

Plant. 1–27: The Significance of Reading Philonic Parallels

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Introduction

This paper deals with the question of how the exercise of reading together several Philonic passages can affect our understanding of what the Alexandrian exegete wants to say. I take two examples from the first chapter of *Plant.* (§§ 1–27): §§ 11–14, a description of the creatures belonging to the elements, where my focus will be on those of the air in §14, and §§ 17–25 which is a rich mixture of Philo’s anthropological, ethical and soteriological views. For the former, the most important parallels are *Gig.* 6–18 and *Somn.* 1.133–141, but (parts of) *Conf.* 174–177 and *QG* 4.188 too clearly belong to the same series thus resulting in a total of five, more or less overlapping parallel passages. For the latter, I will mainly discuss *Plant.* 44, *Leg.* 1.31–38, *Det.* 79–90 and *Her.* 52–64.¹

My key assumption is that when Philo treats the same subject matter using similar vocabulary, he is giving expression to the same underlying set of ideas in each case, even though the subset of ideas explicitly expressed varies. Thus we are entitled to read the passages together in order to be better understand both his thinking and his message, being, however, constantly on the lookout for such discrepancies and contradictions between the parallels that make untenable the assumption that they are really covering different parts of the same whole.²

The Souls of the Air

Inspired by Plato’s account in the *Timaeus* (39e–40a) and possibly adapting some of its Platonist interpretations Philo in *Plant.* 11–13 presents a division of the lesser “plants”³ of the universe into those belonging to regions (rather than elements; see §3) of earth, water, air, fire and heaven. Just like in the parallel accounts in *Gig.* 7–8 and *Somn.* 1.135, he leaves the closer examination of the creatures residing in the *air* last. But instead of simply elaborating on this issue in §14 he begins a new division: “Of twofold kind were the beings which the great Maker made as well in the earth as in the air.” (As we will see, the human souls belong to both, to the latter as incarnate, to the former as discarnate.) The “winged” kinds of the air include two species: those that are sense-perceptible (i.e., the birds) and those that are not, and the latter are further

¹ These parallelisms have, to somewhat varying degrees, long been recognized. For the former case, see, e.g., Azariah ben Moses de’ Rossi, *The Light of the Eyes: Azariah De’ Rossi: Translated from the Hebrew with an Introduction and Annotations by Joanna Weinberg*, Yale Judaica Series 31 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 154–56; Thomas H. Billings, *The Platonism of Philo Judaeus* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1919), p. 28 n. 4; David T. Runia, *Philo of Alexandria and the Timaeus of Plato*, *Philosophia Antiqua* 44 (Leiden: Brill, 1986), 228–29; Anita Méasson, *Du Char Ailé de Zeus à l’Arche d’Alliance: Images et Mythes Platoniciens Chez Philon d’Alexandrie* (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1986) 281–93 and Wilfried Eisele, *Ein unerschütterliches Reich: Die mittelplatonische Umformung des Parusiegedankens im Hebräerbrief*; BZNW 116 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2003) 196–227. For the latter (but not including all the parallels I discuss), see, e.g., Thomas H. Tobin, *The Creation of Man: Philo and the History of Interpretation* (Washington, DC: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1983), esp. pp. 87–93; Runia, *Philo and the Timaeus*, esp. pp. 324–29 and Gregory E. Sterling, “‘Wisdom among the Perfect’: Creation Traditions in Alexandrian Judaism and Corinthian Christianity,” *NT* 37, no. 4 (1995) 355–84, especially 365, 375–76.

² Particular care is needed when crossing the boundaries of the Philonic genres. This paper focuses on the *Allegorical Commentary* and the *Quaestiones*, although there would intriguing parallels to discuss elsewhere, in the *Exposition of the Law* in particular.

³ φυτόν can also mean ‘creature’ more generally.

subdivided into those that incarnate and those that do not. The latter are the angels, described in much the same terms but with some variation in *Gig.* 12, *Conf.* 174–177, *Somn.* 1.140–141 and *QG* 4.188 as well.⁴

We will now focus on the non-sense-perceptible, incarnating kind, i.e., the souls of human beings. In what follows I will first quote the texts in *Plant*, *Somn.* and *Gig.* and then discuss the reincarnational connections between these and other texts.⁵ The text in *Plant* goes,

In the air He made the winged creatures perceived by senses, and other powers besides which are wholly beyond apprehension by sense. This is the host of the bodiless souls. Their array is made of companies that differ in kind. We are told that some enter into mortal bodies, and quit them again at certain periods, while others, endowed with a diviner constitution, have no regard for any earthly quarter but exist on high nigh to the ethereal region itself. These are the purest souls of all whom the Greek philosophers call heroes, but whom Moses, employing a well-chosen name, entitles “angels.” (*Plant.* 14)⁶

In *Somn.*, in one of the interpretations he gives for the ascending and descending angels in Jacob’s dream of the heavenly ladder (Gen 28:12), Philo writes,

Of these souls [of the air] some, those that are closest to the earth and lovers of the body, are descending to be fast bound in mortal bodies, while others are ascending, having again been separated (from the body) according to the numbers and periods determined by nature. Of these last some, longing for the familiar and accustomed ways of mortal life, hurry back again, while others, pronouncing that life great folly, call the body a prison and a tomb but escaping from it as though from a dungeon or a grave are lifted up on light wings to the ether and range the heights for ever. (*Somn.* 1.138–139)⁷

I have argued elsewhere that this passage is not an isolated case but only the clearest manifestation of the fact that Philo endorsed the Pythagorean–Platonic tenet of reincarnation.⁸ I have not found any serious attempt in scholarly literature to see *Somn.* 1.138–139 as something else than a description of reincarnation. Indeed, ever since Azariah de’ Rossi’s *The Light of the Eyes* (published in 1573–1575), it is this passage that has been the basis for seeing Philo as a proponent of reincarnation.⁹

A third text probably also ultimately derived from, or influenced by, a common source is found in *Gig.*, where Philo is engaged in explaining the *angels* mentioned in the version of Gen 6:2 he had at hand.¹⁰ He interprets the word to mean souls (§6) and states of them a little later:

Now some of the souls have descended into bodies, but others have never deigned to associate with any of the parts of earth. . . . The former, however, descending into the body as though into a stream have sometimes been caught up in the violent rush of its raging waters and swallowed up, at other times, able to withstand the rapids, they have initially emerged at the surface and then soared back up to the place

⁴ The passages in *Conf.* and *QG* do not receive much attention in this paper. They deal with Gen 11:7 and 26:8, respectively.

⁵ I use the adjective “reincarnational” to denote the presence of the idea of reincarnation: the tenet is either explicitly mentioned or implied, e.g., mentioned close to a given passage in a way that creates a connection between the tenet and the passage.

⁶ The translations of Philonic texts are those in the Loeb Classical Library (with occasional small changes), unless otherwise indicated; for *Gig.* I have used David Winston, *Philo of Alexandria: The Contemplative life, The Giants, and Selections: Translation and introduction* (London: SPCK, 1981). The text in *Plant.* 14 goes on to discuss the tasks of angels which I must her pass by. Philo’s description of their tasks here, as well as in *Gig.* 16 and *Somn.* 1.141 is based on Plato, *Symposium* 202e.

⁷ In *Somn.* too a discussion of angels follows.

⁸ Yli-Karjanmaa, *Reincarnation in Philo of Alexandria*, *Studia Philonica Monographs* 7 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2015). My approach was based on analyzing all available indirect and direct evidence bearing on the matter.

⁹ See Rossi, *The Light*, 113, 156. The broader question of Philo’s attitude towards reincarnation has divided scholars in the 20th and 21st centuries without ever having been the main subject of any study before mine. Debate between researchers has been almost non-existent.

¹⁰ The LXX as we have it speaks of the “sons” of God.

whence they had set out. These, then, are the souls of the genuine philosophers, who from first to last practice dying to the life in the body in order to obtain the portion of incorporeal and immortal life in the presence of the Uncreated and Immortal. But the souls that have been plunged into the surf below are the souls of the others who have had no regard for wisdom. They have surrendered themselves to unstable and chance concerns, none of which relate to our noblest part, the soul or mind, but all are related to that corpse which was our birth-fellow, the body. (*Gig.* 12–15)¹¹

We can see that in addition to similarities, the account have many differences. E.g., in *Gig.*, two reincarnational concepts, the image of the body as river and the practising of death, absent in the others, are added.¹²

We now turn to examining individual elements in *Plant.* It is clearly the sparsest of these parallels, which can also be expressed by saying is that it is the one for whose understanding the potential benefit of reading parallels is the greatest. The notion of there being *souls in the element air* may in itself be regarded as a reincarnational feature. David T. Runia has commented, in the context of *Somn.* 1.137, that seeing the air as “a flourishing city, populated with immortal souls” whose number is astronomical¹³

is an obvious attempt to systematize the doctrine of the *Timaeus* in relation to further data on demons and incorporeal souls in the *Symposium*, *Republic*, *Phaedrus* and *Epinomis*. The souls created by the demiurge are sown onto the planets and the earth (41e4-5, 42d4-5), so that it is natural to deduce that in the process of reincarnation there must be a continual procession of incorporeal souls in the air (cf. also *Phaedo* 81c–d).¹⁴

The idea may also draw on Pythagorean teachings. At least a similar notion is mentioned in Alexander Polyhistor’s compendium of Pythagorean teachings (Diog. Laert. 8.1.25–35): “The whole air is full of souls which are called genii or heroes (δαίμονας τε καὶ ἥρωας); these are they who send men dreams and signs . . . ” (8.1.32).¹⁵ Although these do not seem to be ordinary human souls, it is worth noting that it is precisely daemons (*Gig.* 6, *Somn.* 1.141, *QG.* 4.188)¹⁶ and heroes (*Plant.* 14) that Philo reports as the philosophers’ names for angels.¹⁷

The idea that the soul is invisible (ἀόρατος), “just as the ether is invisible” (Diog. Laert. 8.31) resembles Philo’s “the air, too, must therefore be filled with living things, though they are invisible to us, since even the air itself is not visible to sense” (*Gig.* 8), even if the element mentioned is not the same. In *Plant.* 14 the souls’ inapprehensibility by sense and in *Somn.* 1.136 their invisibility only are mentioned.¹⁸ However, based on the

¹¹ For observations of Philo’s exegetical technique in *Gig.*, see David T. Runia, “Further Observations on the Structure of Philo’s Allegorical Treatises,” *VChr* 41 (1987): 105–38. A further analysis with an emphasis on analyzing Philo’s utilization of Plato in *Gig.* 6–18, see Yli-Karjanmaa, “Philo of Alexandria,” section II.

¹² On the river metaphor, see Runia, *Philo and the Timaeus*, 260–62. See also my *Reincarnation in Philo*, sections 2.4.2 and 2.4.6, for the reincarnational contexts of both of these notions in Plato, and Philo’s use of them.

¹³ On this last point both Philo (*Somn.* 1.137) and Alcinoüs (*Did.* 16.2) follow Plato (*Tim.* 41d).

¹⁴ Runia, *Philo and the Timaeus*, 254. Cf. Xenocrates who seems to have equated the air with Hades (fr. 213) which is compatible with the idea that souls reside in or travel through the air between incarnations.

¹⁵ See Méasson, *Du Char Ailé*, 275.

¹⁶ In the *QG* passage, the Armenian word is դեվք (*devk*) which Marcus translates “divine beings.” However, in a note he retranslates to Greek, οἱ δαίμονες, which accords with what G. Awatik’ean, X. Siwrmēlean, and M. Awgorean, *Նոր Բարգիրք Հայկազեան Լեզուի (Nor Bargirik’ Haykazean Lezu) [New Dictionary of the Armenian Language]*, 2 vols. (Venice: Mechitarist Press, 1836) (henceforth NBHL) gives for *dev* (δαίμων, δαίμόνιον). The Old Latin translation of this passage has “daemones.”

¹⁷ The identification of airborne souls with both daemons and heroes occurs, according to Augustine (*City of God* 7.6), in the Middle Platonist Varro (d. 27 B.C.) as well.

¹⁸ Cf. *Did.* 15.1, according to which there are daemons “present in each of the elements, some of them visible, other invisible . . . so that no part of the world should be without a share in soul.” (Tr. Dillon.) Another example of how a property may be assigned either to the ether or the air is a natural propensity to foster life (and the resultant necessity that the element in question has to have its own creatures). Aristotle (apud Cicero, *De natura deorum* 2.42) opts for ether, Philo, for air (*Somn.* 1.137).

other features linking these passages with *Gig.*, it would not seem sound to think that it is *exclusively Gig.* that is drawing on a tradition similar to that recorded by Alexander. This is an example of how a Philonic parallel with its tradition-historical links has an effect on how we view other passages in which the links are not equally manifest as in the parallel. This case also exemplifies how Philo can sometimes leave part of the story untold without there being any reason for us to think that he has changed his mind or that the passages contradict each other.

Philo then says, “We are told that some enter into mortal bodies.”¹⁹ The first expression, λόγος ἔχει, can be compared with “the old saying (ὁ παλαιός λόγος)” referring to Plato’s *Timaeus* (§17). Philo sometimes uses λόγος ἔχει for referring to the scriptures (see *Her.* 56), but here that is not the case; the pre-existence of souls is, at the literal level, a notion that was present in Philo’s Bible.²⁰ Instead, some Platonist (and thus reincarnational)²¹ source would seem the likeliest option, a source Alcinous too may be drawing on when writes in *Did.* 25.6: “It follows from the proposition that souls are immortal that they should enter into bodies (τὸ εἰσκρίνεσθαι αὐτὰς τοῖς σώμασι) . . . and that they should pass through many bodies both human and non-human . . . [perhaps because of] love of the body (διὰ φιλοσωματίαν).”²² There are several things to be noted. Philo seems to be one of the first authors to use εἰσκρίνω about the soul’s entrance to the body.²³ He uses the verb in this sense in *Leg.* 1.32 as well; there the entity about to incarnate is the “earthly mind” one characteristic of which is that it is body-loving (1.33, from *Phaedo* 68b), just like the descending souls in *Somn.* 1.138 are “lovers of the body (φιλοσώματοι), descending to be fast bound in mortal bodies (ἐνδεθησόμεναι σώμασι θνητοῖς).”²⁴ This last expression is paralleled in the “enter into mortal bodies (σώμασι θνητοῖς)” of *Plant.* 14. Being “bound to a (mortal) body” is referred to several times by both Plato and Philo; for Plato, see,

¹⁹ I pass by the expression, “Their array is made of companies that differ in kind.” Azariah de’ Rossi, who is the first author to mention Philo’s endorsement of reincarnation (p. 113 in Weinberg’s edition, section 1.4) criticizes Philo’s views on the soul—not reincarnation but the idea that souls and angels do *not* differ in kind (Rossi, *The Light*, 157; section 1.6). He did not thus read *Plant.* carefully enough although he cites our passage (p. 155 Weinberg). His misunderstanding is understandable on the basis of *Gig.* 6, 16, although Philo ultimately ends up explaining that “bad” angels are really no angels at all but evil human souls. See David Winston and John Dillon, *Two Treatises of Philo of Alexandria: A Commentary on De Gigantibus and Quod Deus Sit Immutabilis* (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1983) 205 and my “Philo of Alexandria,” section II.

²⁰ It is present in later Jewish writings such as Wis 8:20; see David Winston, *The Wisdom of Solomon: A New Translation and Commentary*, First Yale University Press Impression, Anchor Yale Bible 43 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), 25–32.

²¹ This kind of underlining of the presence of reincarnation in Platonism may seem unnecessary. However, looking at the history of the research into Philo’s views concerning the soul one can say that there has been noteworthy willingness to implicitly—i.e., without raising the question at all—assume Philo rejected one essential part of Platonist “dogma.”

²² I have omitted the other possible causes of incarnation Alcinous mentions. For these, see Alcinous, *The Handbook of Platonism: Translated with an Introduction and Commentary by John Dillon*, Clarendon Later Ancient Philosophers (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993), 34, 155–58; David Winston, *Logos and Mystical Theology in Philo of Alexandria* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1985), 35; Yli-Karjanmaa, *Reincarnation in Philo*, 44–52. Note that Philo’s view of reincarnation could not accommodate human souls being born as animals, because these do not possess the highest part of the soul.

²³ Another passage is *Somn.* 1.31 where Philo (rhetorically) asks, “At our birth, is [the mind] at once introduced into us from without (ἔξωθεν εἰσκρίνεται)?” As noted by Runia, “Philo and Hellenistic Doxography,” in *Philo of Alexandria and Post-Aristotelian Philosophy*, ed. Francesca Alesse; *Studies in Philo of Alexandria* 5 (Leiden: Brill, 2008) 13–54, p. 25, this has a loose parallel in Stobaeus (*Ecl.* 1.48.7): “Pythagoras, Anaxagoras, Plato, Xenocrates and Cleanthes (said) the mind enters (εἰσκρίνεσθαι) from outside.” Anaxagoras and Cleanthes are not known to have espoused reincarnation, which means that even in this kind of context the verb has no automatic reincarnational connotation.

²⁴ These souls can be identified with the reincarnating ones in 1.139; see *Reincarnation in Philo*, 47. There are signs that with his “mind which is entering, but has not yet entered (εἰσκρινόμενον . . . οὐπω δ’ εἰσκεικρίμενον), the body” in *Leg.* 1.32 too Philo is, for some reason, referring to souls in the inter-incarnational state; see Yli-Karjanmaa, “Call Him Earth: On Philo’s Allegorization of Adam in the *Legum Allegoriae*,” in *Where Are You, Adam? Papers from the Conference in Turku, Finland, in August 2014*, ed. Antti Laato and Lotta Valve, *Studies in the Reception History of the Bible* 7 (Åbo: Åbo Akademi University & Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, forthcoming).

e.g., *Tim.* 44b: “so often as the soul is bound within a mortal body (εἰς σῶμα ἐνδεθῆ θνητόν) it becomes at the first irrational.” In its Platonic contexts this expression can well be called reincarnational.²⁵ But in fact also the verb Philo uses in *Plant.* 14, εἰσκρίνω, seems to a surprising extent to be connected with the doctrine in later authors, both Christian and Neoplatonist.²⁶

The reference to time periods links *Plant.* 14 to *Somn.* 1.138: souls quit their bodies “at certain fixed periods (κατὰ τινὰς ὠρισμένας περιόδους)” (*Plant.*) vs. “according to the numbers and periods determined by nature (κατὰ τοὺς ὑπὸ φύσεως ὀρισθέντας ἀριθμοὺς καὶ χρόνους)” (*Somn.*). Another parallel, particularly close to *Plant.*, is found in *Her.* 282. In connection with death Philo states, “this debt he repays when the appointed time-cycles are completed (καθ’ ὠρισμένας περιόδους καιρῶν ἐκτίνει τὸ δάνειον).” What is being referred to is the idea, presented in *Tim.* 42e, that the portions of earth, water, air and fire, which constitute the physical body, are paid back at each death.²⁷ The reference to time periods is not, however, part of Plato’s account. John Dillon has drawn attention to the fact that not only Philo but also Alcinous adds such a reference in a similar context at *Did.* 16.1: the gods “borrowed certain portions from primal matter for fixed periods (πρὸς ὠρισμένους χρόνους), with a view to returning them to it again.”²⁸ So is Philo just using a standard Middle Platonist formula for the duration of human life in all these cases (and some others) or does the *Her.* passage have something to contribute to our understanding of *Plant.*?

Philo’s exegesis of Gen 15:15 in *Her.* 282–283 has links with both sections of *Plant.* discussed in this paper. The (admittedly commonplace) notion of the purity of the ether is close to the purity of angels dwelling at it in *Plant.* 14. The idea of the human soul being a fragment (ἀπόσπασμα) of the ether, criticized in *Plant.* 18, is presented in a fairly positive light, although without explicit approval.²⁹ I also want to note that the kind of souls that will find a “father” in the ether is “intellectual (νοερόν) and heavenly (οὐράνιον).” Philo uses both adjectives in *Leg.* 1.32 (a passage which I below discuss in connection with *Plant.* 18) to describe—as I have argued elsewhere—what the “earthly mind” becomes through the reception of the “breath life.”³⁰ In his quite similar exegesis of the same biblical verse in *QG* 3.11 Philo includes a discussion of the *fathers as elements* theory but restricts it to the four that constitute the body. In both treatises the proponents of the theory are left anonymous and Philo fails to spell his own explicit position on it. In *QG*, however, he continues: “To me, however, (Scripture) seems to indicate the incorporeals and the *logoi* of the divine region, whom elsewhere it is accustomed to call ‘angels’.”³¹ It seems we can add a sixth passage to the list of parallels, although this time

²⁵ See Plato, *Tim.* 43a, 44d, 69e; *Phaedo* 81e, 92a; Philo, *Leg.* 2.22, 3.151; *Conf.* 92, 106, 177; *Her.* 274; *Mut.* 36; *Ios.* 264; *Spec.* 4.188; *Virt.* 74.

²⁶ In addition to Alcinous, it (or the noun εἰσκρίσις) is used in this sense, e.g., by Origen (*Comm. in Joann.* 6.14.85, *Cels.* 1.32), Epiphanius (*Panarion* 3.91.15) and Photius (*Bibl. cod.* 117, 92a25) as well as Plotinus (*Enn.* 4.3.9, 6.4.16) and Iamblichus (*De mysteriis* 1.8.36).

²⁷ *Post.* 5 is similar, although more cosmological in idea, but different in vocabulary. For a more detailed discussion of the notion of borrowing the elements as well as the references to periods of time in *Plant.*, *Her.* and *Somn.* and their background, see *Reincarnation in Philo*, 117–19, 136–38.

²⁸ Alcinous, *Handbook of Platonism*. 137.

²⁹ Colson, in his introduction to *Her.* (PLCL 4.280) says Philo “seems ready to accept” the interpretation of the “fathers” two whom Abraham will depart as the five elements of the universe—“at any rate he gives no other.” But in *QG* 3.11 he does. See below.

³⁰ See below, the discussion of *Plant.* 17–25.

³¹ Marcus in PLCL Suppl. 2.196, “the incorporeal Logoi of the divine world,” but this ignores the conjunction ι (*ew*, ‘and’) in the Armenian which is more correctly rendered by Mercier in PAMP 34b.45, “les incorporels et les raisons du monde divin.” Aucher wanted to correct the MSS. բանս (*bans*; NBHL: λόγος) to բանսալս (*banaks*; παρεμβολή; λογεῖον, λόγιον), translating it “habitatores” (or, alternatively, to բանսալս (*banaks*; e.g., ἐγγενής, συγγενής, γνήσιος). I see no need for an emendation, because Philo in many places links God’s *logoi* and angels; see below.

we only have a few (but characteristic) words. Greek philosophical terms for angels are now absent; instead we have the “incorporeals” (cf. *Cher.* 114) and the *logoi*.³² In *Somn.* the connection between God’s *logoi* and angels is very pronounced (e.g., 1.115, 142, 147–48). Furthermore, the paraphrastic Greek fragment (which does not include these words) has καλεῖν ἄγγέλους εἶωθεν for “accustomed to call ‘angels’”—exactly the same words we have in *Somn.* 1.141 (and also in *Conf.* 174).

These bilateral links between the three passages (*Plant.* 14, *Her.* 282–282 and *QG* 3.11) encourage us to read them together. If we peer around us in *QG*, we would find in 3.10 not only a clear commonality with 3.11 in the description of the pre- and post-existence of the soul, but also statements like “the soul of the sage, when it comes from above from the ether and enters into a mortal and is sown in the field of the body is truly a sojourner in a land not its own, for the earthy nature of the body is alien to the pure mind” and “the mind is released from its evil bond, the body”—notions in good agreement with the descent of the pre-existent soul into the body and its release from it encountered in *Plant.* 14 and its parallels. *QG* 3.10, for its part, has ties to *Her.* 267–274 (both exeg. Gen 15:13–14) where we find notions like the body as a prison and the mind’s being bound to it which occur in *Somn.* 1.138–139. This shows that the hunt for parallels is probably almost an endless task—although, I believe, an increasingly circular one.³³

The question of an author’s intentions is always a tricky one. On the other hand, we may ask: how would Philo’s audience, if they were familiar with his interpretations of the dream of the ladder, have seen the accounts in *Plant.* and *Gig.*? The parallelisms were no more difficult to notice than they are now. Would Philo’s hearers not have perceived the passages as referring to the same underlying pool of ideas about the journey of the soul in each case? I think they would

Plant. 17–25: Protological Anthropology, Universal Soteriology, or Both?

Between the two sections discussed in this paper Philo first discusses the species of the earth (§15), the home of plants and animals.³⁴ He discusses their different anatomy in Platonic terms (§16). We are now back in the *Timaeus* (91e–92a), in the concluding part of the dialogue where reincarnation plays a significant role. Humans make a somewhat unexpected reappearance in §17 when Philo moves on to the human constitution. Given the overall theme of the first part of *Plant.* it comes as no surprise that Philo wants to utilize the heavenly plant motif (90ab).³⁵

At §18 he wants to correct a view the presentation of which he himself is not innocent:³⁶

³² I think the identification with angels concerns the latter only.

³³ What I mean is that if we started to map out the connections of a set of notions in the *Corpus Philonicum*, the share of new passages in the network would eventually start to diminish as we go along. Perhaps in the future we will have, in addition to the grammatical definitions of words now available through the splendid TLG, a “notional” lemmatization of Philo’s works.

³⁴ That land animals are presented paired with plants (which were already part of the first divisioning at §§ 11, 13) is reminiscent of Apuleius’s division of creatures in that those of fire and air are followed by mortal kinds composed of both water and earth: plants and land creatures (*De dogmate Platonis* 204).

³⁵ For an analysis of the Timaeian influences in *Plant.* 16–22, see Runia, *Philo and the Timaeus*, esp. pp. 327–29, 347–48.

³⁶ Cf., e.g., *Leg.* 3.161 where the soul is described in virtually identical terms as “a portion of an ethereal nature.” This kind of discrepancy is a good example of such *differences* between parallels that should make a scholar fond of reading them together beware. The basic assumption of the passages telling (slightly different parts of) the same story cannot hold *in toto* and the limits of what can be read together need to be demarcated by analyzing what subjects the agreements and disagreements pertain to.

Now while others, by asserting that our human mind is a portion of the ethereal nature, have claimed for the human being a kinship with the ether, our great Moses likened the rational class of soul to none of the created things.³⁷

Tobin takes the first part as a criticism of “the Stoic conceptual framework used to interpret Gen 2:7.”³⁸ However, the idea of *kinship* with the ether (συγγένεια ἀνθρώπου πρὸς αἰθέρα) also seems blameworthy, or at least inferior to Moses’s view, and so Plato too gets his share of censure; cf. his affirmation that the leading part of the soul raises the human body “up from earth towards our kindred in the heaven (πρὸς τὴν ἐν οὐρανῶ ξυγγένειαν, *Tim.* 90a). Once this is set straight, Philo, as it were, puts his *Timaeus* scroll aside for a while and returns to Genesis, now to 1:27 and 2:7. It is, in particular, his exegesis of these verses that is primarily discussed below.

So what is Moses’s view more precisely?

[He] averred [the rational class of soul] to be a genuine coinage of that divine and invisible “Spirit,”³⁹ signed and impressed by the seal of God, the stamp of which is the eternal Logos (τοῦ θείου καὶ ἀοράτου πνεύματος ἐκείνου δόκιμον εἶναι νόμισμα σημειωθὲν καὶ τυπωθὲν σφραγίδι θεοῦ, ἧς ὁ χαρακτήρ ἐστὶν ὁ αἰδιος λόγος). For “God inbreathed into his face a breath of life”, so that it cannot but be that the one who receives is made in the likeness of the one who sends forth. Accordingly we also read that the human being is⁴⁰ “in accordance with the image of God.” (*Plant.* 18–19)

The soul is, Philo says, a coinage *of* spirit. This genitival relationship is not a very precise one. But it seems that an impress is stamped on the soul whereby it receives the image of the Logos.⁴¹ And this Philo takes to be described *both* as the reception of the “breath of life” and being “in accordance with the image of God.”⁴²

Coming to Philonic parallels, it is very interesting, first of all, to deal with *Plant.* 44 where too Philo discusses both Gen 1:27 and 2:7.⁴³ Philo begins by emphasizing the significance of details: “It is with deliberate care that

³⁷ The translation is based on the PLCL but adopts some of Tobin’s (*Creation*, 91) corrections and introduces a few others. Worth mentioning is that I do not think Philo is referring to the rational *part* of the soul with τῆς λογικῆς ψυχῆς τὸ εἶδος. Cf. *Conf.* 176 (which, by the way, a clear parallel to *Plant.* 14 in many respects), where human souls are described as a reasoning (λογικῆ), perishable species (εἶδος).

³⁸ *Ibid.* As for the history of the idea itself, cf. also Cicero, *De natura deorum* 1.27 where the notion that “the entire substance of the universe is penetrated and pervaded by a soul of which our souls are fragments” is ascribed to Pythagoras. See also Winston, *Logos*, 28–29, 64–65.

³⁹ In this paper I use quotation marks more than is customary in order to make a clearer distinction between what Philo is explaining and what his explanation is. The word πνεῦμα (“spirit,” but also “wind” etc.) is a case in point. In its “spiritual” sense it is not a Philonic category. An analysis of all of its occurrences in the *Allegorical Commentary* leads to the conclusion that apart from the instances it denotes a physical phenomenon or is related to the Stoic notion of cohesion, it always comes from the biblical text and something Philo will want to *explain* (away). For the details, and a critique of the use of this category in Philonic research, see my “Call Him Earth.”

⁴⁰ γεγενῆσθαι; Whitaker: “has been made.” For translating past tenses of γίγνομαι, see below (p. 11).

⁴¹ Cf. *Leg.* 3.95 where Philo speaks of an “image” (χαρακτήρ) which “God has stamped (ἐντετύπωκεν) on the soul as on a tested coin (νομίσματος δοκίμου τρόπον).” The character seems again to be the Logos (3.96, 104), although Philo is not quite explicit.

⁴² Sterling, “Wisdom,” 365 sees the rationale for this connection in Philo’s contrast between Gen 2:7b–c and Lev 17:11a (discussed below). I do not agree, because the term “blood” (Lev) is not discussed in *Plant.* On p. 365, primarily in connection with *Det.* 79–90 but apparently also referring to *Plant.* 18–19 he has just discussed, Sterling says that Philo takes both εἰκὼν and πνεῦμα as references to “the rational capacity of humanity,” and (p. 375), based on *Plant.* 17–23, that “[t]he inbreathing of the θεῖον πνεῦμα is thus the anthropological basis for the reception of σοφία.”

⁴³ A brief description of what happens in the second chapter of *Plant.* before §44 is in order. After some thoughts on the plants planted in the human being (§§ 28–31) Philo moves to a secondary lemma, Gen 2:8. He presents an interpretation which has close points of contact with his exegesis of the same verse in *Leg.* Cf. especially *Plant.* 32–42 with *Leg.* 1.43–47 (note also the connections between §§ 33, 37 and 3.51–53, 253). In both, Philo takes a subsidiary lemma, Gen 6:19 in *Plant.* 43 and Deut 16:21 in *Leg.* 1.48–51, and even these have some common elements like the wildness (or the lack of it) of animals or plants.

the lawgiver says not of the human stamped ‘after the image’ but of the ‘moulded’ one that he was introduced into the garden.”⁴⁴ The reason, which Philo fails to spell out, seems to be that the former already finds himself represented in Paradise:

the human stamped with the “spirit” “in accordance with the image of God” (ὁ μὲν γὰρ τῷ κατὰ τὴν εἰκόνα θεοῦ χαραχθεὶς πνεύματι) differs not a whit, as it appears to me, from the tree that bears the fruit of immortal life. (*Plant.* 44)

Thus in both *Plant.* 18 and 44 the human (soul) receives a stamp, and this Philo sees described in both Gen 1:27 and 2:7. This much is quite obvious. The identification of the human after the image with the tree of life is somewhat surprising, but Philo kindly explains that “both are imperishable things (ἄφθαρτα) and have been accounted worthy of the most central and princely portion.”⁴⁵ What about the other human, then? “Nor does the ‘moulded’ human differ at all from the composite and more earthly (γεωδεστέρου) body” (§44). The key feature of both is having “no part in the simple unmoulded and simple nature (ἀπλάστου καὶ ἀπλῆς φύσεως ἀμέτοχος).”

I find this statement resonating with what I have called the *corporealization of the mind* defined as a phenomenon as a result of which the mind (or soul) orientates towards, and desires to experience, the world of matter in general and a physical body of its own in particular.⁴⁶ The concept is based on the Philonic notion of the mind becoming bodylike and earthly present in his interpretations of Gen 3:19 in *QG* 1.51 and *Leg.* 3.252–253. In the former, the first human is said to have “g[iven] himself wholly over to the earth,” and in the latter he is “ranked with things earthlike and incohesive.” For Philo, *this* is the justification for God’s words, “for you are earth and into the earth you will depart” (Gen 3:19) and the explanation for the *aporia* (explicit in *QG* 1.51) that calling the first human “earth” ignores his inbreathed component. The soul, too, has become earthly and needs to return to earth—i.e., reincarnate.⁴⁷ Let us compare three expressions:

- In *Leg.* 1.31 the “heavenly human,” who is “not moulded (οὐ πεπλάσθαι),” is “altogether without part in corruptible and terrestrial substance (γεώδους οὐσίας ἀμέτοχος).”
- In *Leg.* 3.252 the “foolish mind” which is “ranked with things earthly (γεώδεσι)” has been “‘taken’ (Gen 2:7) not from the sublime nature (τῆς μεταρσίου φύσεως) but from the more earthly matter (τῆς γεωδεστέρας ὕλης).”
- In *Plant.* 44 the human who is identified with the “more earthly (γεωδεστέρου) body” has “no part in the unmoulded and simple nature (ἀπλάστου καὶ ἀπλῆς φύσεως ἀμέτοχος).”

A key thing to be noticed in *Plant.* 44 is that Philo *connects Gen 1:27 with 2:7b* (the “image” with the “breath”) *and plays these against 2:7a* (the “moulding” and the “earth”).⁴⁸ I have argued elsewhere that Philo’s famous “two

⁴⁴ The reference is to Gen 2:8b. In *Plant.* Philo does not launch into the kind of comparison between Gen 2:15 and 2:8b he discusses in *Leg.* 1.53–55 building on the fact that his text of v. 15 apparently read (like some LXX MSS. do) ἐποίησε instead of ἔπλασεν. The “made” human is interpreted as the one “after the image and archetype” (cf. Gen 1:26, 5:3). Nevertheless, Philo uses the same epithets in both treatises: the “moulded” (πεπλασμένον) human and the one “after the image” (κατ’ εἰκόνα).

⁴⁵ For the theme of centrality in a similar context, see *Leg.* 1.59–60 (cf. also 3.28–29).

⁴⁶ I discuss corporealization as a potential cause of (re)incarnation in *Reincarnation in Philo*, 70–79.

⁴⁷ In *Leg.* 3.252 Philo goes as far as to apparently change the text of the LXX to usher in a reincarnational interpretation. See *Reincarnation in Philo*, 76–77.

⁴⁸ Sterling, “Wisdom,” 363 notes in *Opif.* 135 “a sharp distinction between Gen 2:7a which refers to the mortal nature of humanity and 2:7b which presents our immortal nature” and refers to *Opif.* 144, *Leg.* 1.33, *Det.* 83, *Her.* 55–57, *Spec.* 1.171, 4 123 as containing “similar statements.” Gen 2:7 is naturally divided into three parts as follows: V. 7a: “And God moulded the human being, taking dust from the earth;” v. 2b: “and breathed into his face a breath of life;” v. 7c: “and the human being became a living soul.” These are quoted by Philo

types of humans”—the heavenly and the earthly—in *Leg.* 1.31–32 does not refer to Gen 1:27 and 2:7 as such but to the combination of 1:27 and 2:7b against 2:7a.⁴⁹ The gist of the matter is that Philo’s interpretation of the “breath of life” of Gen 2:7 in *Leg.* 1 is almost exclusively *universal* instead of *protological* (more specifically, *soteriological*).⁵⁰ In *Leg.* 1.31–32, the “breath” *converts* the “earthly” mind/human into a heavenly one. Compare the following expressions:

The heavenly human (*Leg.* 1.31)

- κατ’ εικόνα γεγονώς
- κατ’ εικόνα τετυπώσθαι
- φθαρτῆς καὶ γεώδους οὐσίας ἀμετοχος
- οὐ πεπλάσθαι

The earthly human after receiving the breath of life (*Leg.* 1.32)

- γίνεται (νοερὰν καὶ ζῶσαν ὄντως)
- οὐκ ἀδιατύπων (NB. ἐτύπωσε in 1.38)
- οὐκ ἀργόν⁵¹
- οὐκέτι πλάττεται⁵²

As we have seen, Philo in *Plant.* to an extent follows his exegesis of Gen 2:7–8 in *Leg.* 1 and at §44 splits Gen 2:7 into parts, combining v. 7b with 1:27.⁵³ *Plant.* 18 too features this combination, but now 2:7a is absent.⁵⁴ Is he being protological, telling us how the human being was created?⁵⁵ What is it in fact that Philo says was inbreathed? To recall, his words were, “For ‘God inbreathed into his face a breath of life’, so that it cannot but be that the one who receives is made in the likeness of the one who sends forth (ἀνάγκη πρὸς τὸν ἐκπέμποντα τὸν δεχόμενον ἀπεικονίσθαι).” This is a description of the soul’s being stamped with the seal of God. The soul is thus the *object* of God’s action and must logically exist prior to the event described as “inbreathing.” Philo’s

three, eight and five times, respectively (these are the figures for the quotations of entire sub-verses in Philo’s surviving Greek *oeuvre*). For a list of Philo’s citations of and allusions to Gen 2:7 (51 in total) see *ibid.* 362 n. 22.

⁴⁹ See Yli-Karjanmaa, “Call Him Earth.”

⁵⁰ Moves in this direction in the interpretation of *Leg.* 1 have been taken in earlier research. See the references in Yli-Karjanmaa, *Reincarnation in Philo*, 36 n. 133. By universal as opposed to protological allegory I mean an interpretation of the biblical, protological narrative (in practice, the first chapters of Genesis) which does not take over its protologicality. According to my observations, this is the dominant—although not exclusive—mode of Philo’s exegesis in *Leg.* Note the affinity between this distinction and the observation by Runia, *On the Creation of the Cosmos According to Moses: Introduction, Translation, and Commentary*, Philo of Alexandria Commentary Series 1 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2001) 333–34 concerning the distinction in Philo “between a presentation as *history*, i.e. an account of the life of early mankind, and a presentation in terms of *actualization* and *idealization*, i.e. seeing Adam and Eve as types of human beings” (emphasis original). Cf. also Folker Siegert’s (“Philo and the New Testament,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Philo*, ed. Adam Kamesar [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009] 175–209, reference (p. 184) to “mankind as it is in the present” in connection with *Leg.* 1.31–38.

⁵¹ Cf. *Mos.* 2.136, *Spec.* 1.21 and *Flacc.* 148, which show that ἀργός is a natural attribute of ὕλη.

⁵² Cf. also the characterization of the earthly human *before* the breath: “compacted out of incohesive matter (ὑλης) . . . a ‘moulded’ work but not offspring (πλάσμα, ἀλλ’ οὐ γέννημα) of the Artificer.”

⁵³ If we followed him further, we would find in §45–46 two other concepts used in the exegesis of Gen 2 in *Leg.* 1, ὁ μέσος νοῦς (*Leg.* 1.93, 95) and Adam as ὁ γήινος νοῦς (1.31, 90, 95).

⁵⁴ Its *exegesis* in *Leg.* 1 may, however, be hinted at. The notion of *being compacted out of perishable matter* with the words ὕλη, φθαρτός and πήγνυμι (within one line) used of the physical eyes in *Plant.* 22 appears only there and in *Leg.* 1.31 in the whole *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*. It seems that in *Leg.* the notion is an elaboration of the biblical text (which is directly referred to in this context) rather than part of Philo’s interpretation thereof. Thus even though the actual interpretation of Gen 2:7a is in terms of the “earthly man,” the referent of the notion is, in both cases, the physical human body.

⁵⁵ In stating that in *Plant.* 16–22 and *Det.* 79–90 “Philo looks at man as he is in his earthly existence” (in the same way as Plato is at the end of the *Timaeus* no longer dealing with protology) Runia opts for a universal understanding (*Philo and the Timaeus*, 338). He continues that in those passages Philo “prefers to reconcile the two Mosaic texts, considering that also in this existence man’s ‘true self’ is present, albeit dimly.”

combined interpretation of Gen 1:27 and 2:7 in *Plant. 18* presupposes the soul and is to be regarded as universal, not protological; it addresses neither the creation of the soul nor its coming together with the body.⁵⁶

It is illuminating to compare the text just cited with two passages in *Leg.* First, in 1.37 (exegesis of Gen 2:7) Philo makes a very similar distinction between three factors: “that which inbreathes (τὸ ἐμπνέον) is God, that which receives (τὸ δεχόμενον) is the mind, that which is inbreathed (τὸ ἐμπνεόμενον) is the ‘spirit’ (πνεῦμα).”⁵⁷ Is this now the same idea as in *Plant. 18* or a different one? *Plant. 44* comes closer to the *Leg.* passage, for there the role of the spirit is more explicitly expressed. Let us again compare three key expressions:

- In §18 the soul is “signed and impressed (τυπωθέν) by the seal (σφραγιῶν) of God the stamp of which is the eternal Logos.”
- In §44 we first have the human being “stamped (τυπωθέντα) ‘after the image’.”
- Then, the same entity is said to have been “stamped with the ‘spirit’ (χαραχθεὶς πνεύματι) ‘in accordance with the image of God’.”

In context, it is clear that the last two expressions mean the same. Based on the identity between the Logos and the image of God (§§ 19–20) it seems §18 can also be taken as saying the same thing. It follows then that in the first expression the instrumental role of the “seal of God” is very similar to that of “spirit” in the last one and that we can rather safely assume that what is said about the “seal” can be taken as an elaboration of the more ambiguous “coinage of ‘spirit’.”⁵⁸ Thus the event whereby “the one who receives is made in the likeness of the one who sends forth” is one whereby *the soul receives the “image” of the Logos when God stamps it with “spirit.”*

There is, however, a problem with “is made in the likeness of” which translates a single word, ἀπεικονίσθαι, which is the middle/passive perfect infinitive (the only one for this verb in the whole TLG).⁵⁹ In Greek “the perfect denotes a completed action the effects of which still continue in the present” (HWS §1945),⁶⁰ and it is very interesting to note that the English (Yonge and PLCL), German (PCH) and French (PAPM) all use the *present* tense in rendering the verb.⁶¹ They may, in fact, be right, if the perfect is wrong. First of all we may note that it is difficult to make sense of “it cannot but be that the one who receives *has been made* in the likeness of the one who sends forth.” For although the *effect* of having been made in the likeness of the sender is continuing at the moment of sending, the perfect tense unavoidably makes the *act* of making anterior to the act of sending—thereby cancelling the causal relationship clearly implied by the logic of appealing to Gen 2:7b

⁵⁶ There certainly are passages where Philo uses Gen 2:7 as evidence for the divine origin of the mind. He states in *QG* 1.50, “the mind is a divine inbreathing” and calls the soul in *Leg.* 3.161 and mind in *Somn.* 1.34 a divine fragment justifying this with the verse. This kind of interpretation can also be expressed in terms which are very similar to what we are discussing; cf. *Det.* 83 (discussed below), where the essence of the rational part of the soul is said to be “‘spirit’ (πνεῦμα) . . . an impression (τύπον) and stamp (χαρακτῆρα) of the divine power (δυνάμειος) to which Moses gives the appropriate title of ‘image.’”

⁵⁷ The similarity of the passages is so marked that Thomas Mangey in fact wanted to conjecture ἐμπνέοντα for ἐκπέμποντα at *Plant.* 19.

⁵⁸ It is intriguing to note that in *Leg.* 3.95–96, another “numismatic” passage connected to Gen. 1:27, the soul is said to receive a stamp like a tested coin (see above, n. 41), but now Ex. 31:2–3 takes, as it were, the place of Gen. 2:7b, although the “divine spirit” is not mentioned.

⁵⁹ For many of the observations mentioned below I am indebted to James R. Royle. The conclusions are mine.

⁶⁰ Herbert Weir Smyth, *A Greek Grammar for Colleges* (New York: American Book, 1920).

⁶¹ This is also true for Sterling’s translation (in “Wisdom,” p. 365.)

and the word ὥστε.⁶² Fortunately, there seems to be an attractive way out of this dilemma. Eusebius quotes *Plant.* 18–20 in *Praep. ev.* 7.18.1–2), and in some MSS., as well as in the epitome *De mundo* (MS. E, see PCW 2.vii), the verb form in question is in the present tense, ἀπεικονίζεσθαι. Wendland often follows Eusebius who, he notes, alone transmits the correct text, e.g., at §18 (see PCW 2.x). In my view, we should opt for the present tense.

However, the sentence is followed by this statement: “Accordingly we also read that the human being is (γεγενῆσθαι) ‘in accordance with the image of God,’ not however after the image of anything created.” It would seem reasonable to see a connection between the two infinitives thus supporting the option that the first one too is a perfect. I maintain, however, that the cases are different. There are three aspects. First, the verb γίγνομαι can in past tenses mean simply “be,” as I think it does here. Second, even if the verb were translated “has become” we should note that Philo makes a direct reference to the text of Genesis with his λέγεται, and it is thus the level of the biblical, protological narrative he is moving on. Third, the emphasis is now on the comparison between “the image of God” and “anything created,” not the history of how the human being came to possess its likeness to God’s image.⁶³ Thus it seems we can hold on to the universal interpretation that the soul is stamped it with “spirit” whereby it receives the “image” of the Logos.

The second parallel in *Leg.* 1 for the sending and receiving in *Plant.* 19 is 1.61, which in fact also bridges *Plant.* 19 and 44. Philo’s primary lemma is Gen 2:9 which, in his view, tells us “what trees of virtue God plants in the soul” (1.56). It is worth highlighting that both planting the Paradise and breathing in the human face are, in Philo’s view, events whose essence is *God’s action on the soul*. After some discussion of theoretical and practical arts and the extolling of virtue as best of them all (1.57–58) the tree of life is, because of its central position, identified with “virtue in the most comprehensive sense, which some term goodness” (1.59). Philo then notes that the biblical text does not reveal the location of the tree of knowing good and evil (1.60) and proceeds to declare that it is, “nominally (οὐσίᾳ) in [Paradise], but in effect (δυνάμει), outside” (1.61). To get to the points we are mainly interested in Philo needs a secondary lemma which, as he sees it, has a thematic connection with (the tree of) good and evil: “All this (πάντα ταῦτα) has come upon me!” cries Jacob in Gen 42:36. The link is that the human mind “is all-receptive and resembles wax that receives (δεχομένῳ) all impressions (τύπου) fair and ugly.” Philo continues that whenever the soul

receives (δέξεται) the stamp (χαρακτῆρα) of perfect virtue, it is (γέγονε)⁶⁴ “the tree of life,” but when (it receives) that of wickedness, it is “the tree of knowledge of good and evil.” . . . [Thus the mind which] has received (δεδεγμένον) [wickedness] is nominally in the “garden,” for it has in it likewise the stamp (χαρακτῆρ) of virtue properly belonging to the “garden.” On the other hand, in effect it is not in it because the impress (τύπος) of wickedness is alien to the divine “risings.” (*Leg.* 1.61)

In *Leg.* 1 Philo ties *virtue* tightly together with the breath of life (1.34–35) as well as with Paradise with its tree of life and the rivers (esp. 1.45–49, 54–66, 70–73, 88–89). It is difficult for me not to see the reception of the

⁶² Note also that according to HWS 1865, although the infinitive does not have time of itself, it does express the stage of action, which for the perfect is that of *completion*. I.e., the action is *over*, only its effects continue.

⁶³ In the sentence quoted there is also another word which we cannot press, “the human being.” The Philonic view restricts the human resemblance to the image of God to the (highest part of the) soul, and so “human” is not the correct term (as explicitly stated in *Det.* 83). The word should thus actually be put in quotation marks; it comes directly from Gen 1:26–27 and is thus part of the *explanandum*. Indeed, in the very next sentence Philo writes, “the human soul.”

⁶⁴ Whitaker: “shall have received . . . straightway becomes.”

stamp of perfect virtue as referring to the same salvific act of God as the “breath of life” in Philo’s exegesis. *Rejection* of virtue is, again, the essence of the Philonic notion of the death of the soul (1.105–108) from which the soul can recover to its own, true life—of virtue.⁶⁵ Concepts closely linked with virtue in *Leg.* are “heavenly wisdom” (1.43) and “the right principle” (*Leg.* 1.45–46, 92–93; 3.2, 80, 106, 147–148, 150, 168, 222, 251–252), and it is noteworthy that the corporealization of the mind, i.e., its becoming “earthly” involves forsaking both (3.252).

Now when in *Plant.* 19 “the one who receives is made in the likeness of the one who sends forth,” that does not immediately sound very similar to receiving the stamp of virtue. But when we read it together with §44, which the striking image of being or becoming the “tree of life” connects to *Leg.* 1.61, and, through it, to Paradise, virtue and back to the “breath of life,” the differences diminishes considerably. We should add the fact that in Philo virtue is often almost a synonym for salvation. In *Plant.* we have a passage highly relevant in this context: At §37 the tree of life is called the “path [of the rational soul] according to virtue, with life and immortality as its end.”⁶⁶ It should also be noted that at the beginning of *Leg.* 3 Adam and Eve’s post-fall state is explained to mean that the wicked person is “an exile from *virtue*.”

Let us move on to *Plant.* 20. Philo posits a link, which is at least partially causal, between the soul’s image-likeness and a series notions related to *ascending*, starting here with the body:

As a consequence, then, of the human soul having been made in the likeness (ἀπεικονισθείσης) (of and) after the image of the archetype, the Logos of the Cause, the body too—raised up towards the purest portion of the universe, the heaven—lifts up the eyes. (*Plant.* 20)

It seems Philo is moving towards a more clearly protological mode of expression. I think this is because he has an aim. He will have wanted to end his excursus to Genesis—the end of which can be located at the words “the Logos of the Cause”—in a way that connects with what he was discussing before embarking on it: the erect posture of the human body, its *design*. Against this background it is understandable that he now speaks of the *soul’s* original design. He does so in fairly biblical terms, without blending in much allegory. He does narrow down the biblical act of creation to concern that of the soul only, and, as usual, interprets the “image” of Gen 1:27 in terms of the Platonic model-copy relationship.

The purpose of the erect posture, Philo then tells us, is “that by means of the visible it (i.e., the soul) would clearly apprehend (καταλαμβάνηται) the unseen.” In the sequel he refers to souls that are “drawn (ἀχθέντας)” by God. The ascent motif continues. The statement quoted opens up new soteriological vistas to parallels in *Leg.*, *Det* and *Her.* which we will now discuss before continuing further in *Plant.* Being *drawn up by God* is mentioned in Philo’s exegesis of Gen 2:7 in *Leg.* 1.37–38 in a context which is seamlessly linked with his discussion of that which inbreaths, that which receives and that which is inbreathed which was reviewed above. The purpose of “the union of the three,” says Philo in *Leg.*, is “that we may obtain (λάβωμεν) a conception (ἔννοιαν) of Him.” He elaborates this as follows,

For the human mind would never have ventured to soar so high as to grasp (ἀντιλάβεσθαί) the nature of God, had not God Himself drawn it up (ἀνέσπασεν) to Himself, so far as it was possible for the human mind

⁶⁵ On this last point see Yli-Karjanmaa, *Reincarnation in Philo*, 64. For a much more extensive treatment of all the issues in this paragraph, see my “Call Him Earth.”

⁶⁶ Cf. also, e.g., *Post.* 31; *Abr.* 269; *QG* 1.51, 4.131.

to be drawn up, and stamped (ἐτύπωσε) it with according to the powers that are within the scope of its understanding. (*Leg.* 1.38)

Here the soul's being drawn up, its ascent and the ability to grasp the nature of God are presented as the *consequences of the reception of both the "spirit" and the stamp* by the mind. Thus we have good grounds to remain alert to possible allusion to such salvific phenomena in Philo's text whenever we encounter the combination of Gen 1:27 and 2:7b.⁶⁷

In *Det.* the connection between the ability to know God and the joint interpretation of Gen 1:27 and 2:7b is explicit:

It would be greatly to the advantage of the thing wrought should it obtain (λάβοι) a conception (ἔννοιαν) of Him who wrought it . . . He breathed into him from above (ἄνωθεν ἐνέπνει) of His own Deity. The invisible Deity stamped on the invisible soul the impress (τύπους) of itself to the end that not even the terrestrial region should be without a share in the image of God (εἰκόνας ἀμοιρήση θεοῦ). (*Det.* 86)

Here again, the inbreathing does not stand for the *reception* of the soul by the human being, or its creation.⁶⁸ Instead, it is *stamped* in a manner that makes it possess the image of God. In a relevant statement a little earlier Philo outright equates "spirit" and "image" saying that the former is the essence of the rational power of the soul, "not moving air, but, as it were, an impression (τύπον τινά) and stamp (χαρακτῆρα) of the divine power to which Moses gives the appropriate title of 'image'" (*Det.* 83). The details of the interpretation are closer to *Leg.* (1.38) than *Plant.*, but in all Gen 1:27 and 2:7b are interpreted jointly to mean a "greatly advantageous" event which facilitates the soul's orientation towards God.⁶⁹

Her. 58–64 presents us with a variation of this theme. Philo discusses the question of who can be the heir of divine and incorporeal things and answers, "one only is held worthy of these, the recipient of inspiration from above (ὁ καταπνευσθεὶς ἄνωθεν)" (§64). This is plainly a universal statement. That it refers to Gen 2:7b is clear based on §56, a passage parallel in thought to *Plant.* 18:

On the other hand he did not make the substance (οὐσίαν) of the mind depend on anything created, but represented (εἰσήγαγεν) it as breathed down (καταπνευσθεῖσαν) by God. For the Maker of all, he says, "inbreathed into his face the breath of life, and the human being became a living soul;" just as we are also told that he was stamped (τυπωθήναι) "in accordance with the image" of his Maker. (*Her.* 56)

⁶⁷ *Gig.* 20 is an interesting case, because Philo seems to be saying something similar based now on Gen 6:3. That God's "spirit" does not abide forever in humans, referring in its biblical context to the human lifespan, makes Philo remark: "The 'spirit' sometimes stays awhile . . . Who indeed is so lacking in reason or soul (ἄλογος ἢ ἄψυχος) that he never either with or without his will receives a conception of the best (ἔννοιαν τοῦ ἀρίστου . . . λαβεῖν)?" Even "the reprobate" sometimes gets it, but he is not able to grasp and keep (φυλάξει) it. There are several connections here to *Leg.* 1.32, 36–37, 54 that I will not discuss here, but what is worth noting that the discussion leads Philo in §23 to adopt as his "translation" of the biblical category of "divine spirit" the words in Ex 31:2: "wisdom, understanding and knowledge."

⁶⁸ It should be noted that for Philo the protological and universal levels are not mutually exclusive. Hence he can state, referring to Gen 2:7b, "the essence of soul is 'spirit'" (*Det.* 80).

⁶⁹ And yet he soon again, similarly to *Det.* 80 (see previous note), states, "but the human soul [Moses] names 'spirit.'" Two things connect these two protologically geared statements. First, in both the soul–"spirit" connection is presented as distinct from the soul–"blood" connection of Lev 17:11, 14, and Philo's focus is on explaining away their seeming contradiction. Second, both refer directly to the biblical text (φησὶν . . . παριστάς, ὀνομάζει) thus indicating that Philo is moving closer to the *explanandum* than his *explanatio*, the latter being in both instances that the soul–"spirit" concerns the highest part of the soul. (The word παριστάς in §80 can be thought of as introducing an *initial* explanation—"the essence of soul is 'spirit'"—needed to bring out the actual exegetical problem, the apparent contradiction with the Lev passage, more clearly. Note that now also Gen 2:7c, "and the human being became a living *soul*," is quoted.

Here the identification of the substance of mind with the “breath of life” comes juxtaposed with the connection made between blood and soul in Leviticus (17:11, 14).⁷⁰ Dealing as it does with the “historical” basis of the human constitution it can be regarded as *protological*, but two things should be noted. First, Philo’s angle of approach is defined by the verbal connection between his primary and secondary lemma—“blood”—and between the secondary and tertiary lemma—“soul.” There is a potential contradiction in the biblical texts involved, but in *Her.* Philo merely gives an explanation without raising an explicit *aporia*.⁷¹

At §57 Philo changes the mode of his exegesis. Very much like in *Leg.* 1.31, he states, “So the human kind is twofold.”⁷² The two classes, again described in terms of a distinction between Gen 2:7b and 2:7a, are:⁷³

that of those who live by the intellect, the divine “spirit,” the other of those who live by “blood” and the pleasure “of the flesh.” This last is a “moulded clod of earth (πλάσμα γῆς)” the other is the faithful impress (ἐκμαγεῖον) of the divine “image.” (*Her.* 57)

In describing how the two kinds of people *live*, this statement is almost purely universal—but not entirely, since the human intellect is identified with the divine “spirit.”⁷⁴ We thus have another example of the blending of the two modes of interpretation. But are there signs of “traffic” between the classes; can “our piece of ‘moulded clay’ [which] has imperative need of God’s help” (§58) in fact fail to get that help through which it can become an impress of the “image” in a way that is relevant in the context of *Plant*.?

I think there are such signs. The salvific role of the “breath” is in *Her.* now combined with the divine help symbolized by Eliezer (§58): Philo says that “the mass of blood . . . is quickened (ζωοπυρεῖται) by the providence of God . . . since our race cannot of itself stand firmly established for a single day.”⁷⁵ In §§ 63–64 (partly already quoted) he implies that the worthy inheritor soul is one that *stops* living its blood-life:

Can he who desires the life of the blood and *still* claims for his own the things of the senses become the heir of divine and incorporeal things? No; one alone is held worthy of these, the recipient of inspiration from above (ὁ καταπνευσθεὶς ἄνωθεν), of a portion heavenly and divine, the wholly purified mind which disregards not only the body, but that other section of the soul which is devoid of reason (ἄλογον) and steeped in “blood,” aflame with seething passions and burning lusts. (*Her.* 63–64)

This can be compared with the statement in §68 that the heir will not be “that intellect which abides in the prison of the body of its own free will, but that which released from its fetters into liberty has come outside the prison walls.”⁷⁶

⁷⁰ See n. 69 for *Det.* 80, 83.

⁷¹ Philo’s explanation differs a little from *Det.* in that now “blood” becomes the substance of the *whole* soul

⁷² Other links with *Leg.* 1 are the term “earthly mind” as the epithet of Adam (§52; cf. 1.31–32, 90) and the offspring of sense-perception as “those who are in truth dead to the life of the soul” in distinction to “those who are really living” (§53; cf. *Leg.* 1.32 and the death of the soul in 1.105–108).

⁷³ Sterling, “Wisdom,” 365 n. 36 says Philo here argues that “Gen 2 7b-c (sic) presents two classes of humanity.”

⁷⁴ Or, perhaps, the “divine spirit.” The placing of the quotation marks depends on whether one sees here an allusion to the “breath” (πνοή) of Gen 2:7b (both πνεῦμα and πνοή are cognate to πνέω; in, e.g., *Leg.* 3.161 πνεῦμα occurs in a quotation of Gen 2:7b) or to the “divine spirit” (πνεῦμα θεῖον) of Ex 31:3. The latter may also have been in Philo’s mind; cf. *Her.* 53 where wisdom and knowledge are mentioned.

⁷⁵ Cf. the interpretation of the angels on Jacob’s ladder as God’s *logoi* who “with their salvific breath may quicken into new life (σωτήριον πνέοντες ἀναζωῶσι) the soul which is still borne along in the body as in a river.” (*Somn.* 1.147)

⁷⁶ Cf. *Somn.* 1.139 where the ideas of the body as a prison and the soul’s voluntary entry to it occur. The idea of or self-induced prison terms fits reincarnation very well. Cf., e.g., *Phaedo* 82e: “the most dreadful thing about the imprisonment is the fact that it is caused by the lusts, so that the prisoner is the chief assistant in his own imprisonment.”

Based on the texts discussed it seems likely that by writing what he did in *Plant.* 18–20 Philo wants to remind his audience not only of the divine origin of the mind but also of the actual possibility of receiving (quite possibly *again*, after losing it upon the death of the soul) God’s salvific grace which he saw symbolized by the various biblical images and themes, and thereby gaining an apprehension of things divine, ultimately God.

Philo continues in *Plant.* 21 by speaking of the attraction of the mind, and its being pulled towards God, the same theme we saw in *Leg.* 1.38. In §22 Philo moves on to the theme of the flight of the soul.

The strong yearning to perceive the Existent One gives [the eyes of the soul] wings to attain not only to the furthest region of the ether, but to overpass the very bounds of the entire universe and speed away toward the Uncreate. (*Plant.* 22)

This is a profoundly Platonic passage with the themes of wingedness, yearning and overpassing the bounds of the universe coming directly from the *Phaedrus*.⁷⁷ It is noteworthy that the thought comes close to two of Philo’s most directly reincarnational passages. In *Somn.* 1.139 liberated souls “are lifted up on light wings to the ether.” *QE* 2.40 is even closer: There “a holy soul is divinized by ascending not to the air or to the ether or to heaven [which is] higher than all but to [a region] above the heavens.” Those whose desire for the divine is strong enough have their stay in the divine city sealed by God, but the fickle ones are drawn back to Tartarus, which can on good grounds be understood to mean the human body.⁷⁸ Similarly Philo in *Plant.* 25 says of the mind of the genuine philosopher that it is “borne upward insatiably enamoured of all holy happy natures that dwell on high,” and in §23 he says that those “who crave for wisdom and knowledge with insatiable persistence are said . . . to have been called upwards.”

The soul’s soaring “to the utmost height” is causally linked to the its “strong yearning to see the Existent” (§22) and “the attraction of the understanding” towards the same (§21), which, for its part is in a somewhat less precise manner coupled with the erect posture of the human body and our ability to lift our eyes towards the ether and the heaven (§§ 17, 20–21). The erect posture, again, is linked with soul’s being an image of the Logos (§20), which, finally, is identified with the reception of the “breath of life.” A striking comparison can be made:

- In *Plant.* 17–25 we have the sequence “breath” + “image” — erect posture — ascent
- In *Leg.* 1.31–32, 37–38, we find “breath” + “image” ————— ascent

The beginning and the end are similar, but in *Plant.* Philo’s train has one stop more. Why is this? Because of his biblical lemma. The posture issue is directly linked with the heavenly plant motif—which Philo does not want to forego in a discussion concerning plants! Let Plato be quoted at some length:

We declare that God has given to each of us, as his daemon, that kind (εἶδος) of soul which is housed in the top of our body and which raises us—seeing that we are not an earthly but a heavenly plant—up from earth towards our kindred in the heaven. And herein we speak most truly; for it is by suspending our head and root from that region whence the substance (γένεσις) of our soul first came (ἔφου) that the Divine Power keeps upright our whole body. (*Tim.* 90a)

It might even be said that although Philo quotes sparsely from Plato and extensively from the Pentateuch, as is his custom, by his excursus to Gen 1:27 and 2:7 in *Plant.* 17–20 Philo actually wants to *support the veracity of*

⁷⁷ See especially 245d–246a, 246c, 247d–248c, 249a, 251c–e.

⁷⁸ Cf. *QG* 4.234. For *QE* 2.40 see my *Reincarnation in Philo*, 167–86.

the *Timaean notion*. That really seems to be the purpose of quoting the verses. Using the very useful (but still too little utilized) analyses, and concepts introduced to the research, of Philo's exegetical method by David T. Runia, we can in fact see that Philo's secondary lemma is, in effect, *Tim.* 90ab (mode of transition from Gen 9:20: verbal φυτόν) and the Genesis verses must be seen as *tertiary* (MOT from *Tim.* mainly thematic, the divine origin and constitution of the human soul; common words: ψυχή, γῆ).⁷⁹ There is no direct link between the main and subsidiary verses from Genesis.

The ascent takes place "by the native force of the 'divine spirit'" (§24)—again, most probably a combination of allusions to both Ex 31:3 (πνεῦμα θεῖον) and Gen 2:7 (cf. the *uplifting* effect of the "breath" in *Leg.* 1.38). In addition to the flight of the soul, §§ 24–25 also contain the same combination of Platonic reincarnational notions, pursuing philosophy correctly and the ascetic ideal of practising death (i.e., separation from the body and its needs), just like *Gig.* 14. The combination occurs thrice in the *Phaedo* (64a, 67e, 80e); the purpose of both practices is to allow the soul to depart pure so as to avoid a further incarnation (see, e.g., 80d–81e). In marked harmony with the ethos of the dialogue (e.g., 81b), in both *Plant.* (§25) and *Gig.* (§15) the goods of the body are rejected.⁸⁰

Reflections and Conclusions

The discussion above aims to show that the notion of there being two species of souls in the air (*Plant.* 14) is, in Philo, part of a larger scheme that involves the ever-unembodied angels and their tasks as well as the journey of the human soul from its descent through reincarnation to its ascent. This journey with all its anthropological, ethical and soteriological implications is, so this author believes, at the heart of the Philonic allegories concerning the soul especially in the *Allegorical Commentary* but also the *Quaestiones*. In different contexts Philo exposes to view and discusses different parts of the journey and uses divergent illustrations. However, this does not prevent his student from seeing the bigger picture, although, together with Philo's habit of cultivating allusions of varying clarity, it does mean that there is not shortage of work.

Plant. 14 and its parallels reveal the remarkable fact that Philo uses his scheme of the airy souls as an explanation of biblical verses that do not have much in common. This practice of Philo's (which is not limited to this scheme) immediately sprang to my mind when I came across what William James calls *the law of dissociation by varying concomitants*: "What is associated now with one thing and now with another tends to become dissociated from either."⁸¹ It is my conviction that the further study of this phenomenon will enhance our understanding of individual passages in Philo's writings and his exegetical method as well as the very different roles played by the biblical text—his *explanandum*—and the ideas presented as its *explanatio*.

Based on the observations presented in this paper I think it is fair to say that the effect of the biblical text on the subject matter discussed in its exegesis varies widely. For example, the entire first part of *Plant.* (§§ 1–139) is really based on a single word in Gen 9:20, ἐφύττευσεν, whereas in *Somn.* 1.138–139 the biblical basis of the scheme mentioned is broader, the upward and downward movement of entities between earth and heaven. It

⁷⁹ It must be noted that the transition to *Tim.* 90ab does not take place directly from the biblical text

⁸⁰ A further commonality is that in both *Plant.* 22 and *Gig.* 14 God is called the Uncreate. Note also ἄνω δὲ φέρεται in *Plant.* 25 and ἀναφέρεται in *Gig.* 15, although the meaning is different.

⁸¹ *The Principles of Psychology*, 2 vols. (New York: Holt, 1890), 1.506.

is worth noting that the narrower the biblical basis is, the fewer biblical constraints (things to be accounted for) there are and the larger freedom of maneuver Philo has with regard to the actual contents of his allegories.

In the case of the scheme of the souls of the air it seems that Philo's *explanatio* can be further divided into parts: On the one hand, we may think of the soul's journey from above to the world and the release from reincarnation and returning to God as the *interpretation proper*; on the other, what we find between it and the biblical text are various kinds of mostly Platonic (and Platonist) notions and images which Philo feels free to combine in different ways in his interpretations of different biblical verses (which have their effect on his choice). These notions and images come, in a way, close to being mythical features, i.e., narrative elements through which beliefs are expressed.⁸² E.g., the image of the body as a river is precisely that in its original context in the *Timaeus*. Such elements do not need to remain the same in different versions of a myth (and they can even be incompatible with each other), because more important are the beliefs that are conveyed.

Philo's allegorizations of the two accounts of the creation of the human being have given rise to different kinds of scholarly interpretations. We take two quotes, from David T. Runia and Thomas H. Tobin. Runia writes,

When [Philo is] not engaged in giving a detailed running commentary on the double account of man's creation . . . [t]he man κατ' εἰκόνα θεοῦ and the inbreathing of the divine πνεῦμα both refer to man's god-like part, the νοῦς or rational soul (cf. *Det.* 80–86, *Plant.* 18–20, *Her.* 56). . . . But in . . . *Opif.*, *Leg.* I–II and *QG I* Philo tends to keep the man of Gen. 1:27 separate from the man created in Gen. 2:7. At *Leg.* 1.31 . . . [t]he attempt is *not* made to show that the mind created in Gen. 1:27 is the same as the rational part that is inbreathed in Gen. 2:7.⁸³

Tobin says,

The interpretation of the term "image" (εἰκόν) in Gen 1:26–27 is Platonic while the term "spirit" (πνεῦμα) in Gen 2:7 receives a Stoic interpretation. Yet the fact that they often appear together with their concepts and vocabulary combined (*Det.* 80–90; *Plant.* 14–27; *Mut.* 223; *Op.* 139, 146–146; *Spec.* 1.171) indicates they are referring to the same single creation of man.⁸⁴

In the context of the *Allegorical Commentary* I would comment these statements as follows. It is no doubt the case that both the "image" and the "breath" can refer to the divine origin of the mind in Philo.⁸⁵ I would call this the protological interpretation. The other alternative is the universal interpretation, where the "stamping" and the "inbreathing" are interpreted to mean an action by God on the soul/mind with greatly beneficial effects contributing to its salvation. This interpretation has no protological content: it does not refer to the creation of the human being. The dividing line between these does not go between Philo's interpretations of the creation accounts as primary vs. secondary lemmas. I think the fact that in the latter (i.e., outside the running commentaries) the "image" and the "breath" receive a joint interpretation is based Philo's dividing Gen 2:7 into parts: v. 7b(–c) belongs together with Gen 1:26–27 and refer "up" while v. 7a refers "down." This distinction ultimately corresponds to the basic divide in the Platonic worldview, the

⁸² See John Bowker (ed.), *Oxford Concise Dictionary of World Religions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), s. v. "myth."

⁸³ *Philo and the Timaeus*, 335. Emphasis original.

⁸⁴ Tobin, *Creation*, 21.

⁸⁵ See above, n. 56. But in my view Philo does not speak of the inbreathing of rational part of the soul in *Leg.* 1.31(–42).

noetic and the changeless vs. the material and the ever-changing. Thus in *Leg.* 1 the human of Gen 1 is kept separate from the human of Gen 2:7a, but not from the human of v. 2:b–c.

These two interpretations are not mutually exclusive. Philo accepts them both, but he also sometimes blends them so that his student may have difficulties following his train of thought: which does he mean? In *Plant.* 18–19 Philo in no way indicates he might not be discussing the general human situation (in distinction to the virtuous only). This speaks against a purely universal interpretation. On the other hand, pure protology is not possible either, because the soul is presupposed as the object of God’s action. What follows in §§ 20–22—the soul’s orientation towards the heaven and ascent to God—are not things that happen just like that to anyone. And in §§ 23–25 Philo then refers to those with “insatiable persistence” and “the mind of the genuine philosopher” etc. This is the kind of souls that, in the Philonic way of thinking, can experience the sort of ascent described earlier. The question is: how far back in *Plant.* can we assume this qualification to reach? Do all souls receive the stamp of the Logos in §18? I have no firm answer at the moment, but what I think is clear is that there are these two interpretations and that the scholarly endeavor to understand Philo will benefit from taking both into account.

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