

[DRAFT]

*The Knowledge of God and the Dialectics of Apophatic Theology:
Philo between Scripture and the Platonic Tradition*

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In ancient and late antique philosophy, including Hellenistic Jewish and patristic philosophy, the study of God, i.e. theology, was the culmination of philosophy. Philosophy and theology were not separate disciplines, each with a different scope and methodology, as they are in our post-Kantian perspective.¹ Thus, the knowledge of God was arguably the highest achievement of philosophy. But here the problem immediately arose of the very possibility of such knowledge, and of the possibility of *theo-logy* as a theory of the divine. Hence the rise of apophatic theology—and later, in Neoplatonic thinkers such as Proclus and Dionysius, even a hyper-apophatic theology.

Philo's ideas about the knowledge of God seem to belong to the tradition of apophatic theology, which for him is grounded both in Scripture and in Plato, who in his highly influential *Timaeus* famously proclaimed the divinity to be difficult to know and impossible to express. The Platonic foundation may explain the reason why some aspects of this approach are very similar in Philo, Plotinus, Origen, Gregory Nyssen, and Evagrius, all Platonists from different religions.² Philo exegeted Scripture, and more specifically the Septuagint, in the light of Platonic philosophy, and indeed his thought reveals many elements that are common with so-called Middle Platonism.³ If Philo could read Scripture from a Platonic perspective, this was due to the allegorical interpretation that he applied to it. This is what Christian exegeses of the Bible such as Clement, Origen, Gregory of Nyssa, and Evagrius will also do—to the point that, as I argued elsewhere,⁴ most of the important philosophical and theological doctrines that from Philo passed on to these Christian Platonists did so through specific exegetical points and strategies. However, unlike some extreme Jewish Hellenistic allegorists against whom he seems to have reacted, Philo did not reject the historical level of the Bible. He kept both the historical and the allegorical planes at the same time, as Origen will do after him, reacting both against literalists and against the extreme (“Gnostic”) allegoris-

¹ See, e.g., Ilaria L.E. Ramelli, “Patristic Philosophy: A Critical Study,” *The International Journal of the Platonic Tradition* 10.1 (2016) 95-108.

² This is pointed out in my “The Divine as Inaccessible Object of Knowledge in Ancient Platonism,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 75.2 (2014) 167-188 esp. for Plotinus; for Evagrius, “Mysticism in Middle and Neoplatonism,” in *Constructions of Mysticism as a Universal. Roots and Interactions Across the Borders*, ed. Annette Wilke, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2016.

³ I limit myself to referring to David T. Runia, “Philon d’Alexandrie,” in *Dictionnaire des philosophes antiques*, ed. Richard Goulet, vol. 5/a (Paris: CNRS, 2011), 363-90.

⁴ In “Philosophical Allegoresis of Scripture in Philo and Its Legacy in Gregory of Nyssa,” *The Studia Philonica Annual* 20 (2008) 55-99.

ers of his own day.⁵ From Philo's perspective, theology mainly coincided with the interpretation of the Bible, which is all about God, and this interpretation was to be performed by means of philosophy—primarily Platonism, but also Stoicism. Philo's attention was directed first and foremost to Scripture, as scholars such as Valentin Nikiprowetzky, David Runia, Peder Borgen, and David Winston have highlighted with good reason.⁶ Indeed, Philo's attitude was exegetico-theological, but philosophy provided the necessary tool and framework for his scriptural allegorical interpretation.

Besides Plato, the roots of Philo's apophaticism are found in his Biblical exegesis. As I shall indicate, Philo interpreted some Biblical episodes as the allegorical expression of the necessity of apophaticism: this meant the awareness of the limit of human cognitive and discursive-expressive power when it came to the Divinity in itself, that is, its nature or essence as distinct from its activities and their products. This presupposed a transcendent notion of the divine, which squares perfectly well with Platonism but not with an immanentistic system such as Stoicism (let alone Epicureanism, for which Philo had scarce sympathy). These allegorical expressions appear precisely in passages which can be fruitfully compared with the parallel interpretations of Origen and Nyssen. I shall analyse how Philo grounded his tenet that, because of its transcendence, the Divinity is unknowable in its *essence* (οὐσία), and therefore also ineffable, but knowable through its *activity*. Even the epithets that are ascribed to God in the Bible, according to Philo, do not reveal God's very essence but God's relationship to the creation. What humans can know about God is *that* God is, but not *what* God is. Divine revelation in Scripture of course moderates negative theology to some extent, for Philo as well as for his patristic followers such as Clement, Origen, and Gregory of Nyssa, but is also subject to strict rules of interpretation. Allegoresis is the key to understanding the true meaning of the Bible, but it is also a key available to few, those who master this hermeneutical tool.

However difficult or in some respects even impossible, the search for God, as Philo insists, is the noblest among human activities. Therefore, the cognitive impairment of human beings before the divine should not stop their "theo-logical" investigation. Philo and the (Platonic) apophatic theologians who were inspired by him show indeed a tension between apophaticism and the discourse on God that they did nevertheless pursue. This is what I

⁵ See Ilaria L.E. Ramelli, "The Philosophical Stance of Allegory in Stoicism and its Reception in Platonism, Pagan and Christian: Origen in Dialogue with the Stoics and Plato," *International Journal of the Classical Tradition* 18 (2011): 335-71; "Plato in Origen's and Gregory of Nyssa's Conception of the ἀρχή and the τέλος," in *Plato in the Third Sophistic*, ed. Ryan Fowler, Berlin, De Gruyter, 2014, 211-235.

⁶ Peder Borgen, *Philo of Alexandria* (Leiden: Brill, 1997); Valentin Nikiprowetzky, "L'exégèse de Philon d'Alexandrie," *Revue d'Histoire et de Philosophie Religieuses* 53 (1973): 309-29; Nikiprowetzky, *Le commentaire de l'écriture chez Philon d'Alexandrie* (Leiden: Brill, 1977); David T. Runia, review of *La philosophie de Moïse*, by Richard Goulet, *Journal of Theological Studies* 40 (1989): 588-602; Runia, *Philo of Alexandria. On the Creation of the Cosmos According to Moses* (Leiden: Brill, 2001); David Winston, "Philo and the Wisdom of Solomon on Creation, Revelation, and Providence," in *Shem in the Tents of Japhet*, ed. James Kugel (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 109-30.

would call the dialectic of apophatic theology.⁷ Θεολογία means reasoning and speaking or theory (λόγος) about the divine (θεός), but if the divine is unknowable, how can theology work? This is why Philo, as I shall show more in detail below, opted for the strategy of differentiation: God's intimate nature or essence is unknowable, at least to embodied human intellects, but the Divinity manifests itself in its activities. This strategy of differentiation proved enormously influential on later Christian Platonism.

For the Christian Platonists, however, from Origen onwards, apophaticism and its counterpart, mysticism, have also an eschatological dimension as anticipation of the final restoration and deification. This dimension may be lacking in Philo, as will be discussed in the final section of this essay. This obviously bears on the issue of Philo's elusive view of the end.

In Philo's view, the knowledge of God—to the extent that is possible to human minds, even just as knowledge of the existence of God and of God's operations in the world (see below)—is crucial to human knowledge in general. There can be no knowledge without some knowledge of God. Indeed, Philo describes right opinion (*Leg.* 3.31) as “referring all things to God” (*Leg.* 3.29). Failing to recognise God brings about both ignorance and wickedness: “the wicked person sinks down into his own incoherent (σποράδα) mind as he strives to avoid the One who is” (*Leg.* 3.37). For Philo, who follows a well-known Stoic argument, only the philosopher is king, since the king is the one who contemplates the noetic paradigms of the cosmos, like Moses the perfect philosopher (*Mos.* 2.17)⁸—a line that will be developed by Clement of Alexandria.⁹ Now, again, this contemplation is connected with the knowledge of God, no least because the paradigms of the cosmos are in the mind of God, the “noetic cosmos.” Knowledge of God and knowledge of the cosmos are inseparable, and they are both a prerogative of the philosopher. Just as all knowledge refers to the knowledge of God, so also all virtues are crowned by piety, the queen of virtues, which is closely related to God and the knowledge of God. For Philo, those who are worthy of the knowledge of God possess piety, the greatest virtue (*Spec.Leg.* 4.135;147);¹⁰ the link between knowledge and virtue—

⁷ Ramelli, “The Divine.” For the tension within Neoplatonism between the Neoplatonists' extensive writings and their acknowledgment that they seek a wisdom that cannot be discursively grasped, see Sara Rappe, *Reading Neoplatonism: Non-discursive Thinking in the Texts of Plotinus, Proclus, and Damascius*, Cambridge: CUP, 2000, ix-xvii and passim; also Philippe Hoffmann, “L'expression de l'indicible dans le néoplatonisme grec de Plotin a Damascius,” in *Dire l'évidence (Philosophie et rhétorique antiques)*, eds Carlos Lévy et Laurent Pernot, Paris: L'Harmattan, 1997, 335-390.

⁸ F. Damgaard, “Philo's *Life of Moses* as ‘Rewritten Bible,’” in *Rewritten Bible after Fifty Years: Texts, Terms, or Techniques? A Last Dialogue with Geza Vermes*, ed. J. Zsengellér, Leiden: Brill, 2014, 233-248.

⁹ See Kathleen Gibbons, “Moses, Statesman and Philosopher: The Philosophical Background of the Ideal of Assimilating to God and the Methodology of Clement of Alexandria's *Stromateis* 1,” *Vigiliae Christianae* 69 (2015) 157-185.

¹⁰ See Gregory Sterling, “The Queen of the Virtues: Piety in Philo of Alexandria,” *The Studia Philonica Annual* 18 (2006) 103-124.

which will return prominently in Origen, Gregory of Nyssa, and Evagrius¹¹—is also clear from Philo’s principle that virtue illumines the soul, therefore immediately acquiring an intellectual value (*Leg.* 1.46). The lack of virtue, common to most human beings, hinders the functioning of *logismos* to a dramatic extent.

Consistently with the centrality of God and the knowledge of God for Philo, Carlos Lévy calls Philo’s doctrine of the soul a “religious psychology,” meaning “one in which it is not important to determine the exact nature and function of the soul but its relation to God.”¹² Everything, indeed, revolves around God: Philo defines soul as a divine emanation and identifies the real human prerogative as the capacity for worshipping the One Being, God (*Somn.* 1.35). According to Philo, *logismos* is not a property of humans, but a gift from God. In *Cher.* 69 Philo stresses the weakness of human reason, as he also does, and to a greater extent, in *Praem.* 29, where he warns against the self-affirmation of human λογισμός and αἴσθησις. One should rather “take God for one’s sole stay and support with a reasonableness whose resolution does not falter, and a faith unswerving and securely founded” (*Praem.* 29). In *Congr.* 155, he proposes a positive meaning of *logismos* in opposition to human lower faculties: “mind is more powerful, more active [δυνατώτερον και δραστικώτερον], and altogether better than the hand”. In *Mos.* 185, *logismos* is described as “the highest authority within us,” because it is the part of the soul that can make us closer to God as far as possible. The key resides in the relation of one’s *logismos* to God.

Crucial to the issue of the knowledge of God in Philo is the fact that he seems to have been the first to mention an intelligible Form of God.¹³ In *Somn.* 1.232, he mentions “the archetypal Form” (τὸ ἀρχέτυπον εἶδος) of God. Incarnate souls, that is, souls that are found in bodies such as those of human beings living on earth, cannot have any grasp of the Form of God, which is only accessible to incorporeal souls, such as those of angels who serve God and are close to God. Angels, indeed, are described as disembodied souls, without any irrationality, similar to monads through their pure *logismoι* (*Spec.Leg.* 1.6). From the very ontological point of view, thus, the fact of being embodied renders this kind of perfection impossible. Philo insists that incarnate human beings cannot know God, or contemplate God’s intelligible Form also in *Spec.Leg.* 1.45. Here Philo is reporting Moses’ dialogue with God: “I bow before Your admonitions, that I never could have received the manifest Form of your appearance [τὸ τῆς σῆς φαντασίας ἐναργὲς εἶδος], but I implore You that I may at least contemplate the glory that is around You [περὶ σέ].” We shall return very soon to the distinction that Philo draws between seeing God (banned to humans on earth) and what is “around God” (permitted), which will have a remarkable *Wirkungsgeschichte* especially in Christian

¹¹ See the introductory essay (vii-lxxxiv) and the commentary on KG 1.32 in Ilaria L.E. Ramelli, *Evagrius’s Kephalaia Gnostika*, Leiden-Atlanta: Brill-SBL, 2015.

¹² Carlos Lévy, “Philo and the Stoic conception of soul,” in *Lovers of Souls ad Lovers of Bodies: Philosophical and Religious Perspectives in Late Antiquity*, forthcoming.

¹³ See also Dragos Giulea, “Simpliciores, Eruditi, and the Noetic Form of God,” *HTR* 108 (2015) 263-288: 268-269.

Platonism. More generally, indeed, “Philo exerted, along with Plotinus, an immeasurable influence on the Christian mystical tradition.”¹⁴

First, in the light of Philo’s remarks concerning the inaccessibility of the Form of God for embodied humans, we have to ask the following question: when Philo speaks of the “heir of the divine things” in *Quis haeres rerum divinarum sit*, and he is thinking of the person who inherits what is divine, does this include the knowledge of God? If so, wouldn’t his contradict the inaccessibility of the Form of God? The answer seems to be that there is in fact no contradiction, since Philo envisages a kind of knowledge of God that is not discursive knowledge, and not even the intuition of an intelligible Form, but a mystical, ecstatic knowledge.

Indeed, in *Haer.* 68 Abram, before becoming Abraham, asks who will inherit the divine things, and his reply points to a mystical knowledge of God, which requires an ecstasy, a leaving behind of oneself: the heir will be “not the way of thinking that abides in the prison of the body of its own freewill, but that which, released from its fetters into liberty, has come forth outside the prison walls, and, so to say, has left itself behind.”¹⁵ This ecstasy is further detailed by Philo as an allegorisation of Abram’s departure from his land: “Leave not only your land, that is, the body; your family, that is, the senses; your father’s house, that is, the *logos*—but also become a fugitive from yourself, and exit yourself” (*Haer.* 14). To inherit God, that is, to know God, means to perform an ecstasy or departure from one’s very self—body, senses, *logos*, and all. This means not only setting aside sense-perception and the form of knowledge based on sense-perception, but also rational knowledge, with its knower-known dualism.¹⁶ What must be achieved is a form of ecstasy that is the fourth, and highest, kind of ecstasy classified by Philo in *Haer.* 51: the divine possession that is typical of prophets.¹⁷ In this case, the human *logos* must set, like the sun, and when darkness spread after sunset, this turns out to be the divine light, which overpowers human faculties and is therefore experienced as darkness.

Philo himself experienced divine possession, as he recounts, and in this state his knowledge seems to have been “divine” in the sense that it came directly from God, not in the sense that he could have either a discursive or an intuitive knowledge of God. The presupposition is, again, that one must empty oneself: he had to be “empty” in order for him to “become full all of a sudden”; he was “showered with ideas falling from on high” (*Migr.* 7). “Language, ideas, light, and keenest vision” were all received by him “as in a clearest showing”: he obtained knowledge from God. But again the knowledge of the Form of God is (here only implicitly) precluded.

¹⁴ Charles Stang, “Writing,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Mysticism*, eds Amy Hollywood and Patricia Beckman, Cambridge: CUP, 252-263: 253.

¹⁵ Trans. Colton-Whitaker with slight modifications. On mystical theology in Philo see C. Noack, *Gottesbewusstsein. Exegetische Studien zur Soteriologie und Mystik bei Philon von Alexandrien*, WUNT 2/116, Thüringen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000.

¹⁶ See my “The Divine as Inaccessible Object of Knowledge in Ancient Platonism.”

¹⁷ For Philo’s impact on Origen’s theory of prophecy see my Origen Prophecy*

The Hebrew Bible's terms *urim* and *thummim*, designating parts of the vestments of the high priest, are translated in the LXX as δῆλωσις and ἀλήθεια.¹⁸ According to Philo, both of these concepts have much to do with knowledge, and possibly with the knowledge of God—to which, as we have seen above, all knowledge refers. For δῆλωσις represents the *logos prophorikos* and ἀλήθεια the *logos endiathetos* (*Spec.Leg.* 4.69; *Quaest.Ex.* 2.116; *Mos.* 2.127-129)—which can be guaranteed to be truth only if it is that of God or if it comes from God. In Ex 28:30 LXX and Lev 8:8 LXX, the breastplate of the high priest, on which the *urim* and *thummim* are found, is called λογεῖον or λόγιον, which Philo connected with the *logos* (*Quaest.Ex.* 2.110-111; 2.116). The fact that the *logos*, δῆλωσις, and ἀλήθεια belonged primarily to the high priest—according to an interpretation that was taken over by Origen¹⁹—suggests that the knowledge they indicate refers primarily to the knowledge of God, and that this comes from revelation and worship, represented by the high priest. Again, however, there is no hint that humans can achieve a discursive or intuitive-intellectual knowledge of God. The mystical knowledge of God is of a different kind.

This does not mean that Philo thinks that humans on earth can know absolutely nothing of God. He rather availed himself of the above-mentioned strategy of differentiation and established that what is unknowable is God's essence, like God's intelligible Form mentioned above, and what is knowable is God's powers (δυνάμεις) and operations / activities (ἐνέργειαι). Indeed, Philo elaborated his whole doctrine of God's powers as knowable expressions of the unknowable divinity.²⁰ Logos and Wisdom were prominent among God's powers; creative, royal, gracious, legislative, and providential powers are the main divine powers Philo singles out.²¹ At least Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and Gregory of Nyssa were indebted to Philo in this respect and more generally in their theology, both apophatic and cataphatic. Philo's Logos and Dynamis of God in some respects became the Christ-Logos of Clement, Origen, and other Christian thinkers; Clement took over Philo's doctrine of the divine δυνάμεις and for

¹⁸ See Adam Kamesar, "ΔΗΛΩΣΙΣ and ΑΛΗΘΕΙΑ: The Septuagint, Philo, and Some Later Rhetorical Texts," in *Pascha nostrum Christus. Essays in Honour of Raniero Cantalamessa*, eds Pier Franco Beatrice – Bernard Pouderon, Paris: Beauchesne, 2016, 17-26.

¹⁹ *Hom.Lev.* 6.4, followed by Jerome, *Comm.Hos.* 3.4-5.

²⁰ See Peter Frick, *Divine Providence in Philo of Alexandria*, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999, 73–88; Monique Alexandre, "La puissance de Dieu chez Philon," in *Potere e potenze in Filone di Alessandria*, eds. Francesca Calabi, Olivier Munnich, Gretchen Reydams-Schils, Emmanuele Vimercati, Turnhout: Brepols 2015, ch. 3; David T. Runia, "Philo of Alexandria on the Human Consequences of Divine Power," *ibidem* ch. 14; Ilaria Ramelli, "Divine Power in Origen of Alexandria: Sources and Aftermath," in *Divine Powers in Late Antiquity*, Oxford: OUP, 2016, 177-198.

²¹ On the (relative) revelatory power of the Logos in Philo see Emmanuel Albano, *I silenzi delle Sacre Scritture: limiti e possibilità di rivelazione del Logos negli scritti di Filone, Clemente e Origene*, SEA 147, Rome: Augustinianum, 2014.

the most part transferred them onto Christ-Logos.²² Clement's apophaticism and his distinction between God's powers (knowable) and God's essence (unknowable) derives mainly from Philo. For Clement, too, human *logos* is frail and incapable of grasping or expressing God; the names and appellatives that both philosophers and poets have attached to God "do not express God's essence, which is ineffable, but God's powers and operations" (*Strom.* 6.18.165. 5-166.2).²³ Philo also contributed to shape Origen's concept of the divine Hypostasis of the Son, Christ-Logos, as I have suggested elsewhere.²⁴ The divine power is an aspect of the divinity that can be known together with its operations, as opposite to its unknowable essence/nature. This dichotomy will be developed especially by Origen and Gregory of Nyssa.²⁵ Jang Ryu distinguishes two epistemological approaches to the issue of the knowledge of God and its limits in Philo's oeuvre, one in each of his exegetical series of writings: in the Allegorical Commentary²⁶ and in the Exposition of the Law.²⁷ While these two perspectives depend on Philo's prevailing interests in each of the two sets of writings, the main tenet of the unknowability of God's essence and of the knowability of God's existence and works certainly hold true, I find, as representative of Philo's thought as a whole.

To Philo's mind, even the knowledge of the divine powers, let alone God's essence, is a gift from God: "How could the soul have conceived of God, had He not 'breathed into' it ... the human mind would never have ventured to soar so high as to grasp the nature of God, had not God Himself drawn it up to Himself, so far as it was possible that the human mind should be drawn up, and stamped it (ἐτύπωσεν) with the powers that are within the scope of its understanding" (*Leg.* 1.38). The last sentence would even suggest that there are other powers that are beyond the grasp of embodied human intellects' understanding. In this connection, it is worth noting that Philo influenced Clement in the exegesis of Ex 33:13ff. and in his related apophaticism. For Philo, Ex 33:13 indicates that it is the Divinity itself that makes itself known; Clement took over this exegesis, only adding the identification of the divine Logos,

²² See David Runia, "Clement of Alexandria and the Philonic Doctrine of the Divine Power(s)," *Vigiliae Christianae* 58 (2004):256-276. On divine δυνάμεις, which count 187 occurrences in Philo's corpus (108 plural, 79 singular), see Cristina Termini, *Le potenze di Dio. Studio su δύναμις in Filone*, Rome: Augustinianum, 2000, who argues for their theophanic nature vs. an independent ontological reality; Francesca Calabi, "Tra Platone e la Bibbia: ontologia e teologia in Filone," *Oltrecorrente* 9 (2004) 47-59; Martin Neher, *Wesen und Wirken der Weisheit in der Sapientia Salomonis*, Berlin: de Gruyter, 2004, 155-163.

²³ Joseph Trigg, "Receiving the Alpha: Negative Theology in Clement," in *Studia Patristica* 31 (1997) 540-555; Arkadi Choufrine, *Gnosis, Theophany, Theosis: Studies in Clement of Alexandria's Appropriation of His Background*, New York: Lang, 2002; Henny Fiskå Hägg, *Clement of Alexandria and the Beginning of Christian Apophaticism*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006; Annewies van den Hoek, "God beyond Knowing," in Andrew McGowan et al. (ed.), *God in Early Christian Thought. Essays in Memory of Lloyd G. Patterson*, Leiden: Brill 2009, 37-60.

²⁴ "Origen, Greek Philosophy, and the Birth of the Trinitarian Meaning of Hypostasis," *Harvard Theological Review* 105,3 (2012) 302-350; further in "Clement's Notion of the Logos 'All Things As One.' Its Alexandrian Background in Philo and its Developments in Origen and Nyssen," in *Alexandrian Personae: Scholarly Culture and Religious Traditions in Ancient Alexandria (1st ct. BCE-4ct. CE)*, ed. Zlatko Pleše, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, forthcoming.

²⁵ As is argued in Ramelli, "The Divine as Inaccessible Object of Knowledge in Ancient Platonism."

²⁶ Jang Ryu, *Knowledge of God in Philo of Alexandria*, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015, 23-70.

²⁷ Ryu, *Knowledge*, 71-147.

mediator of this knowledge, with the Son: “only through divine grace and through the Logos coming from God can one conceive the Unknowable [τὸ ἄγνωστον]” (*Strom.* 5.12.82.4). For Philo, as later for Clement, Abraham sees the place of God from far away (Gen 22:4) because the place of God is difficult to reach. This is what Plato called “the region of Ideas/Forms” (χώρα ἰδεῶν), having learnt from Moses that it is a region because it encompasses the multiplicity and totality of beings (*Strom.* 5.11.73.3). Here Clement is using again Philo’s exegesis of Gen 22:4. Concerning divine appellatives, such as One, Good, Nous, Being, or Father, “none of these, taken separately, can designate God, but all of them together indicate (ἐνδεικτικά) the power of the universal Master” (*Strom.* V, 12, 82, 1-2). For Philo as well as for Clement, no divine name reveals the essence of God—thus, in *Protr.* 11.114.1-2, God is inaccessible light—but they indicate the divine powers and activities, which are knowable.

The knowledge of God can be only knowledge of God’s manifestations in the world through divine powers and activities such as creation and providence, or else knowledge of the Divinity itself, but not discursive or intellectual, not dualistic knowledge as a cognitive relation of knower and known, but a mystical knowledge. Within such a framework, it will not come as a surprise that, like Plutarch and later Clement,²⁸ Philo characterised the instruction in the “Mosaic philosophy” as an initiation into the mysteries.²⁹ In *Cher.* 42-48 Philo speaks of the knowledge of God in terms of piety and adopting mystery terminology—just as Clement and Origen will do when speaking of theology as “epoptics”.³⁰ Speaking of the division of philosophy into ethics, physics, epoptics, and logic—the Stoic tripartition plus *epoptica*—Origen posits epoptics as the crowning of philosophy: now, epoptics is theology (*de divinis et caelestibus*),³¹ which he thus deems part and parcel of philosophy, insisting that theology cannot be studied without philosophical bases (*C.Cant.* prol. 3.1-3). Porphyry too divided Plotinus’s *Enneads* into ethics (1), physics (2-3), and epoptics (4-6)—without logic. Indeed, according to Plotinus, too, philosophy included the investigation of the divine and the divine realm, which was metaphysics at its highest level. Aristotle himself treated theology as a synonym of metaphysics as opposed to physics: “Three are the theoretical branches of philosophy: mathematics, physics, and theology [μαθηματική, φυσική, θεολογική].”³² Thus, Plotinus’s discourse on the One is

²⁸ For Clement see my *Mysteries of Scripture Brill & Mysticism Münster Wilke*; for Plutarch see *Is.Os.* 68.378B: “We must take the *logos* that comes from philosophy as a mystagogue.”

²⁹ See on Philo Naomi Cohen, “The Mystery Terminology in Philo,” in *Philon und das Neue Testament*, eds Roland Deines and Karl-Wilhelm Niebuhr, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004, 173-188. Philo was highly critical of pagan mysteries per se, as is clear from *Spec.Leg.* 1.319-323. See Peter van Nuffelen, *Rethinking the Gods: Philosophical Readings of Religion in the Post-Hellenistic Period*, Cambridge: CUP, 2011, 201-205.

³⁰ Clement, *Strom.* 1.176.3; 1.15.2; 5.66.1-4; *Div.* 37. See my “The Relevance of Patristic Exegesis to Contemporary Biblical Hermeneutics,” *Religion and Theology* 22 (2015) 100-132.

³¹ According to Theon of Smyrna, epoptics for Plato was metaphysics, the study of the Ideas (*Exp.mathem.* 15.16-18Hiller). According to Plutarch, *Is.* 77.382DE, for Plato and Aristotle epoptics studied “what is first, simple, and immaterial.”

³² Aristotle, *Metaph.* 1026a18.

both protological and theological, but theological theory can only be attempted, suggestive, and hinted at.³³

The association between theology and mysteries is well attested, as I mentioned, already in Philo. In *Cher.* 42 he claims to teach as a hierophant “the divine mysteries” (τελετὰς θείας) only to those initiates (μύστας) who are worthy of the most sacred mysteries (τελετῶν τῶν ἱεροτάτων), who are also identified as those who practice the true piety (εὐσέβειαν). Philo can present himself as a hierophant who initiates others because he in turn has been initiated into Moses’ “great mysteries” (μεγάλα μυστήρια, *Cher.* 49—a terminology that Clement will abundantly deploy), which enabled him to reach “the knowledge of the Cause and of virtue” (*Cher.* 48). In this way Philo keeps to what I have called the dialectic of apophatic theology: he speaks of the knowledge of God, the Cause, but at the same time he warns that this knowledge is a mystery. Remindful of Philo, Clement *Strom.* 2.6.1 will cast Moses’ entrance into the darkness on Mount Sinai as a journey towards the intelligible realities, to which only Christ-Logos grants access to “the great mysteries” (*Strom.* 2.134.2).³⁴

Philo’s theory of the knowledge of God, essentially resulting in apophatic and mystical theology, is grounded not only in Platonic categories of thought, but also in his Biblical exegesis—which, as I pointed out above, was performed through a Platonic lens. Philo read some scriptural passages as expressing allegorically that an apophatic approach to theology is indispensable. Through this kind of exegesis he intended to raise the awareness of the limits of the cognitive discursive-expressive power of embodied human beings with respect to the divinity in itself, i.e. the divine nature or essence (φύσις, οὐσία) as distinct from the divine powers and activities (δυνάμεις, ἐνέργειαι) and their products. This clearly presupposed a transcendent notion of the divinity, which squares with Platonism but not with an immanentistic system such as Stoicism (the latter influenced Philo as well, but more on the ethical than the ontological plane). But Philo aimed at showing that this theory is what emerges from Scripture itself and is ferreted out through meticulous and consistent exegetical efforts. The allegorical expressions of the necessity of apophatic theology according to Philo appear precisely in passages which can be compared³⁵ with the parallel interpretations of Origen and Gregory of Nyssa. This means that there was a strong continuity in this respect between Philo, Origen, and Gregory of Nyssa, and that the very tenets of apophaticism—just like other philosophical and theological doctrines—were conveyed precisely through scriptural exegesis.

³³ See Ramelli, “The Divine as Inaccessible Object.”

³⁴ See Judith Kovacs, “Concealment and Gnostic Exegesis: Clement of Alexandria’s Interpretation of the Tabernacle,” *Studia Patristica* 31 (1997) 414-437; for the reception in Gregory of Nyssa see Ann Conway-Jones, *Gregory of Nyssa’s Tabernacle Imagery in its Jewish and Christian Contexts*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014, and my review in *Journal of Religion* 2017. See also Deirdre Carabine, “A Dark Cloud: Hellenistic Influences on the Scriptural Exegesis of Clement of Alexandria and the Pseudo-Dionysius,” in *Scriptural Interpretation in the Fathers*, eds Thomas Finan and Vicent Twomey, Dublin: Blackrock, 1995, 61-74.

³⁵ See Ilaria Ramelli, “Philosophical Allegoresis of Scripture in Philo and Its Legacy in Gregory of Nyssa,” *Studia Philonica Annual* 20 (2008) 55-99.

Indeed, through Biblical exegesis Philo himself came up with, and posited, the immensely influential principle that the divinity is unknowable in its essence (οὐσία), and therefore also ineffable, but knowable through its activity. Consistently, in *Spec.Leg.* 1.32 Philo gives up determining “what is God’s essence” or οὐσία.³⁶ For “What Is cannot be grasped *from itself* alone, without anything else, but *only through its works*, either qua creator or qua ruler” (μὴ δύνηται τὸ ὄν ἄνευ ἐτέρου τινὸς ἐξ αὐτοῦ μόνου καταλαβεῖν, ἀλλὰ διὰ τῶν δρωμένων ἢ κτίζον ἢ ἄρχον, *Abr.* 122). The Divinity in itself, in its very nature, is “ineffable, unintelligible, impossible to grasp” (*Mut. nom.* 10;15). Even the epithets that Scripture attaches to God do not describe God’s very essence (οὐσία), that is, God’s true nature or φύσις, but they rather indicate God’s relationship to the creation. This is why Philo insists that what human beings—at least in their embodied existence on earth—can know about God is *that God is*, as Ex 3:14 reveals (“I am the One who Is”), but not *what God is* (*Mos.* 1.75).

Human intellectual faculties cannot grasp God’s essence due to God’s transcendence, the revelation of God in Scripture represents an important factor that moderates apophatic theology for Philo (*Leg.All.* 3.100), just as later for Clement, Origen, Gregory of Nyssa, and Evagrius. The gnoseological help available from Scripture, however, is subject to precise hermeneutical rules in Philo’s view. Allegoresis, in the sense of the allegorical exegesis of the sacred text—in the case of Philo and his patristic Platonic followers, that of Scripture, but in the case of “pagan” Neoplatonists, for instance, poetry and various forms of traditional myths and rituals³⁷—is the key to comprehending the true meaning of the Bible. Now such a key was available to few, those who mastered this philosophical tool. This will also be true from the viewpoint of Clement and, to some extent, Origen and Evagrius, but also “pagan” Middle Platonists and Neoplatonists who applied philosophical allegoresis to Homer and other traditional, authoritative texts, just as the Stoics had done before them.³⁸ Philosophy is therefore the key to the knowledge of God, which in its highest form becomes mystical.

Philo bases his apophatic theology on Ex 20:21, like Clement, Origen, and Gregory of Nyssa after him. This is the episode in which Moses enters the darkness in which God is: “Now the people were standing at a distance, but Moyses went into the darkness [σκοτός] where God was” (NETS). Philo and his followers read this darkness as an allegory of God’s unknowability.³⁹ Darkness is a metaphor of human cognitive limits before the divine and, as I mentioned above when speaking of Philo’s allegory of the setting of human rational faculty, at the same time is divine light, which overpowers human faculties and for this reason is experienced by humans as darkness. It is a metaphor of apophatic theology, that is to say, the aware-

³⁶ See also *Spec.Leg.* 1.43; *Deus inm.* 62; *Post. Caini* 15.

³⁷ See my “Valuing Antiquity in Antiquity by Means of Allegoresis,” in *Valuing the Past in the Greco-Roman World. Proceedings of the Penn-Leiden Colloquium on Ancient Values VII, Leiden 14-16 June 2012*, eds James Ker and Christoph Pieper, Mnemosyne Supplements, Leiden: Brill, 2014, 485-507.

³⁸ See, e.g., Ilaria L.E. Ramelli, “Stoic Homeric Allegoresis,” in *Brill’s Companion to the Reception of Homer from the Hellenistic Age to Late Antiquity*, ed. Christina-Panagiota Manolea, Leiden: Brill, 2017.

³⁹ Philo *The Posterity of Cain* 14; *The Changing of Names* 7.

ness that the human *logos* (word and thought) cannot grasp and express the divinity, whose transcendence is allegorised as a light that is so bright as to blind human (intellectual) eyes.

In the foundational Biblical text for apophatic theology, Ex 33:20-23, God states that Moses will not be allowed to see God's face, but he will only be able to see God's back: "You shall not be able to see my face. For a person shall never see my face and live ... You shall stand on the rock. Now, whenever my glory passes by, then I will put you in a hole of the rock, and I will cover you with my hand until I pass by. And I will take my hand away, and then you shall see my hind parts, but my face will not appear to you." Philo interprets v. 23 about seeing only the "back" of God, but not God's face, as expressing allegorically that only what is "behind" God, "at his back," "after" God—including his operations and works—is knowable to humans on earth: "God says: 'You will see my back parts [τὰ ὀπίσω], but my face [τὸ πρόσωπον] you will not behold.' For it is sufficient for the wise man to know what comes after and follows [τὰ ἀκόλουθα καὶ ἐπόμενα], and the things which are after God [ὅσα μετὰ τὸν θεόν]; but he who wishes to see the principal Essence/Being [τὴν δ' ἡγεμονικὴν οὐσίαν] will be blinded by the exceeding brilliancy of its rays before he can see it" (*Fug.* 165). Here we see again at work the metaphor of the divine light that blinds and therefore manifests itself as darkness to human impaired intellectual sight. The visual metaphor of blindness caused by the excessive brightness of the divine essence was indeed typical of Philo.⁴⁰ Gregory of Nyssa was later inspired by Philo in his exegesis of this scriptural passage in reference to apophatic theology, although, as I suggested elsewhere,⁴¹ he seems to have read Philo's words through the filter of Origen. The difference between Philo and Origen in this exegesis is that Origen seems to introduce an eschatological nuance in the interpretation of τὰ ὀπίσω that is absent in Philo. This is indeed a more general element of disagreement between Philo and Origen, as I shall point out in the final section of this essay.

Through allegoresis, Philo refers Ex 33:20-23 to God's unknowability also in *Spec.Leg.* 1.32.50. Philo's exegesis, which was followed rather closely by Origen and Gregory of Nyssa, is that God's existence is easy to apprehend, but God's essence or nature is impossible to grasp. Nevertheless, Philo insists, the search for God—and therefore the whole theological endeavour—is the noblest of all human activities. As a consequence, the unknowability of God's essence should not discourage human "theo-logical" investigation. Indeed, Philo, like later Platonist philosophers-theologians such as Clement, Origen, Plotinus, Gregory of Nyssa, reveals a tension between the apophatic theology that he professes (with its claim that the Divinity cannot be known in its essence or expressed by humans because of its transcendence) and the θεο-λογία or theory/discourse about the divine that he does not renounce pursuing—and even recommending as the highest human activity. To develop his theory/discourse about the divine notwithstanding its unknowability, Philo, like the above-mentioned later Platonists, pursued what I have called a strategy of differentiation. He thereby posited that, while the Di-

⁴⁰ David Bradshaw, "The Vision of God in Philo of Alexandria," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 72 (1998) 483-500.

⁴¹ In "Philosophical Allegoresis."

vinity's very nature or essence is inaccessible, It manifests itself in its powers and operations and their effects.

Philo's conviction that the divine in its essence cannot be grasped by the minds of human beings is similar to that of Plotinus, Origen, Gregory of Nyssa, and other philosophers-theologians who shared the same philosophical tradition (Platonism), notwithstanding their different religious affiliations (Jewish, "pagan," or Christian). In this framework, Platonism seems to have played a remarkable role, since the Platonic category of transcendence applied to God helps to explain the largely homogeneous nature of their reflections on God as unknowable to human minds qua object in a subject-object cognitive relation, which can nevertheless be experienced in a meta-intellectual way (what we might call mystical knowledge, as I have shown above in Philo). Plotinus opposed dualistic intellectual knowledge, imprisoned in the knower-known dualism, to mystical "knowledge," which allows one to "touch" the One (God), while one cannot "see" it either with the eyes of the body or with those of the soul. This is a way of hinting at what is impossible to comprehend or express.⁴²

Unlike Plotinus, and like Christian Platonists such as Clement, Origen, Gregory, and Evagrius after him, Philo admitted that a mitigation of apophaticism, or at least a mediation, can come from the revelation of God in Scripture—and I have already noted that this revelation is however to be attained through an essentially Platonic allegorical reading, which once again brings Biblical exegesis into the realm of Platonism. But for the Christian Platonists, in so many other respects the heirs of Philo, apophaticism and mysticism have also an *eschatological* dimension, as an anticipation of the final restoration (ἀποκατάστασις) and deification (θέωσις).⁴³ This dimension would seem to be lacking in Philo, who appears to have entertained a rather elusive view of the end. Indeed, if Philo adopted, at least as an esoteric doctrine, the theory of metempsychosis—which he approvingly mentioned in at least three passages⁴⁴—this would square well with a view that does not contemplate the end of the world, and with the doctrine of the preexistence of souls. This is precisely what later readers would charge Philo with. In Codex Monacensis Graecus 459, containing works by Philo, on page 1, at the bottom of the page, a scholium notes that Philo supported "three doctrines opposed to the church": "matter without beginning, preexistence of souls, and stars and air regarded as alive."⁴⁵ In the same manuscript, a passage from *De somniis* (1.137-139) concerning the preexistence of souls and metempsychosis is lacking, probably by an act of censorship.

⁴² On Plotinus's "mystical" knowledge of God see my "The Divine as Inaccessible Object of Knowledge in Ancient Platonism" and "Mysticism in Middle and Neoplatonism."

⁴³ See my *The Christian Doctrine of Apokatastasis: A Critical Assessment from the New Testament to Eriugena*, VCS 120, Leiden: Brill, 2013, with the reviews by Anthony Meredith, *International Journal of the Platonic Tradition* 8.2 (2014) 255-257; Mark J. Edwards, *Journal of Theological Studies* 65.2 (2014) 718-724; Johannes van Oort, *Vigiliae Christianae* 64 (2014) 352-353; Chris L. De Wet, *Journal of Early Christian History* 5.2 (2015) 1-3; Steven Nemes, *Journal of Analytic Theology* 3 (2015) 226-233; George Karamanolis, *International Journal of the Platonic Tradition* 10 (2016) 142-146; Robin Parry, *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 18.3 (2016) 335-338.

⁴⁴ See Sami Yli-Kyriänmaa, *Reincarnation in Philo of Alexandria*, Atlanta: SBL, 2015.

⁴⁵ See David Runia, 'Philo in Alexandria: An Exploration', *Vigiliae Christianae* 70 (2016) 259-81:262.

Indeed, that metempsychosis implied the rejection of the end of the world—which Origen regarded as a Biblical doctrine—was pointed out by Origen, who refused to uphold this theory exactly for this reason (probably being aware that Philo hinted at it with approval). The end of the world as the reason for the rejection of metempsychosis is stressed by Origen more than once: “If indeed, according to the authority of Scripture, the end of the world will come soon [*consummatio imminet mundi*] and the present corruptible state will change into an incorruptible one, there seems to be no doubt that in the state of the present life it is impossible to return to a body for a second or third time. For, if one admits this, it will necessarily follow that, given the infinite successions of these passages, the world will have no end [*finem nesciat mundus*]” (*C.Cant.* 2.5.24). Likewise in a surely authentic work preserved in Greek: “If one supports metempsychosis, as a consequence one will have to maintain the incorruptibility of the world” (*C.Io.* 6.86). But this contradicts Scripture—at least on Origen’s reading if not on that of Philo, probably also because Origen included the Apocalypse of John in Scripture as inspired—and Origen explicitly rejects metempsychosis in many passages.⁴⁶

Philo, unlike his patristic followers, is far removed from an eschatological orientation, as well as from universalism, as I have thoroughly argued elsewhere.⁴⁷ His concept of *apokatastasis*—revolving around the restoration of the soul and the restoration of Israel—seems to bear no relation to the doctrine of the eventual universal salvation, nor to the resurrection of the body, whereas Origen’s doctrine of *apokatastasis* implies both the resurrection of the body and the absolute universality of such restoration.⁴⁸ In spite of these divergencies, Philo must be credited all the same with being one of the main inspirers of Origen’s doctrine of *apokatastasis* as well as, more generally, his exegesis and theology.

Indeed, both Clement of Alexandria and Origen, as well as later Gregory of Nyssa and Evagrius, were certainly influenced by Philo’s idea of the restoration of the soul, as well as of the restoration of Israel, although with remarkable differences too. One concerns the resurrection of the body, which Origen and his followers maintained as constitutive of the restoration, conceiving it as a “spiritualisation” of the body (this will be crystal clear in Evagrius, who will posit the subsumption of body into soul and soul into intellect and a resurrection of the body, the soul, and the intellect⁴⁹). The restoration for Origen will undo both the death of the body and the death of the soul. For the life of the soul, according to both Philo and Origen, is virtue, and the death of the soul is vice, evil, detachment from God-the Good. Philo, in particular, spoke of the death of the soul as dying to the life of virtue (*Leg.* 1.107). This by no means should compromise theodicy, since God “created (ἐδημιούργησεν) no soul barren of

⁴⁶ E.g. *C.Matt.* 10.20; 11.17; 13.1. In *C.Io.* he still presented metempsychosis as a hypothesis to be discussed (6.7;85), but rejects it: John the Baptist is not a reincarnation of Elijah, but an angel sent onto earth (2.186). Further passages in which Origen rejects metempsychosis in Panayiotis Tzamalikos, *Origen: Philosophy of History and Eschatology*, Leiden: Brill, 2007, 48-53.

⁴⁷ “Philo’s Doctrine of Apokatastasis: Philosophical Sources, Exegetical Strategies, and Patristic Aftermath”, *The Studia Philonica Annual* 26 (2014) 29-55; reviewed by Johannes van Oort, *Vigiliae Christianae* 69.5 (2015) 577.

⁴⁸ See Ramelli, *The Christian Doctrine of Apokatastasis*, 137-215.

⁴⁹ KG 5.19, 5.22, 5.25 with commentary in *Evagrius’s Kephalaia Gnostica*.

good" (*Leg.* 1.34) and the choice for the adhesion to, or detachment from, the Good depends on the individual soul—exactly as Origen will maintain, also in an effort to defend theodicy.⁵⁰

That virtue is the life of the soul is a tenet also shared by a disciple of Plotinus and Origen, Porphyry, whose acquaintance with Philo's ideas would be very interesting to investigate. He posits two kinds of death, the death of the body and good philosophical death to the body or detachment from the body (which Origen classified as good death to sin), in order for one to live a life of virtue.⁵¹ Exactly like Origen in his *Dialogue with Heraclides*, Porphyry takes soul to admit of death as well, since passions leading to vices are non-life (*Sent.* 23), but the soul is ἡ οὐσία ἧς ἐν ζωῇ τὸ εἶναι ("the essence/being/substance whose existence is life," *Sent.* 21), as Origen also maintained: this is why there cannot be substantial/essential death of the soul, *substantialis interitus*.⁵² Therefore, the death of the soul is not ontological, but moral: for Porphyry, too, it is passions that lead to the death of the soul. For both Origen and Porphyry, who likely derived this notion from Origen, the soul does not perish ontologically, but dies morally in passions and sin. Plotinus also speaks of the death of the soul in *Enn.* 1.8 as a filling up with matter. Origen and Porphyry mention, not so much matter, as passions and sins as the causes for the death of the soul. Philo also thought that virtue is the life of the soul and vice produces the death of the soul,⁵³ but his position concerning the possibility of an ontological death, i.e. annihilation, of the soul—which is accepted as real by John Conroy⁵⁴—is more elusive (since Philo may be thinking of a moral kind of death), and is complicated by the possibility of Philo's penchant for the theory of metempsychosis, which would offer a way out from the ontological death of the soul through repeated transmigrations.

⁵⁰ On this point see my "Origen, Bardaisan, and the Origin of Universal Salvation," *Harvard Theological Review* 102,2 (2009) 135-168.

⁵¹ *Sent.* 9, p. 4.3-6 Lamberz, commenting on Plato *Phaedo* 64C: Ὁ θάνατος διπλοῦς, ὁ μὲν οὖν συνεγνωσμένος λυομένου τοῦ σώματος ἀπὸ τῆς ψυχῆς, ὁ δὲ τῶν φιλοσόφων λυομένης τῆς ψυχῆς ἀπὸ τοῦ σώματος· καὶ οὐ πάντως ὁ ἕτερος τῷ ἑτέρῳ ἔπεται *Sent.* 8: "Nature looses the body from the soul, while the soul looses itself from the body."

⁵² *Hom.* 2 in *Ps.* 38, 12. See Ramelli, *The Christian Doctrine of Apokatastasis*, 141-143.

⁵³ See my "Philo's Doctrine of Apokatastasis" and "1 Tim 5:6 and the Notion and Terminology of Spiritual Death: Hellenistic Moral Philosophy in the Pastoral Epistles," *Aevum* 84 (2010) 3-16; Dieter Zeller, "The Life and Death of the Soul in Philo of Alexandria: The Use and Origin of a Metaphor," *The Studia Philonica Annual* 7 (1995) 19-55.

⁵⁴ John T. Conroy, "Philo's Death of the Soul: Is This Only a Metaphor?" *The Studia Philonica Annual* 23 (2011) 23-40: the notion of the death of the rational soul in Philo implies that impious and vicious people descend to the level of animals, having only their vital soul left but not their rational soul. This idea was later developed by Origen, on the moral but not ontological plane. If Philo embraced metempsychosis, the picture gets once again complicated.

Another core difference between Philo and Origen (and followers) is precisely the *eschatological* orientation, which is lacking or very elusive in Philo in general,⁵⁵ and in particular in his doctrine of the restoration of the soul, while it is paramount in Clement, Origen, Gregory of Nyssa, and other patristic supporters of the doctrine of universal restoration. Yet another difference may lie precisely in the *universality* of the restoration itself, which Origen, Gregory of Nyssa, Evagrius, and other Origenians upheld, but which is not present, or at least is not clear, in Philo. Here, however, Philo's possible adhesion to the theory of metempsychosis, at least on the esoteric plane, seems to me to complicate the picture, since it leaves the door open for an imperfect, or even heavily wanting, soul to attain restoration and the knowledge of God in a future reincarnation. Therefore, this avenue of research is worthy of further investigation, both *per se* and in its implications for the relation between Philo's and Origen's ideas (as well as Clement's).

Even though Origen did not support metempsychosis, and rather opposed to it his own doctrine of "ensomatosis,"⁵⁶ Philo's notion of allowing souls much more time beyond one single earthly life to attain perfection is not too dissimilar from Origen's idea of a long sequence of aeons that allows rational creatures to improve and attain perfection beyond their earthly life. The main differences are two here:

(1) will rational creatures change bodies, as the doctrine of metempsychosis presupposes, or will they keep one single body which changes according their moral choices and advancements or regressions (Origen's position)?

(2) is the sequence of aeons infinite or finite (Origen's position), and therefore is *apokatastasis* only temporary, before another cycle and so on forever, or is it definitive and eternal, after the end of all aeons (Origen's position)? The same difference with respect to *apokatastasis* will later obtain between Origen and Proclus.⁵⁷ Philo would seem closer to Proclus in this respect than to Origen.

⁵⁵ See Lester Grabbe, "Eschatology in Philo and Josephus," in *Judaism in Late Antiquity*, ed. Alan Avery-Peck and Jacob Neusner; Leiden: Brill, 2000, 4:163–185; Wilfried Eisele, *Ein unterschütterliches Reich: Die Mittelplatonische Umformung des Parusiegedankens im Hebräerbrief*, Berlin: de Gruyter, 2003, 160–240. According to Eisele, Philo can be said to have an "eschatology" only to a certain point: it is better to speak of human destiny in terms of aretology, since immortality for Philo depends on virtue. However, if Philo accepted metempsychosis, the attainment of virtue can be spread over more cycles of reincarnation. The problem, as in Neoplatonism, would be what happens to the finally perfect soul: will it have to undergo reincarnation forever or not?

⁵⁶ On which see my "Origen," in *A History of Mind and Body in Late Antiquity*, Cambridge: CUP, forthcoming, Ch. 17.

⁵⁷ See Ilaria L.E. Ramelli, "Proclus of Constantinople and Apokatastasis," in *Arkhai: Proclus Diadochus of Constantinople and his Abrahamic Interpreters*, eds David Butorac and Danielle Layne, Berlin: de Gruyter, 2016, 95-122.