Concluding remarks

Why the second commandment? Philo has used a great range of strategies to make the case as persuasively as possible: to bring all who are capable of reasoning to the knowledge of the truly existing God who is the one and only source of all goods on which the cosmos and its inhabitants depend for their existence. This fundamental idea, according to Philo, is inscribed in the very location of the second commandment: its place, alongside the first commandment, at the beginning of the Decalogue, shows that both these commandments deal with the beginning point of all things – God. The logical connection of the prohibition of images to the first commandment may also be seen in its role in combating the delusion, as Philo sees it, of worshipping what is created (the cosmos, manufactured images, animals) instead of its creator.

What is prohibited? In emphasizing that it is the activity of *shaping* (μορφώω) material that is forbidden, Philo may be seen as building on Scripture's prohibition of making a 'carved' or 'hewn' object or any 'form', adding a further dimension through the use of this particular verb: it is the uncreated God who gives form to living things; from a rational perspective, it is topsy-turvy to think that those who have been formed through God's power should themselves have any power to give shape to divinity.

In defining the prohibited objects of worship, Philo employs terms that are closer to LXX γλυπτόν than to εἴδωλον, in order to emphasize the material nature of these fabricated gods, drawing on terms familiar from Scripture and from the standard vocabulary for cult objects of the Graeco-Roman world of Philo's contemporaries. The second commandment is redrawn to reflect the realities of Philo's world. In defining these objects as χειρόκηματα, Philo also draws on the language of philosophy to refer to these prohibited objects of cult as artificial constructions which people have confused with things shaped by divine power. The message is clear: in making gods of objects that owe their 'existence' to human hands, people have failed to recognize the true source of existence.

Since God can neither suffer nor inflict harm, the rewards and punishments associated with the second commandment in fact refer, according to Philo's argument, to the spiritual state of the individual, linked to

transgression or observance of the prohibition of making and worshipping images. Those who worship the images they have made have disabled the rational element of their soul, rendering themselves unable to progress in their knowledge of God, lost in a state of self-inflicted spiritual blindness. Philo employs many different rhetorical strategies to draw in his readers and draw out the theme, familiar from Scripture and the philosophers alike, of the folly of worshipping lifeless images. These ‘gods’ have no real substance at all; they are endowed with all the illusory, deceptive qualities of the *εἰδωλον*. It is in this context that Philo directly employs the language of the LXX formulation of the prohibition of images in mocking those who make (*προτείν*) and worship (*προσκυνεῖν*) the images that they have made.

To whom is the prohibition addressed? Philo reconstructs the scriptural prohibition as an exhortation addressed to all in possession of a rational soul, and formulates it in terms deliberately constructed to invite universal agreement: no one with a soul is to worship a soulless thing. Since the goal of life is to become as much as possible like God – following the principles of Scripture and Plato – no rational being would wish to become like a lifeless statue. In including Egyptian animal worship under the terms of what is prohibited by the second commandment, Philo extends the notion that the commandment forbids the worship of the soulless by those with rational souls. By singling out for condemnation the worship of living things that belong to land, air and sea, Philo also makes a direct connection between the contemporary reality of popular animal cults in Roman Egypt and the prohibition of images and its elaboration in Deuteronomy, which together emphasize that no image of any living thing, in any part of the cosmos, is to be worshipped. Just as Philo makes no room for any philosophical defence of the use of images as objects of cult, so too with animal worship – there is to be no toleration of attempts to justify animal worship by appealing to rational arguments. Indeed, for Philo, animal worship is the most insane of all misconceptions of God. It is also harmful, in its power to win adherents, even among those who arrive as outsiders to Egypt – an acknowledgment of the profound influence of animal cults in the multicultural society of Roman Egypt. As with image-worshippers, the real harm done by animal-worshippers is spiritual self-harm; their loss of reason makes them like their irrational animal ‘gods’. Such is the end of those who fail to observe the second commandment. In his final statement on the second commandment, however, Philo focuses on the benefit that comes from observing the prohibition of images, a good that is potentially available to all. In this summing up, we may see Philo as following the

lead of Scripture's formulations of the second commandment, closing with a statement that affirms God's 'kindness' towards the infinite number of those who observe the divine commandments. In *De Decalogo*, Philo's reading of the second commandment reveals his fundamental commitment to drawing out the fullest significance of the words of Scripture: in their deepest sense, as applied to the human soul and the conception of God through its God-given intellect; and in their application to the world of here and now, signalled in Philo's updating of the terms of Scripture to reflect the realities of religious life in the Graeco-Roman world and, right on the doorstep, in multicultural Alexandria.

CHAPTER 4

1. On the innovative character of Philo's *De Decalogo*, see Y. Amir, 'The Decalogue according to Philo', in B. – Z. Segal, ed., *The Ten Commandments in History and Tradition* (trans. G. Levi; Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1990), pp. 121–60.
2. V. Nikiprowetzky, *De Decalogo: Introduction, Traduction et Notes* (Les Oeuvres de Philon d'Alexandrie 23; Paris: Cerf, 1965). The important German and English translations produced earlier in the twentieth century are only lightly annotated: L. Treitel, 'Über den Dekalog', in L. Cohn, ed., *Philo von Alexandria, Die Werke in deutscher Übersetzung Volume 1* (Breslau: M. & H. Marcus, 1909); F.H. Colson, *Philo*, vol. 7 (LCL; Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1937). Other fine editions of *De Decalogo*, building on Nikiprowetzky's work, include: S. Daniel-Nataf, *Philo of Alexandria: Writings Volume 2, Exposition of the Law, Part 1* (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute and Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1991) [Hebrew]; F. Calabi, *De Decalogo: Filone di Alessandria* (Pisa: Edizioni ETS, 2005).
3. See especially E.R. Goodenough, *By Light, Light: The Mystic Gospel of Hellenistic Judaism* (New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 1935), pp. 256–7. Goodenough's *Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period* (New York: Pantheon Books/Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1953–68) comments in many places on different aspects of Philo's work in relation to Jewish and non-Jewish visual images in antiquity, though with very little direct reference to the treatment of the second commandment in *De Decalogo*. On Philo's 'liking for art', see *Jewish Symbols*, vol. 4, p. II.
4. Wolfson's argument, which does not explicitly engage with Goodenough's work on this point, emphasizes that Philo does not condemn images in general, but specifically focuses on the prohibition of statues painted with colour: H.A. Wolfson, *Philo: Foundations of Religious Philosophy in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*, vol. 1 (rev. edn; Cambridge MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1948), pp. 29–30 n. 22; cf. *Wisd. 15:4; bAvodah Zarah 43b*; Wolfson's interpretation on this point remains influential, cf. K.P. Bland, *The Artless Jew: Medieval and Modern Affirmations and Denials of the Visual* (Princeton NJ and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2000), pp. 61–2.
5. K.-G. Sandelin, 'Philo's Ambivalence towards Statues', *The Studia Philonica Annual* 13 (2001), pp. 122–38; cf. also his earlier study, 'The Danger of Idolatry According to Philo of Alexandria', *Temenos* 27 (1991), pp. 109–50. Sandelin appeals explicitly to Peder Borgen's conception of Philo as 'a conqueror, on the verge of being conquered' (i.e. by non-Jewish culture): P. Borgen, 'Philo of Alexandria: A Critical and Synthetical Survey of Research since World War II', *ANRW* II.21.1 (1984), pp. 98–154 (150).
6. J. Gutmann, 'The "Second Commandment" and the Image in Judaism', in Gutmann, ed., *No Graven Images: Studies in Art and the Hebrew Bible* (New York: Ktav, 1971), pp. 3–14, esp. 12–14; originally published in *Hebrew Union College Annual* 32 (1961), pp. 161–74.
7. On the date of the translation of the Torah, see M. Harl et al., *La Bible Grecque des Septante: Du Judaïsme Hellénistique au Christianisme Ancien* (Paris: Cerf, 1994), pp. 56–8.
8. W. Barnes Tatum, 'The LXX Version of the Second Commandment (Ex.20,3–6 = Deut.5,7–10): A Polemic against Idols, not Images', *Journal for the Study of Judaism* XVII.2 (1986), pp. 177–95 (178, 181); cf. J. von Ehrenkrook, *Sculpting Idolatry in Flavian Rome: (An)Iconic Rhetoric in the Writings of Flavius Josephus* (Atlanta GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011), pp. 87–9.
9. R. Hayward, 'Observations on Idols in Septuagint Pentateuch', in S.C. Barton, ed., *Idolatry: False Worship in the Bible, Early Judaism and Christianity* (London and New York: T&T Clark, 2007), pp. 40–57 (54).
10. Barnes Tatum, 'The LXX Version', pp. 187–90, 192–3.
11. Hayward, 'Observations', pp. 53–4.
12. For a sound overview of problems and solutions to the question of Philo's biblical

text, see Borgen, 'Philo of Alexandria', pp. 121–3. Borgen notes the weakness of some of the more important studies in this field in not adequately taking account of 'the fact that in the paraphrasing expositions', such as *De Decalogo*, 'Philo deals with the text as an active exegete, and he works, moreover, exegetical traditions into his paraphrase. Thus, it is impossible to reconstruct an original Septuagint text on the basis of his exegesis' (123). For a review of the relatively limited research on these issues, see A. Passoni dell'Acqua, 'Upon Philo's Biblical Text and the Septuagint', in F. Calabi, ed., *Italian Studies on Philo of Alexandria* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), pp. 25–52.

13. R. Arnaldez, 'La Bible de Philon d'Alexandrie', in C. Mondésert, ed., *Le Monde Grec Ancien et la Bible* (Paris: Éditions Beauchesne, 1984), pp. 37–54 (52–3).
14. I. Himbaza, 'Le Décalogue de Papyrus Nash, Philon, 4Qphyl G, 8Qphyl 3 et 4Qmez A', *RevQ* 20 (2002), pp. 411–28, and *Le Décalogue et l'Histoire du Texte: Études des Formes Textuelles du Décalogue et leurs Implications dans l'Histoire du Texte de l'Ancien Testament* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 2004), pp. 167–9. The evidence relates for the most part to Philo's treatment of the fourth commandment (*Decal.* 96–105).
15. ἀποδιδοὺς ἀνομίας [LXX ὄμαρτίας] πατέρων ἐπὶ υἱοὺς [LXX τέκνα], ἐπὶ τρίτους καὶ ἐπὶ τετάρτους [LXX Exod. ἔως τρίτης καὶ τετάρτης; LXX Deut. ἐπὶ τρίτην καὶ τετάρτην].
16. LXX Deut. 5:8, γλυπτόν (papyrus 963), cf. εἴδωλον (Ms B): The Greek text of Exodus and Deuteronomy is based on the Göttingen edition of the Septuagint: J.W. Wevers, ed., *Septuaginta. Vetus Testamentum Graecum Auctoritate Academiae Scientiarum Gottingensis editum*, vol. II.1: *Exodus* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1991); vol. III, 2: *Deuteronomium* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1977). Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own.
17. Cf. BDB and HALOT s.v. נְבָד.
18. C. Houtman, *Exodus Volume 3, Chapters 20–40* (Leuven: Peeters, 2000), p. 31.
19. J.W. Wevers, *Notes on the Greek Text of Deuteronomy* (Atlanta GA: Scholars Press, 1995), p. 100.
20. Cf. plural εἴδωλα = MT פָּסִירְלִים: Isa. 30:22; 2 Chr. 33:22; 34:7.
21. Singular נְבָד: γλυπτόν (Deut. 4:16, 23, 25; 5:8; 27:15); cf. γλυπτά (Lev. 26:1); plural: γλυπτά (Deut. 7:5, 25; 12:3); cf. γλυπτὰ τῶν θεῶν (Deut. 7:25; 12:3). The Jewish revisers of LXX Exodus 20:4 also have γλυπτόν.
22. LSJ s.v. εἴδωλον.
23. The evidence is presented by T. Griffith, 'ΕΙΔΩΛΟΝ as "Idol" in Non-Jewish and Non-Christian Greek', *Journal of Theological Studies*, NS, 53.1 (2002), pp. 95–101. This represents a major advance on earlier treatments of the significance of εἴδωλον in LXX, but does not decisively refute the influential view that the LXX application of εἴδωλον to images of the gods represents a semantic neologism (cf. F. Büchsel, 'Εἴδωλον', *TDNT*, vol. 2 (ET; Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans, 1964), pp. 375–80).
24. E.g. Plutarch, *De Iside et Osiride, Moralia* 359b; PSI 8.901 (46 CE). J. Gwyn Griffiths suggests that εἴδωλον in this context may refer to the Egyptian concept of the living animal as the *ba* of a god: *Plutarch's De Iside et Osiride* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1970), pp. 363–4. The ancient Egyptian liturgies represent worshippers as referring to the living animals as the *ba*, defined as the soul, essence or emanation of a particular god; as 'images and vessels' of the god, the sacred animals only represented a 'limited and imperfect expression' of a deity, cf. E. Hornung, *Conceptions of God in Ancient Egypt: the One and the Many* (trans. J. Baines; New York: Cornell University Press, 1996), p. 137.
25. Griffith, 'ΕΙΔΩΛΟΝ', p. 99.
26. In addition to LXX Exod. 20:4–6 and Deut. 5:8–10, cf. LXX Gen. 31:19, 34–35, 'teraphim' (household idols used in divination); Lev. 19:4, 'worthless things'; Lev. 26:30; Deut. 29:17, 'dungy things'; Num. 25:2, foreign gods; Num. 33:52, molten images; Deut. 32:21, 'vapidities'.
27. Hayward, 'Observations', p. 54.

28. Ibid., p. 42.
29. Cf. MT Deut. 'any form': i.e. 'an image, of whatsoever form' or 'an image of whatever form'.
30. Houtman, *Exodus*, p. 31.
31. Ibid., p. 32; cf. Deut. 4:16–18.
32. The exception is Deut. 4:16, where ὁμοίωμα = תְּבִנָה, 'form [of a man or woman]'. In other biblical passages, in which תְּבִנָה refers to the appearance of a 'likeness' of the Deity, the LXX translators render the Hebrew term as δόξα, the 'glory' of God (LXX Num. 12:8; Ps. 16:15). In LXX Job, the תְּבִנָה which appears in a dream vision is a μορφή, a 'form' or 'shape' (Job 4:16).
33. See further, M. Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy 1–11* (The Anchor Bible; New York: Doubleday, 1991), pp. 204–6.
34. Cf. LXX Deut. 5:9, 'because I am the Lord your God, a jealous God'.
35. A. Le Boulluec and P. Sandevoir, *La Bible d'Alexandrie: L'Exode* (Paris: Cerf, 1989), p. 206.
36. Here, as in most cases in the Torah, ἔλεος = Hebrew רָחֵל, referring to the obligations of beneficence and benevolence which the parties in a relationship owe to each other.
37. The notion of God's kindness as abundant and great in extent is repeatedly emphasized in the traditions of Scripture, e.g. Exod. 34:7; Num. 14:18–19; Deut. 7:9; as filling the earth, cf. Pss. 33:5; 119:64.
38. Josephus, *Ant.* 3.91, 'The second commands us to make an image [εἰκών] of no living being for worship.'
39. *Mekhilta R. Ishmael, Bachodesh* §8 (Lauterbach); *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan*; cf. M. Breuer, 'Dividing the Decalogue into Verses and Commandments', in Segal, ed., *The Ten Commandments*, pp. 291–330.
40. On the two tablets of stone, see e.g. Deut. 4:13; 5:19(22). On the division of the commandments into two sets of five, see e.g. *Her.* 168; *Decal.* 50–51.
41. A distinctly Platonic formulation, used by Philo together with other epithets describing the Deity as eternal and uncreated, and as the Creator of all that exists: *Decal.* 41, 64, 105.
42. Unless otherwise noted, all translations from Philo's writings are my own, and based on the critical edition of the Greek text by L. Cohn, P. Wendland and S. Reiter, eds, *Philonis Alexandrini opera quae supersunt*, vols I–VI (Berlin: Reimer, 1896–1915); esp. L. Cohn, ed., vol. IV: *De Abrahamo*; *De Iosepho*; *De Vita Mosis*; *De Decalogo* (Berlin: Reimer, 1902).
43. G.E. Sterling, "'The Queen of the Virtues': Piety in Philo of Alexandria", *Studia Philonica Annual* 18 (2006), pp. 103–23.
44. A similar scheme is used by Philo in *Ebr.* 108–110; *Contempl.* 3–9; cf. *Wisd.* 14–15.
45. *Decal.* 51, 65.
46. *Decal.* 64. As Philo makes clear in the same context, he nevertheless sees the cosmos and the heavenly bodies as constituting a different order of created things, superior to human beings because the divine power has allotted to them a substance that is purer and more immortal than that given to human beings. The conception of the superior ranking of the cosmos in the order of creation is clearly influenced by Plato's *Timaeus* 30e–43b: Nikiprowetzky, *De Decalogo*, p. 74.
47. *Decal.* 58.
48. *Decal.* 65.
49. *Decal.* 2–17.
50. *Republic* 373b.
51. Gig. 59; Josephus, *Apion* 2.256; cf. Nikiprowetzky, *De Decalogo*, p. 42.
52. Though cf. Isa. 44:13 Q in margin and Aquila, noted in BDAG, s.v. μορφώ.
53. E.g. of idols, cf. Josephus, *Ant.* 15.329; *Sib. Or.* 8.259; of God's fashioning of human beings, *Sib. Or.* 4.182; 8.379.
54. E.g. LXX Judges (A) 8:18; Daniel 3:19; 4 Macc. 15:4.
55. For details of Philo's citations of major passages from canonical Scripture, see *Biblia*

- Patristica. Supplément, Philon d'Alexandrie* (Paris: Éditions du Centre national de la recherche scientifique, 1982).
56. *Deus* 55; *Plant.* 3; *Conf.* 63, 87; *Fug.* 12, 69; *Somn.* 1.173, 210; 2.45; *Abr.* 118; *Spec.* 1.21, 171; 2.255; 3.108, 117; *Aet.* 41.
 57. Cf. *Somn.* 1.67, God cannot be apprehended 'under any form'.
 58. For a valuable overview, see T. Griffith, *Keep Yourselves from Idols: A New Look at 1 John* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), pp. 44–8.
 59. *Congr.* 65.
 60. *Somn.* 2.133; *Flacc.* 164.
 61. Of parts of the city (*Opif.* 18); of the invisible eye (*Plant.* 21); of the soul (*Abr.* 153); of virtues or virtuous living (*Conf.* 69, 71; *Prob.* 146); of the impressions of folly or vice or the passions (*Fug.* 14; *Praem.* 19, 116); of images reflected as in a mirror (*Spec.* 1.219); of an idea (*Somn.* 1.153; cf. Colson and Whitaker, *Philo*, vol. 5 (LCL; Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1934), pp. 600–601 on the 'very strange' use of εἴδωλον in this context). See also Philo's use of ἀνειδωλοποιέω, 'to form a mental image of', of the mind's creation of things that have no basis in reality (*Ios.* 126).
 62. *Contempl.* 72.
 63. E.g. Plato, *Tht.* 150c; *Soph.* 265b; *Phd.* 66c; cf. Philo, *Conf.* 74; *Fug.* 143; *Somn.* 2.162; *Spec.* 1.25–28; *Somn.* 2.97 (εἴδωλοποιέω).
 64. *Leg.* 2.46 (of Rachel hiding the 'idols', LXX Gen. 31:19, 34–35); *Conf.* 74 (LXX Gen. 31:35); *Fug.* 143 (LXX Gen. 31:33); *Spec.* 1.25–28 (LXX Lev. 19:4, 'You shall not follow idols and you shall not make molten gods').
 65. Implicitly, *Leg.* 2.46.
 66. *Conf.* 74.
 67. *Spec.* 1.25–28.
 68. *Her.* 169; *Decal.* 156; *Spec.* 1.1 (title).
 69. LXX Deut. 27:15: 'Cursed be the person who makes a sculpted or molten object (γλυπτὸν καὶ χωνευτόν), an abomination for the Lord, the work of a craftsman's hands, and who places it in a hiding place.'
 70. *Leg.* 3.36, trans. F.H. Colson and G.H. Whitaker, *Philo*, vol. 1 (LCL; Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1929). The χωνευτόν, 'molten object', likewise represents the idea that God is corruptible, like molten images.
 71. *Migr.* 48–49.
 72. LXX Exod. 20:23 ('You shall not make for yourselves gods of silver, and you shall not make for yourselves gods of gold'); Exod. 32:4 (the golden calf); cf. LXX Lev. 26:30 ('I will completely destroy your wooden images made by hand').
 73. Cf. Deut. 28:36, 64.
 74. Jewish Scripture includes examples of gods made of a more extensive range of materials, e.g. Daniel 5:4, 23: the Babylonian rulers praise 'the gods of gold and silver, bronze, iron, wood, and stone'.
 75. In LXX usage: ἄγαλμα: Isa. 19:3 (= MT מִתְמָן), referring to the images of the gods consulted by the Egyptians; 21:9 (= MT מִלְכָבֵד), referring to the cultic images of Babylon, together with 'the works of her hands (τὰ χειροποίητα)'; 2 Macc. 2:2, citing Jeremiah's exhortation to the exiles not to 'be led astray in their thoughts on seeing the gold and silver statues and their adornment' (RSV); cf. 2 Baruch 4:34 (A) (Β ἀγαλλίαμα). Both ἄγαλμα and ξόσον appear in Aquila's translation of Ezekiel (12:14; 6:4).
 76. On Philo's use of these terms in wider context, see Tatum, 'The LXX Version', p. 189; Sandelin, 'Philo's Ambivalence', pp. 126–7. On terminology in non-Jewish Greek authors, see A.A. Donohue, *Xoana and the Origins of Greek Sculpture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988); D. Tarn Steiner, *Images in Mind: Studies in Archaic and Classical Greek Literature and Thought* (Princeton NJ and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001).
 77. A. Anguissola, 'Note on Aphidruma 1: Statues and their Functions', *Classical Quarterly* 56 (2006), pp. 641–3 (the ἀφίδρυμα is 'any sacred object used to begin and found a new cult', defined by its function rather than any precise concrete

- category, p. 641); cf. I. Malkin, 'What is an "Aphidruma"?' *Classical Antiquity* 10:1 (1991), pp. 77–96; Anguissola, 'Note on *Aphidruma* 2: Strabo on the Transfer of Cults', *Classical Quarterly* 56 (2006), pp. 643–6.
78. Tatum, 'The LXX Version', p. 189.
 79. The expression is borrowed from P. Borgen, *Philo of Alexandria, An Exegete for His Time* (Leiden: Brill, 1997); for the same idea, focusing on Philo's application of Scripture's language of idolatry in other contexts, see Wolfson, *Philo* I, p. 29.
 80. *χειρόκυμητος* is one of several compounds of the rare *κυμητός*, 'wrought'.
 81. Within LXX, *χειροποίητος*, lit. 'hand-made', with the sense in classical and Hellenistic Greek of 'artificial' as opposed to 'natural', is one of the terms used to represent Hebrew **לִילָא**, associated with the 'worthlessness' of idols (LXX Lev. 26:1; Isa. 2:18; 10:11; 19:1; 31:7); while in other contexts it has no equivalent in the traditional Hebrew text (LXX Lev. 26:30; Isa. 16:12; 21:9; 46:6; Dan. 5:4, 23; 6:28; cf. Bel and the Dragon 5; Wisd. 14:8; Jdt. 8:18). Philo rarely follows LXX usage in identifying the objects of prohibited cult as *χειροποίητος*; Mos. 1.303 (interpreting Num. 25); 2.165, 168 (interpreting the golden calf).
 82. Aristotle, *Cael.* 287b 16.
 83. D.L. 5.33.6.
 84. Aet. 10; apparently following Aristotle, *De philosophia* fr. 18 Ross; cf. D.T. Runia, *Philo of Alexandria and the Timaeus of Plato* (Leiden: Brill, 1986), p. 190; on the translation of *χειρόκυμητα* in this context, cf. F.H. Colson, *Philo*, vol. 9 (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1941), p. 175, n. a.
 85. *Somm.* 1.210. Philo can also speak of the Jerusalem Temple as 'hand-wrought (*τὸ χειρόκυμητον*)', not in any polemical sense, but by way of contrast with the cosmos which he describes as being, 'in the truest sense', the temple of God: *Spec.* 1.67; cf. Plutarch, *De tranquilitate animi (Moralia)* 477c; Pseudo-Heraclitus, *Ep.* 4.2. Cf. Timaeus Locrus, on the inferiority of the 'generated paradigm' (*Timaeus* 28b), interpreted as the 'hand-wrought (*χειρόκυμητος*) paradigm': *On the Nature of the Cosmos and the Soul* 207, 9f. (Baltes).
 86. Philo repeatedly uses *χειρόκυμητος* in summing up what is prohibited by the second commandment: *Spec.* 1.1 (*τὸ μὴ χειρόκυμητα θεοπλαστεῖν*); *Spec.* 2.1 (*τὸ περὶ τοῦ μηδὲν θεοπλαστεῖν χειρόκυμητον*); cf. *Decal.* 51, 76, 156; for other formulations, cf. *Her.* 169; *Spec.* 2.224. He also applies the term to idolatry in general: *Post.* 166; *Spec.* 1.22, 58; 2.256, 258; *Virt.* 40, 220. In relation to the emperor Gaius' plan for a statue in the Jerusalem Temple, Philo identifies images that are prohibited in the Temple in his own day as *τὰ χειρόκυμητα*: *Legat.* 290, 292, 310.
 87. Cf. *Decal.* 68, in which Philo contrasts the disability of blindness to the state of spiritual blindness which idolatry inflicts on the 'eye of the soul'.
 88. Cf. *Decal.* 80 on the miserable state of the souls of animal-worshippers, though, they, Philo specifies, in contrast to the image-worshippers, are to be pitied by the rational.
 89. Philo uses this term extensively; cf. Plato, *Rep.* 533d; Aristotle, *De mundo* 391a.
 90. On the proverbial folly of infants, see Philo, *Mos.* 1.102; cf. Homer, *Il.* 17.32; Hesiod, *Op.* 218; Plato, *Symp.* 222b.
 91. In Jewish tradition, cf. *Wisd.* 12:24–25; 15:14–17 (drawing on *Pss.* 49:11; 92:7; 94:8; *Jer.* 10:8, etc.); in non-Jewish sources, a particularly striking example appears in the satire on superstition, inspired by the Greek intellectual tradition, in the Roman poet Lucilius (second century BCE), *Fr.* 484–9 Marx. On philosophical traditions relating to criticism of using cult images, see H.W. Attridge, 'The Philosophical Critique of Religion under the Early Empire', ANRW II.16.1 (Berlin and New York: De Gruyter, 1978), pp. 45–78; C. Ando, *The Matter of the Gods: Religion and the Roman Empire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), pp. 21–42.
 92. Elsewhere, Philo writes of the lifeless creations of artists as being not real goods, though much prized by those who glorify bodily beauty; such people are not 'of good sense': *Prov.* 2.15.
 93. For rhetorical comparisons of this kind, cf. *Praem.* 78; Antiphon, *Tetr.* 2.3.1.

94. On Philo's rhetorical use of the first-person to convey a 'sense of communal bond' with his audience, cf. *Decal.* 68, 75; T. Conley, 'Philo's Rhetoric: Argumentation and Style', *ANRW* II.21.1 (Berlin and New York: De Gruyter, 1984), pp. 343–71 (349–50).
95. Contrast the conclusion reached by Barnes Tatum, that 'both Philo and Josephus fail to reflect LXX language in their summaries of the Second Commandment: "The LXX Version", p. 188. There is also an echo of the second commandment's ban on making or worshipping a likeness (όμοίωμα) of anything in the cosmos in Philo's discussion of assimilation (ἐξομοίωσις) to God and of becoming like (ἐξομοιώθηναι) idols (*Decal.* 73–74), cf. ὅμοιοι...γενέσθαι (*Decal.* 75).
96. On Philo and the Platonic theme of becoming like God, see *Phdr.* 252d ff; *Tht.* 176a; *Leg.* 716cd; cf. Nikiprowetzky, *De Decalogo*, p. 143 n. 12; J. Dillon, *The Middle Platonists: A Study of Platonism 80 B.C. to A.D. 220* (London: Duckworth, 1977; 2nd edn, 1996), p. 145; Runia, *Philo of Alexandria*, pp. 341–3. The goal of assimilation to God, though differently expressed, is also fundamental within biblical tradition: cf. Lev. 19:2, 'You shall be holy because I am holy, I the Lord your God.'
97. Cf. ἐξομοιώω, *Decal.* 74.
98. Nikiprowetzky, *De Decalogo*, p. 80 n. 2.
99. Cf. *Spec.* 2.256.
100. As Colson notes, 'the works of nature' is 'rather a strange phrase for mankind, but justified by the antithesis to χειρόχυμητα': *Philo*, vol. 7, p. 44, n. a; in particular, the contrasting use of these terms also appears in Aristotle's contrast between natural bodies and χειρόχυμητα (D.L. 5.33).
101. Plato, *Phdr.* 246b; for the development of this theme in Philo, cf. *Leg.* 2.50; *Gig.* 37; *Contempl.* 9; D. Winston and J. Dillon, *Two Treatises of Philo of Alexandria: A Commentary on De Gigantibus and Quod Deus Sit Immutabilis* (Chico CA: Scholars Press, 1983), p. 256.
102. S.J.K. Pearce, *The Land of the Body: Studies in Philo's Representation of Egypt* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), pp. 280–82.
103. On this aspect of Philo's treatment of animal worship in wider context, see Pearce, *The Land of the Body*, pp. 288–92.
104. See above, p. 58.
105. *Exod.* 20:4, par.
106. *Deut.* 4:20.
107. *Decal.* 79.
108. M. Niehoff, 'Philo's Views on Paganism', in G.N. Stanton and G. Stroumsa, eds, *Limits of Tolerance in Early Judaism and Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 135–58 (137).
109. *Decal.* 78. Philo often uses προσυπερβάλλω in expressions that designate excessive impiety (*Decal.* 62; *Spec.* 1.330), as well as its opposite, an excess of piety (*Virt.* 106, 140).
110. Pearce, *The Land of the Body*, pp. 241–64. Philo also associates excessive religious behaviour with Egyptian priests, in the practice of shaving their bodies: *Spec.* 1.5.
111. Goodenough suggests that Philo's apparent reluctance to refer to the lion of Judah may partly reflect his hatred of Egyptian animal worship, 'in which he especially scorned the lion as a symbol of God': E.R. Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period*, vol. 7 (New York: Pantheon Books, 1958), p. 85.
112. On the language of savagery, see Aristotle, *De partibus animalium* 663a 3; *Historia animalium* 502b 4.
113. *Decal.* 78.
114. Pearce, *The Land of the Body*, p. 290.
115. Plutarch, *De Iside et Osiride*, Moralia 358b.
116. Philo also associates τῷφος with other, specifically Egyptian manifestations (as he understands them, at least) of impiety, including the golden calf and the Pharaoh of Exodus who represents the Egyptian character unable to comprehend God.

117. For the development of this theme in Alexandrian Christian tradition, see Clement of Alexandria, *Paidagogos* 3, 2.4.2–2.5.4.
118. Nikiprowetzky, *De Decalogo*, pp. 82–3; Runia, *Philo of Alexandria*, pp. 348–9; cf. Plato, *Rep.* 618a, 620a–d; *Phd.* 81e–82a, etc.
119. *Abr.* 8, 33; *Mos.* 1.43; *Spec.* 3.99; *Q.G.* 4.133.
120. Cf. *Decal.* 52.
121. V. Nikiprowetzky, *Le Commentaire de l'Écriture chez Philon d'Alexandrie* (Leiden: Brill, 1977), p. 131.
122. *Deus* 143: τὸ δὲ τέρμα τῆς ὁδοῦ γνωσίς ἔστι καὶ ἐπιστήμη θεοῦ.
123. *Opif.* 8 (trans. Runia).
124. Runia, *Philo of Alexandria*, pp. 474–5.

CHAPTER 5

1. For a brief survey of the more common views, see L.I. Levine, 'The History and Significance of the Menorah in Antiquity', in L.I. Levine and Z. Weiss, eds, *From Dura to Sepphoris: Studies in Jewish Art and Society in Late Antiquity* (JRA Supplement Series 40; Portsmouth RI: Journal of Roman Archaeology, 2000), pp. 131–53 (147–8).
2. An extremely influential exponent of such views was E.R. Goodenough. See his *Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period*, vol. 4 (New York: Pantheon Books, 1954), pp. 77–98.
3. See, for instance, L.Y. Rahmani, 'Representations of the Menorah on Ossuaries', in H. Geva, ed., *Ancient Jerusalem Revealed* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1994), pp. 239–43, followed by R. Hachlili, *Jewish Funerary Customs, Practices and Rites in the Second Temple Period* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), p. 309.
4. See, for instance, S. Fine, *Art and Judaism in the Greco-Roman World. Toward a New Jewish Archaeology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 160–65.
5. R. Hachlili, *The Menorah, The Ancient Seven-armed Candelabrum: Origin, Form and Significance* (Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism, vol. 68; Leiden: Brill, 2001). Strictly speaking, the menorah had six arms/branches and a central shaft, as pointed out by C.J. Labuschagne in his critical review of Hachlili's monograph in *JSJ* XXXIV (2003), pp. 323–7. However, the epithet 'seven-branched' has become so standard in discussions of the menorah that to avoid using it here seems pedantic.
6. For criticism of Hachlili's nationalist historiography, see S. Fine's review of *The Menorah* in *BASOR* 331 (2003), pp. 87–8 ('the blatant ideologizing in this volume oversteps scholarly bounds').
7. Hachlili, *The Menorah*, pp. 279–80. For earlier articulations of this view, see her *Ancient Jewish Art and Archaeology in the Land of Israel* (Leiden: Brill, 1988), p. 255, and *Ancient Jewish Art and Archaeology in the Diaspora* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), pp. 343–4. For criticism of this view on the grounds of its anachronism, see Fine, *Art and Judaism*, pp. 157–8, who concludes: 'The essential pattern of symbols was established before [my stress] the influence of Christian art and architecture had set in.'
8. For the astral interpretation favoured by these writers, see Philo, *Mos.* II.102–03; *Q.E.* II.73–81; Josephus, *Jewish War* V.217; *Antiquities* III.144–46, 182.
9. For Goodenough's use of this, see his *Jewish Symbols*, vol. 4, pp. 92–4.
10. *BASOR* 331 (2003), p. 88.
11. For the early date now proposed for the Villa Torlonia catacomb complex, see L.V. Rutgers, A.F.M. de Jong and K. van der Borg, 'Radiocarbon Dates from the Jewish Catacombs of Rome', *Radiocarbon* 44 (2002), pp. 541–7, and L.V. Rutgers, 'Radiocarbon Dating: Jewish Inspiration of Christian Catacombs', *Nature* 436 (2005), p. 339. It is mostly to the third and fourth centuries, however, that the epigraphical and iconographical material discovered in the Jewish catacombs of Rome has been ascribed. See D. Noy, *Jewish Inscriptions of Western Europe*, vol.