

FREEDOM FROM NECESSITY IN PHILO OF ALEXANDRIA'S
ETHICAL THOUGHT

Klaus Vibe

Fjellhaug International University College, Aarhus, Denmark

Introduction

In *Deus Imm.* 47–49, Philo asserts that the God who gave birth to the mind also judged it worthy of freedom (αὐτὴν [διάνοια] ὁ γεννήσας πατὴρ ἐλευθερίας ἤξιωσε) and that every human being has received a spontaneous and self-determining mind (ὁ δὲ ἄνθρωπος ἐθελουργοῦ καὶ αὐτοκελεύστου γνώμης λαχών). Similarly, Philo contends that God has created each human being as a free and unfettered being (εἰργάσατο αὐτὸν ἄφετον καὶ ἐλεύθερον) who makes use of (χρησόμενον) its powers of action (ταῖς ἐνεργείαις) by means of voluntary and spontaneous actions and deliberate choices (ἐκουσίοις καὶ πραιρητικαῖς) (49). More specifically, human beings are free, insofar as their lives are not determined by what Philo defines as necessity (ἀνάγκη) (*Deus Imm.* 47, 48), as necessity represents that which prevents human beings from living as self-determining creatures. In this way, Philo reveals something important about his understanding of human freedom: human freedom manifests itself as self-determination as opposed to other-determination.

This study argues that Philo's notion of human freedom needs to be elucidated from the perspective of his use of the concept of necessity. Philo's use of this concept reveals that his notion of necessity derives from the Platonic tradition. Therefore, Philo's notion of human freedom needs to be explained as an adaption of Platonic rather than Stoic beliefs. This explains why Philo describes human freedom as relative by comparison with divine freedom.

Philonic Scholarship on Philo's Notion of Human Freedom

In the middle of the twentieth century, Harry Wolfson argued that 'it is quite evident that by man's free will Philo means an absolutely undetermined freedom like that enjoyed by God, who by his power to work miracles can upset the laws of causality which He himself has established'.¹ As Wolfson explains it, 'He [God] would not allow that the struggle between mind and body should be determined, as the struggle between two bodies, by the ordinary laws of nature. Mind was therefore endowed by God with part of that power, which He himself possesses, of upsetting the laws of nature.'² This endowment from God establishes human freedom, so that 'the essential rationality of the mind does not preclude the possibility of its acting, by the mere power of its free will, against the dictates of reason'.³

Wolfson's understanding of Philo's notion of human freedom was subsequently challenged by David Winston. In response to Wolfson, Winston points out that 'Philo is only adapting here [*Deus*. 47] for his own use a characteristically Stoic notion'.⁴ As Winston describes it, the Stoics held a relative free will theory according to which 'God has given us a portion of himself thereby enabling us to make choices'. Hence, 'for the Stoics man is not a mechanical link in the causal chain, but an active though subordinate partner of God' and 'it is this which allows them to shift the responsibility for evil from God to man'.⁵ According to Winston, Philo has adapted this Stoic notion and

Philo's meaning, then, is that in so far as man shares in God's Logos, he shares to some extent in God's freedom. That this is only a relative freedom is actually emphasized by Philo when he says that God gave man such a portion of his freedom 'as man was capable of receiving' and that he was liberated 'as far as might be'. Yet this relative freedom,

1. Harry A. Wolfson, 'Philo on Free Will: And the Historical Influence of His View', *HTR* 35.2 (1942), pp. 131-69 (149-50).

2. Wolfson, 'Philo on Free Will', p. 146.

3. Wolfson, 'Philo on Free Will', p. 146.

4. David Winston, 'Philo's Doctrine of Free Will', in David Winston and John Dillon (eds.), *Two Treatises of Philo of Alexandria: A Commentary on the Gigantibus and Qoud Deus Sit Immutabilis* (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1983), pp. 181-95 (183).

5. Winston, 'Philo's Doctrine of Free Will', p. 184.

in Philo's view, is sufficient for placing the onus of moral responsibility on man and clearing God from any blame for man's sins.⁶

It follows from Winston's account that the divine gift of freedom serves the purpose of defining human beings as morally responsible creatures, thus absolving God from any blame for man's sins. Otherwise, Winston describes Philo's ethical thought as 'evidently deterministic'.⁷ According to Winston, this description of Philo's ethical thought is justified by the many passages in which Philo describes God as the source of human virtue.⁸ Moreover, as Winston points out, 'in spite of the fact that, according to Philo, God bestowed some of his own freedom on man, only God, says Philo elsewhere, is *ἐκούσιον* in the absolute sense of the word, since our own existence is ruled by necessity (*Somn.* 2.253)'.⁹ It is correct that, according to Philo, only God is *ἐκούσιον* in the absolute sense; nevertheless, Philo describes the limited human *ἐκούσιον* as the capacity to rule over necessity. This aspect of Philo's notion of human freedom cannot be explained as an adaption of Stoic beliefs. Therefore, Winston's case that Philo's notion of human freedom needs to be explained as an adaption of a Stoic notion needs to be modified.

In a more recent study of Philo and Stoic ethics, Roberto Radice argues that Philo stresses that human beings are free in matters of morality.¹⁰ According to Radice, Philo's argument in *Migr. Abr.* 180 shows that 'he accepts the principle of communion and cosmic sympathy and simply confutes the

6. Winston, 'Philo's Doctrine of Free Will', p. 184. This quotation from Winston's study is reproduced in David Winston, 'Philo's Ethical Theory', *ANRW* 2.21.1 (1984), pp. 372-416 (379), and here Winston specifies that the phrases 'as man was capable of receiving' and 'as far as might be' derive from *Deus Imm.* 47-48.

7. Winston, 'Philo's Doctrine of Free Will', p. 189.

8. Winston, 'Philo's Doctrine of Free Will', pp. 186-89.

9. Winston, 'Philo's Doctrine of Free Will', p. 188.

10. In this respect, Radice's reading of Philo is comparable to Peter Frick's. Cf. Peter Frick, *Divine Providence in Philo of Alexandria* (TSAJ, 77; Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1999), p. 164: 'Philo is quick to rule out the belief that in matters of morality human beings are under necessity, that is to say, operate within a deterministic framework', even though Frick also points out with a reference to Winston's work that 'there is in Philo also a train of thought which is deterministic in its ethical tone' so that '[r]elative freedom, for Philo, means that "insofar as man shares in God's Logos, he shares to some extent in God's freedom"' (p. 164 n. 110).

Chaldean doctrine of God as pantheist', so that the essential difference between Philo and the Stoics

seems to be the transcendent position of God, which implies that God is exempt from the law of *heimarmene*: 'God, observes Philo, is free will, the created is necessity'. As man is in God's image, and receives the divine pneuma, it is legitimate to deduce that in his moral choice he too is exempt from the necessity of events by which fate and necessity are not the 'cause of everything that happens'. This is the view that Philo expresses clearly in *Deus*. 45–47.¹¹

However, Philo's reservations regarding the Stoic notion of cosmic sympathy need to be further elaborated in order to clarify fully Philo's own position. According to the Stoics, 'this sympathy between all of the parts of the cosmos is a product of the fact that it is all permeated by breath or *pneuma*' and at the core, this idea is a 'conception of a cosmos sympathetically arranged and providentially ordered into a necessary series of causes that admits of no exceptions'.¹² In *Rer. Div. Her.* 301, Philo elaborates his own position, claiming (a) that as a philosopher, Moses understood that causes have sequence, connection and interplay (*ἀκολουθίαν μὲν καὶ εἰρμὸν καὶ ἐπιπλοκὰς αἰτιῶν*) and (b) that Moses did not refer to these as the causes of events that come to pass (*τούτοις δ' οὐκ ἀνάπτει τὰς τῶν γινομένων αἰτίας*).¹³ Philo

11. Roberto Radice, 'Philo and Stoic Ethics: Reflections on the Idea of Freedom', in Francesca Alesse (ed.), *Philo of Alexandria and Post-Aristotelian Philosophy* (Studies in Philo of Alexandria, 5; Leiden: Brill, 2008), pp. 141–67 (163, 164). The phrase in this quotation, 'God is free will ... the created is necessity' is a translation of the phrase *ὁ μὲν θεὸς ἐκούσιον, ἀνάγκη δὲ ἡ οὐσία* from *Somn.* 2.253 and the words 'cause of everything that happens' are taken from *Rer. Div. Her.* 300 (*αἰτίας γινομένων πάντων*), where Philo denies that Moses refers to fate and necessity as causes of everything that happens.

12. John Sellars, *Stoicism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), p. 103.

13. In *Somn.* 2.129–130, Philo characterizes an individual from the ruling class in Alexandria as a blasphemer, because this individual ascribed to himself divine prerogatives such as the power of constraining necessity (*εἰμαρμένης ἀνάγκης δύναμις*). Philo criticizes this man for comparing himself to God, but he does not presume that there is such a thing as a constraining necessity. In *Quaest. in Gen.* 1.21, Philo describes Adam's task of naming the animals (*Gen.* 2.19) as God's way of typifying 'all that is voluntary in us, thus confounding those who say that all things exist by

describes the cause of events that come to pass as relating to someone who is older and antecedent to these other causes (πρεσβύτερον ἄλλο ἐποχούμενον τοῖς ὄλοις), comparing the antecedent cause to a charioteer or a captain of a ship (301). This description of the older cause corresponds to Philo's description in *Migr. Abr.* 181 of the powers that hold the universe together and, as Maren Niehoff has pointed out,

the notion of divine bonds providentially holding together the cosmos and thus negating the laws of nature, according to which every creation implies destruction, echoes Plato's *Timaeus*. In this dialogue the demiurge keeps the created cosmos bound together and protects it from destruction. Philo relies on this Platonic image when opposing Stoic cosmology and insisting on God's transcendence.¹⁴

This is important, for it follows from this description that Philo does not describe the transcendent God as someone who is exempt from the laws of the Stoic fate, but as someone who is exempt from the laws of nature, according to which creation implies destruction. In that case, freedom from necessity (*Deus Imm.* 47–48) might refer to freedom from an inherent potential for destruction that characterizes created reality, in which case Philo may be describing neither God nor the individual human being as those who are somehow exempt from the laws of a Stoic fate.

In a recent book, Jonathan Klawans maintains that 'Philo exhibits little interest in the free will problem per se (the issues come up, to be sure, but the problem as such is not addressed head on, as in Josephus)'.¹⁵ Nonetheless, Klawans does clarify his own perception, pointing out that 'while Winston views Philo as essentially deterministic, I am more convinced by Wolfson that Philo allows for a meaningful free will'.¹⁶ This present study agrees with Klawans that Wolfson's thesis needs to be taken seriously, as Wolfson was correct in arguing that Philo's notion of human freedom was related to the problem of the struggle between the mind and the body, but incorrect in

necessity' (*Quaest. in Gen.* 1.21). Philo, *Questions on Genesis* (trans. Ralph Marcus; LCL, 380; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1953).

14. Maren Niehoff, *Philo of Alexandria: An Intellectual Biography* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018), p. 228.

15. Jonathan Klawans, *Josephus and the Theologies of Ancient Judaism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 249 n. 36.

16. Klawans, *Josephus and the Theologies of Ancient Judaism*, p. 256 n. 106.

suggesting that Philo describes human freedom as a freedom to freely reject the dictates of reason. Human beings are free and morally responsible, because they by virtue of their share in God's own freedom have been given the ability to rule over necessity.

The Main Thesis of This Present Study

Susanne Bobzien has clarified how ἐλεύθερος and ἐλευθερία originally functioned as political terms signifying the absence of tyranny.¹⁷ However, philosophers made metaphorical use of the contrast between freedom and tyranny, and thus 'in ethics, the external, legal or physical, freedom from the forces of tyranny and slavery is replaced by internal, psychological freedom: in order to be free, one must not be the slave of one's passions, or under the tyranny of one's desires for external, material goods'.¹⁸ Hence,

in these contexts of politics and ethics, freedom is never the freedom to decide between alternative courses of actions, or the power to do otherwise, or causal indeterminacy; nor is it ever connected with a two-sided potestative concept of that which depends on us. It is always the freedom of an individual (or group of individuals) from certain external or internal determining factors, thus providing a sphere in which the individuals are masters of their own affairs.¹⁹

It follows from this description that freedom is defined as a freedom from internal or external constraints that otherwise would prevent human beings from managing their own affairs. Jonathan Hecht has clarified how this kind of freedom is construed in a Platonic tradition:

This constraint need not be external, as in the case of determinism or, more directly, chains and manacles. If, for example, I identify one part of myself as most truly me, I might then be constrained internally by

17. For this see also Kurt Raaflaub, *The Discovery of Freedom in Ancient Greece* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

18. Susanne Bobzien, *Determinism and Freedom in Stoic Philosophy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), p. 338.

19. Bobzien, *Determinism and Freedom in Stoic Philosophy*, pp. 338-39.

my other parts. When my true self is not constrained, I am free in a way that is distinct from something simply being up to me.²⁰

Constraint is here construed as something that prevents human beings from being true to the part of themselves that they identify as most truly them. Bobzien has clarified the fundamental difference between a Platonic and a Stoic notion of this kind of freedom:

Both passions and desires are a species of belief for the Stoics. The wise are thus free, if they have the right beliefs ... and in particular do not have any wrong or false beliefs of the kind that are passions or desires. Being one's own authority, or in control of oneself, thus does not mean that some reasoning part of the souls is in control of some appetitive or emotive part of the soul ... Rather, in order to become free, or master of oneself, one has to rid oneself of false (emotive) beliefs, and replace them by true beliefs about what is desirable and what is not.²¹

Hence, in the context of ethical discussions, freedom (*ἐλευθερία*) is defined as freedom from the hegemony of the passions. Thus, the self-determining (*αὐτοκέλευστος*) (*Deus Imm.* 47) and free (*ἐλεύθερος*) (49) human being can be defined as the one who is in control of herself as opposed to being at the mercy of the passions. According to Philo, human beings can live as self-determining creatures because God has given them a share in God's own freedom. This potential of self-determination is actualized when human beings exercise control over necessity, rather than live as subjects to the hegemony of necessity.

Thus, human freedom is neither construed as a freedom to reject the dictates of reason, nor as a freedom in moral choice from the necessity of events dictated by the laws of fate. Human beings are free and self-determining creatures insofar as they follow the inducements of the right reason they have

20. Jonathan Hecht, 'Freedom of the Will in Plato and Augustine', *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 22.2 (2014), pp. 196-216 (204). Compare this with Richard F. Stalley, 'Plato's Doctrine of Freedom', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* NS 98 (1998), pp. 145-58 (145): 'the underlying idea is that we are free if we willingly follow the demands of reason rather than being coerced by external forces or by unruly desire'. For a fuller and helpful study of Plato's notion of freedom, see Siobhán McLoughlin, *The Freedom of the Good: A Study of Plato's Ethical Conception of Freedom* (PhD diss., University of New Mexico, 2012).

21. Bobzien, *Determinism and Freedom in Stoic Philosophy*, pp. 340-41.

received as a gift from God, thus subordinating necessity to the rule of the God-given reason which is constitutive of what it means to be a human being.

Necessity in Plato's Republic and Plato's Timaeus

Necessary Pleasures in Plato's Republic

In Plato's *Republic*, Socrates argues that the conditions that characterize the ideal state also characterize the righteous individual human being (*Resp.* 368E–369A). In *Resp.* 368D–374E, Socrates outlines his idea of the true or proper city state (ἡ ἀληθινὴ πόλις), which he also defines as a healthy (ὕγιής) city state, and which he contrasts with the self-indulgent city state (ἡ τρυφῶσα πόλις) (*Resp.* 372E).

The proper and healthy city is characterized by a concern for specialization and moderation. In the healthy city, each person fulfils the role for which he or she is best suited or qualified (*Resp.* 370A). In addition, the citizens of the healthy city are content to possess only the necessary things (τὰναγκαῖα) (*Resp.* 373A), which Socrates defines as goods like food, a home, clothes and shoes (*Resp.* 369C–D and 373A). In contrast, the self-indulgent state or city will inevitably cause war (*Resp.* 373A–E), because its citizens pursue luxuries like gold and ivory (*Resp.* 373A), goods that are not pursued for the sake of necessity (τοῦ ἀναγκαίου ἕνεκα) (*Resp.* 373B). It follows from this description that the proper and healthy city is guided by a concern for moderation. This concern for moderation is also stressed in the *Republic's* treatment of the way in which humans ought to relate to pleasure and desire.

In Book 8, Socrates describes how deviant regimes like timocracy, oligarchy, democracy and tyranny differ from the ideal and just city state, clarifying that in the same way as there are five different kinds of forms of government, there are five kinds of human souls (*Resp.* 544E). It is beyond the scope of this present study to account for how Socrates describes these various kinds of forms of government and corresponding souls. However, it must be stressed that in Book 8, Socrates advocates an ethic of moderation, arguing for a distinction between necessary and unnecessary pleasures (τάς τε ἀναγκαίους ἐπιθυμίας καὶ τὰς μὴ) (*Resp.* 558D). On the one hand, there is the kind of pleasures that cannot be suppressed. These pleasures are necessary and include foods such as bread and meat, which are necessary to sustain life (*Resp.* 559A–B). On the other hand, there is the kind of pleasures that can and should be suppressed, such as the desire for foods that are harmful for the

soul and thus cannot be regarded as truly necessary (ὀρθῶς οὐκ ἀναγκαία ἀν καλοῖτο) (*Resp.* 559C); these types of food are expensive and are associated with spendthrifts (*Resp.* 559C). In this respect, Socrates also speaks of sexual pleasures, as well as other kinds of pleasures (περὶ ἀφροδισίων καὶ τῶν ἄλλων) (*Resp.* 559C).²²

Socrates clarifies how different kinds of souls are dominated by different parts of the soul. Thus, for example, the oligarchic soul allows the epithumetic element of the soul (τὸ ἐπιθυμητικόν) to become dominant (*Resp.* 553C), thereby allowing both the reasonable part and the spirited part (τὸ λογιστικόν τε καὶ θυμοειδές) to be enslaved (καταδουλωσάμενος) (553D). In contrast, a philosopher who lives his or her life in a healthy (ὕγιεινῶς) and temperate (σωφρόνως) way satisfies the epithumetic element of the soul neither insufficiently nor excessively (μήτε ἐνδεία ... μήτε πλησμονῆ) (*Resp.* 571D) and abates the spirited part of the soul (τὸ θυμοειδές) (*Resp.* 572A).

According to this description, the philosopher is not enslaved (καταδουλωσάμενος) either by the spirited or the appetitive part of the soul. The philosopher is governed by reason and therefore he or she is free.²³ Accordingly, Socrates refers to the tyrannical soul as someone that is full of slavery and unfreedom (μὲν δουλείας τε καὶ ἀνελευθερίας γέμειν τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ) (*Resp.* 577D), while also describing the tyrannized soul (ἡ τυραννομένη

22. Food, drink and sexual desire are pleasures which Socrates associates with the epithumetic element of the soul. See Stanley Rosen, *Plato's Republic: A Study* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), pp. 338-39. Even though Plato designates sexual pleasures as unnecessary (*Resp.* 559C), it may be argued that these pleasures can be enjoyed for the sake of the health of the body. See the discussion in Rosen, *Plato's Republic*, pp. 344-51.

23. The healthiness of the pleasures depends on reason's ability to cooperate and control the other parts of the soul, see Daniel Russell, *Plato and the Good Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 207-19. Whereas Plato's *Republic* stresses that reason may both cooperate with and control the other parts of the soul, *Timaeus* stresses that the pleasures of the epithumetic part of the soul can only be forcibly controlled. See Russell, *Plato and the Good Life*, pp. 233-34. Plato describes the epithumetic part of the soul as irrational (*Resp.* 439D and *Tim.* 71D). In *Leg. All.* 3.116, Philo identifies the thumetic and the epithumetic parts of the soul as the μέρη τοῦ ἀλόγου. For a full discussion of the relationship between the rational and the irrational parts of the soul in Plato, middle-Platonism and Philo, see H. Svebakken, *Philo of Alexandria's Exposition on the Tenth Commandment* (SPhiloM, 6; Atlanta: SBL Press, 2012), pp. 33-62.

ψυχῆ) as one that does not do as it wants at all (ἥμιστα ποιήσει ἂν βουληθῆ), insofar as it is described from the perspective of the whole soul (ὡς περὶ ὅλης εἰπεῖν ψυχῆς) (*Resp.* 577E).²⁴ The tyrannized soul represents, by definition, the least free soul and its oppression originates from the fact that certain parts of the soul other than the rational part have assumed the dominant position.

Socrates points out that the philosopher is correct in claiming that the pleasure of truth-finding is the greatest pleasure, for which reason the other forms of pleasure can only be called necessary (καλεῖν ἀναγκαίως) (*Resp.* 581E). Indeed, if these other kinds of pleasures had not been necessary, the philosopher would have completely detached himself or herself from them (*Resp.* 581E). This, together with the fact that the philosopher in Socrates' argument appears as the antithesis of the tyrant, implies that the philosopher is described as the kind of soul that is as free as is possible. However, the philosopher's freedom is also limited because he or she must show consideration for certain necessary kinds of pleasure.

Necessity and Persuasion in Plato's Timaeus

As one recent study states, 'anangkê in the *Timaeus* seems to mean more than "what cannot be otherwise". One might go even further and say that it has nothing at all to do with this notion.'²⁵ Accordingly, in Plato's *Timaeus*, the astronomer, Timaeus, distinguishes between the causes that are attributed to intelligent nature (τὰς τῆς ἔμφρονος φύσεως αἰτίας) (*Tim.* 46D-E) and the causes of the class of things that are moved by others (ὅσαι ὑπ' ἄλλων κινουμένων) (*Tim.* 46E). Timaeus designates the former as the causes of all things (αἴτια τῶν πάντων) and the latter as auxiliary or contributory causes (ξυναίτια) (*Tim.* 46D). In addition, he designates the former as the divine cause (τὸ θεῖον) and the latter as the necessary cause (τὸ ἀναγκαῖον) (*Tim.* 68E). The auxiliary causes distinguish themselves from the causes that are attributed to intelligent nature by not possessing reason and thought for any purpose (*Tim.* 46D-E).

24. For a full discussion of the experience of mental conflict of the human soul in the Platonic tradition, see A.W. Price, *Mental Conflict* (Issues in Ancient Philosophy; London: Routledge, 1995), pp. 8-103.

25. Peter Adamson, 'Making a Virtue of Necessity: *Anangkê* in Plato and Plotinus', in *Études platoniciennes* 8 (2011), pp. 9-30 (11). See also Thomas Johansen, *Plato's Natural Philosophy: A Study of the Timaeus-Critias* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 92-93.

According to Timaeus, the cosmos owes its existence to reason's persuasion of necessity (*Tim.* 48A), and it appears that without reason's persuasion, necessity will take the form of an errant cause (τὸ τῆς πλανωμένης εἶδος αἰτίας) (*Tim.* 48A).²⁶ Thomas Johansen has clarified the implications in a meaningful way:

The 'wandering' cause is a description of necessity in so far as it operates without regard for the outcome. 'Contributory' cause, meanwhile, is a description of necessity in so far as it has been persuaded by intelligence to work for the good. In the *Timaeus* there are, therefore, two versions of necessity. There is the necessity that reason uses as a contributory cause for its ends. There is also the necessity that has not been persuaded by reason. The contributory causes fall back into this necessity, as Timaeus says, 'on each occasion when they are deprived of thought' (46e4-5). Remove the *aitia* and the *sunaitia* collapse into the sort of necessity that produces disorder.²⁷

Timaeus emphasizes that God makes use of the auxiliary or contributory causes 'in perfecting, so far as possible, the Form of the most good' (τὴν τοῦ ἀρίστου κατὰ τὸ δυνατόν ιδέαν ἀποτελεῶν) (*Tim.* 46C-D) and that 'Reason was controlling Necessity by persuading her to conduct to the best end the most part of the things that come into existence' (νοῦ δὲ ἀνάγκης ἄρχοντος τῶ

26. On the relationship between necessity and matter, cf. Gabriela Roxana Carone, *Plato's Cosmology and Its Ethical Dimensions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 36: 'At [*Tim.*] 48a-b, necessity is related to the nature of fire, water, air, and earth and the attributes (*pathê*) that they possessed before the generation of the universe: thus, necessity seems to be a property inherent in the materials that fill in space'. Necessity in *Timaeus* bears some resemblance to the Aristotelian material cause, the material out of which something is made (*Phys.* 2.3 and *Metaph.* 5.2). However, it must be recognized that each philosopher analyzes causation in terms of his own metaphysical framework; cf. Philip H. Delacy, 'The Problem of Causation in Plato's Philosophy', *Classical Philology* 34.2 (1939), pp. 97-115 (99-103). Nonetheless: 'The metaphysical principles of the *Phil.* and *Tim.* bear a close resemblance to the Aristotelian types of cause. The active agent suggests the efficient cause; the limit or pattern, the formal cause; the unlimited or space, the material cause. Yet it is significant that for Aristotle all three of the Platonic principles would be *equally entitled to the name cause*; whereas Plato attributes causal power only to the active agent' (Delacy, 'Problem of Causation', p. 110 n. 68).

27. Johansen, *Plato's Natural Philosophy*, p. 95.

πείθειν αὐτὴν τῶν γιγνομένων τὰ πλείστα ἐπὶ τὸ βέλτιστον ἄγειν) (*Tim.* 48A). These qualifications, ‘as far as possible’ and ‘to the best end the most part’, reflect the fact that the material from which things are made can only be manipulated to a certain extent. As Gabriela Carone explains, ‘these qualifications would suggest that there is always a random residue of necessity left in the cosmos as a result of which *nous* could not settle with absolute control, therefore, the “instrument” could occasionally become an “obstacle”’.²⁸ This corresponds to the fact that, from the outset, Timaeus makes it clear that the Cause who created the notion of Becoming and All ‘desired that all should be, so far as possible, like unto Himself’ (πάντα ὅ τι μάλιστα γενέσθαι ἐβουλήθη παραπλήσια ἑαυτῷ) (*Tim.* 29E), ‘for God desired that so far as possible, all should be good and nothing evil’ (βουληθεὶς γὰρ ὁ θεὸς ἀγαθὰ μὲν πάντα, φλαῦρον δὲ μηδὲν εἶναι κατὰ δύναμιν) (*Tim.* 30A). It follows from this description that the Demiurge is constrained in his creational activity by the material at hand.²⁹

In summary, in *Timaeus*, necessity represents something that is inevitable, but it also represents something that can be manipulated to a certain extent. Necessity is something that represents an errant destructive force unless it is persuaded by reason. However, necessity also represents something that can only be persuaded or controlled to a certain extent.

28. Carone, *Plato's Cosmology*, p. 40.

29. This is not the only way the creational activity of the Demiurge is constrained, for his creational work is also guided by the ideal pattern according to which he creates the cosmos (*Tim.* 30C; 31B; 39E). As Carone explains, ‘the Demiurge is limited, first, by the forms or the ideal pattern (the “Perfect Living Being” 31b1, cf. 30c, 39e1) that guides his work and that he must follow if he is to instantiate goodness in the world. Second, and most importantly, he is constrained by a given factor in the material constitution of the world, which, like the Forms, he does not create either and which precedes the production of the world’ (Carone, *Plato's Cosmology*, p. 36). The dilemma associated with the creation of the human skull (*Tim.* 75A-C) is Timaeus’s prime example of the limits imposed by the material out of which he creates the cosmos, but there are other examples as well. See Adamson, ‘Making a Virtue of Necessity’, pp. 11-12.

*Freedom from Necessity in Legum Allegoria 1**The Divine Motivation for Giving the Human Mind a Share in the Divine Breath*

Philo's notion of freedom from necessity can, with advantage, be elucidated by a clarification of how the concept of necessity is used in *Legum Allegoria*. The argument in *Leg. All.* 1.31-42 is significant in terms of the subsequent argument in *Leg. All.* 1. Moreover, Philo's argument in these paragraphs bears some resemblance to *Deus Imm.* 45-50. These facts justify that we begin the study in relation to Philo by examining this text.

There are several thematic overlaps between *Leg. All.* 1.31-42 and *Deus Imm.* 33-50. In both passages, Philo makes use of a Stoic conceptual framework and refers to the mind as something that God judged worthy (ἀξιόω) (*Leg. All.* 1.33; *Deus Imm.* 47) of a special benefit, which he respectively defines as pneuma (*Leg. All.* 1.33) or breath (42) and freedom (*Deus Imm.* 47).³⁰ Moreover, in both passages, Philo stresses the fact that God's gift of the pneuma or freedom implies that humans are morally responsible creatures (*Leg. All.* 1.35; *Deus Imm.* 49).

Philo's argument in *Leg. All.* 1.31-42 begins with a description of the heavenly man and the earthly man (*Leg. All.* 1.31). Philo distinguishes between the man created after the image of God (ὁ κατὰ τὴν εἰκόνα) and the earthly man compacted from dispersed matter (ὁ γήϊνος ἐκ σποράδος ἤλης).³¹ Philo clarifies that the earthly man (ἄνθρωπον τὸν ἐκ γῆς) represents (εἶναι) the mind which is to enter into the body (νοῦν εἰσκρινόμενον σώματι) (*Leg. All.* 1.32). This earthly mind would have been corruptible (φθαρσός) if God had not breathed into it the power of real life (εἰ μὴ ὁ θεὸς ἐμπνεύσειεν αὐτῷ δύναμιν ἀληθινῆς ζωῆς) (*Leg. All.* 1.32). Moreover, it is by virtue of the divine inbreathing that the earthly man becomes a living soul (*Leg. All.* 1.32). Roberto Radice has clarified how Philo, in *Leg. All.* 1.31-42, exploits the semantic potential of the Stoic pneuma, whilst adding his own special understanding

30. For the Stoic conceptual framework, see Radice, 'Philo and Stoic Ethics', pp. 148-50, 161-64.

31. See David T. Runia, *Philo of Alexandria and the Timaeus of Plato* (PhA, 44; Leiden: Brill, 1986), pp. 334-40 and George H. van Kooten, *Paul's Anthropology in Context: The Image of God, Assimilation to God, and Tripartite Man in Ancient Judaism, Ancient Philosophy and Early Christianity* (WUNT, 232; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), pp. 269-97.

of what God's gift of pneuma implies. Accordingly, 'Philo is convinced that to act well man needs not only his psychic elements—sensation, representation and *hegemonikon* or “commanding faculty”—but also cognition, a supply of concepts that only God can confer directly with his creating breath'.³² It is this divine supply of concepts that ensures 'that everyone has the supply of knowledge that is indispensable for gaining virtue'.³³

Interestingly, Philo points out that God gives the divine spirit or breath solely to the mind, whereupon intellect extends a portion of what it has received from God to the part of the soul that is devoid of reason (*Leg. All.* 1.39). According to Radice, this idea of the extension of the logos-intellect to the sensible phase is a concept that Philo has adopted from Stoicism, applying it in such a way that intellect becomes involved in the process of the creation of the soul.³⁴ I find no reason to contest Radice's explanation regarding this point. However, there are reasons to believe that Philo's description of the mind's inspiration in relation to other parts of the soul alludes to more than the process of the creation of the soul. It is worth noting that the mind acts in a peculiar God-like way, as it extends a share of itself to the other parts of the soul. For Philo points out that just as the mind was ensouled by God, the unreasoning part of the soul was ensouled by the mind (τὸν μὲν νοῦν ἐψυχῶσθαι ὑπὸ θεοῦ, τὸ δὲ ἄλογον ὑπὸ τοῦ νοῦ) (*Leg. All.* 1.40).³⁵ Therefore, the mind is, as it were, God of the unreasoning part of the soul (θεός ἐστι τοῦ ἀλόγου ὁ νοῦς) (*Leg. All.* 1.40), which is confirmed, Philo asserts, by the fact that Scripture does not hesitate to speak of Moses as a God to Pharaoh (*Leg. All.* 1.40; *Exod.* 7.1).

Philo draws on *Exod.* 7.1 on several occasions.³⁶ Among the passages in which he interacts with *Exod.* 7.1, *Sacr.* 9 appears as the closest parallel to *Leg. All.* 1.40. In *Sacr.* 9, Philo reads *Exod.* 7.1 as an attestation of the fact that the mind of the sage has received from God the capacity to exercise control over the passions. Most likely, then, Philo's description of the mind's inspiration in relation to the unreasonable parts of the soul in *Leg. All.* 1.39–40 reflects not only his views regarding the process of the creation of the soul,

32. Radice, 'Philo and Stoic Ethics', p. 149.

33. Radice, 'Philo and Stoic Ethics', p. 150.

34. Radice, 'Philo and Stoic Ethics', p. 149.

35. Compare *Leg. All.* 1.40 with *Deus Imm.* 47.

36. See *Sacr.* 9; *Det. Pot. Ins.* 161; *Migr. Abr.* 84; *Mut. Nom.* 19, and *Somn.* 2.189.

but also his beliefs regarding the divine motivation for giving the earthly mind a share of the divine breath. Hence, God gave man a share of the divine breath in order that the mind may exercise control over the other parts of the soul.

Philo maintains that since the man created from the image of God receives a share of the divine pneuma (42), whereas the earthly man compacted from dispersed matter receives a share in the divine breath (πνοή) (42), this signifies that the reasoning faculty of the man created from the image of God is robust, whereas the reasoning faculty of the earthly man is more fleeting (42). Philo does not elaborate explicitly how this lack of robustness manifests itself; however, as his argument unfolds, it becomes clear that the reasoning faculty of the earthly mind cannot disassociate itself completely from bodily passions.

The Limited Capacity of the Mind to Exercise Control over the Passions

In *Leg. All.* 1.47, Philo clarifies that the words from Gen. 2.8, according to which God placed the man he had formed in Eden, mean that God places the mind in virtue (τὸν νοῦν τίθησιν ἐν τῇ ἀρετῇ), with a view that (ἵνα δηλονότι) the earthly mind, as a good gardener, may look after it and treat it with great care (καθάπερ ἀγαθὸς γεωργὸς τημελῆ καὶ περιέπη) (*Leg. All.* 1.47). Radice points out that Philo's vision of the man placed in virtue was 'certainly original, in relation both to Stoic positions and those of all other previous philosophers, as none of them would ever have dared to place man in virtue rather than virtue in man'.³⁷ This may be true, but the difference may not be so great after all, since Philo also discusses the virtues that God plants in the soul (*Leg. All.* 1.56). Nonetheless, the overall point is relatively clear; by virtue of creation, humans not only have access to knowledge of virtue, they are also called upon to cultivate the virtues. However, some virtues are harder to cultivate than others.

In *Leg. All.* 1.86, Philo points out that whereas prudence and courage are fully able to conquer folly and cowardice, self-mastery (σωφροσύνη) is unable to encircle (i.e. control) desire and pleasure (ἀδυνατεῖ κυκλώσασθαι τὴν ἐπιθυμίαν καὶ ἡδονήν) (*Leg. All.* 1.86). This is evident from the fact that even the most self-controlled individuals (οἱ ἐγκρατέστατοι) resort to food and drink (παραγίνονται ἐπὶ σιτία καὶ ποτά) because of the necessity of the mortal element of the soul (ἀνάγκη τοῦ θνητοῦ) (*Leg. All.* 1.86). It follows from this

37. Radice, 'Philo and Stoic Ethics', p. 150.

description that the necessity of the mortal element of the soul acts as an obstacle to the pursuit of full realization of the virtue of self-control.

This does not mean that Philo's writings describe the human body in a one-sided negative way.³⁸ Nevertheless, in *Leg. All.* 1.103, Philo maintains not only that solely reasoning is required for the acquisition and practice of virtue (εἰς ἀρετῆς ἀνάληψιν τε καὶ χρῆσιν ἐνὸς μόνου δεῖ τοῦ λογισμοῦ), but also that the body does not co-operate in this regard (τὸ δὲ σῶμα οὐχ οἶον οὐ συνεργεῖ πρὸς τοῦτο), as the body does, in fact, function as a hindrance (ἀλλὰ καὶ κωλυσιεργεῖ) in this respect (*Leg. All.* 1.103). In *Leg. All.* 2 and 3, Philo further clarifies how the theme of man's cultivation of virtue is associated with problems relating to the constraints of necessity.

Freedom from Necessity in Legum Allegoria 2

Legum Allegoria 2 begins with an explanation of the meaning of the word alone (μόνον) in Gen. 2.18 (LXX). Philo points out that only God is truly alone, that is, self-contained and in need of nothing, as God is not a composite being (*Leg. All.* 2.1-2). In contrast, human beings consist of body and soul, just as the human soul itself consists of different parts (*Leg. All.* 2.2). Therefore, it is impossible for the moulded mind to live alone, in the sense that God is alone, as the moulded mind must be in close fellowship with the senses and passions (*Leg. All.* 2.4). This essential difference between God and human beings has implications for the extent to which humans can cultivate virtues.

In *Leg. All.* 2.16-18, Philo discusses the meaning of the words of Gen. 2.18 (LXX) 'to see what he would call them' (ἰδεῖν τί καλέσει). In this connection, Philo draws attention to the fact that different kinds of people make use of pleasures in different ways. However, for every created being, the premise is the same, for 'it is a necessity that the created being makes use of pleasure' (ἡδονῇ χρῆσθαι δεῖ τὸ γεγονός) (*Leg. All.* 2.17). However, not all people make

38. See Runia, *Philo of Alexandria and the Timaeus of Plato*, pp. 321-22 and David Winston, 'Philo and the Rabbis on Sex and the Body', *Poetics Today* 19 (1998), pp. 41-62 (48-50). As Winston points out, 'It should now be evident that the radical devaluation of the body is an automatic consequence of the body-soul dualism of Platonic metaphysics. As we have already seen, Plato himself displayed a dual view of the body-soul relationship, the *Phaedo* representing a considerably darker view of the body than that of the *Timaeus*' (p. 52).

use of pleasure in the same way, as certain people reach out for objects of sense-perception for the sake of necessity alone (ἔνεκα τοῦ ἀναγκαίου μόνον), i.e. because the mortal being, by necessity, is yoked together with passion and vice (ὅτι κατέζευκται τὸ θνητὸν ἐξ ἀνάγκης πάθεσι καὶ κακίαις) (*Leg. All.* 2.16), while others may reach out for these things for the sake of extravagance and for unnecessary reasons (ἔνεκα τοῦ ἀμέτρου καὶ περιττοῦ) (*Leg. All.* 2.16). Accordingly, every human must make use of pleasure, but

the fool makes use of the objects of sense-perception as if these things were a perfect good, whereas the sage makes use of these things as if these things were a necessity only. For apart from pleasure nothing of the things within the mortal race comes into being. Again, the fool considers the acquisition of the necessary things as a most perfect good, whereas the sage considers the same as a necessity and useful thing only.³⁹ (*Leg. All.* 2.17)

This argument sounds much like Socrates' argument in *Resp.* 368D–374E; not least the use of the construction, ἔνεκα plus genitive, springs to mind (*Resp.* 373B). On a more general level, Philo's argument in *Leg. All.* 2.16–18 also reflects the ancient discussion of proper use (ὀρθῶς χρῆσθαι). This discussion probably originated from ancient sophism but it became important in ancient philosophy because of Socrates' argument in the *Euthyd.* 278E–82D and 288D–92E. Here, Socrates stresses the unique value of virtue in comparison with the value of other goods, designating virtue as a skill that manifests itself in the proper use of other goods. Socrates' argument in these passages stands out from the comparable argument in *Min.* 87C–89 because of its radical conclusion: that only virtue can be considered as a real good.⁴⁰ As Julia Annas explains, Socrates' argument 'is generally regarded as anticipating the claim of the Stoics, that virtue is the only good, since only virtue benefits; conventional goods only benefit when put to virtuous use, and are in

39. ὁ μὲν φαῦλος ὡς ἀγαθῶ τελείῳ χρήσεται, ὁ δὲ σπουδαῖος ὡς μόνον ἀναγκαίῳ· χωρὶς γὰρ ἡδονῆς οὐδὲν γίνεται τῶν ἐν τῷ θνητῷ γένει. πάλιν τὴν τῶν χρημάτων κτῆσιν ὁ μὲν φαῦλος τελειότατον ἀγαθὸν κρίνει, ὁ δὲ σπουδαῖος ἀναγκαῖον καὶ χρήσιμον αὐτὸ μόνον.

40. See Julia Annas, 'Virtue as the Use of Other Goods', *Apeiron* 24.3–4 (1993), pp. 53–65 (53–60). See also Christian Gnllka, *Χρήσις: Die Methode der Kirchenväter im Umgang mit der antiken Kultur I: Der Begriff des 'rechten Gebrauchs* (Basel: Schwabe & Co., 1984), pp. 29–39.

themselves “indifferent”: they have value, but it is value of a quite different kind from that of virtue.’⁴¹

Philo’s argument in *Leg. All.* 2.16–18 reflects this discussion of the proper use of goods, as he points out that ‘God wants to see and examine how the mind summons and welcomes each of these, either as good things, indifferent things or as bad things, but at all events as useful things’ (*Leg. All.* 2.17).⁴² Philo moves on to highlight that individual human beings may be characterized as either pleasure-loving (ἡδονικός), licentious (ἀκόλαστος), coveting (ἐπιθυμητικός), cowardly (δειλός), prudent (σώφρων), just (δίκαιος) or brave (ἀνδρείος) (*Leg. All.* 2.18).⁴³ Nonetheless, Philo has already clarified that mortal human beings by necessity identify with passion and vice (*Leg. All.* 2.16). Ridding oneself entirely of the realm of passions is, therefore, not an option. Accordingly, Philo argues that whenever the mind lowers itself to the level of passions (ὑφιίγται πρὸς τὰ πάθη) and finds itself drawn by bodily necessity (ἀγόμενος ὑπὸ τῆς σωματικῆς) (*Leg. All.* 2.28), the passions will be purified by sound reason, for ‘when reason is strong enough to purify the passion (ἐὰν δὲ ὁ λόγος ἰσχύσῃ ἀνακαθᾶραι τὸ πάθος), we will neither be drinking till we

41. Annas, ‘Virtue as the Use of Other Goods’, pp. 55-56. For a fuller discussion of ancient convictions regarding the relationship between virtue, happiness and external goods, see Julia Annas, *The Morality of Happiness* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 364-435.

42. ὁ θεὸς ἰδεῖν καὶ καταμαθεῖν βούλεται, πῶς ἕκαστον τούτων προσκαλεῖται καὶ ἀποδέχεται ὁ νοῦς, εἴτε ὡς ἀγαθὰ εἴτε ὡς ἀδιάφορα ἢ ὡς κακὰ μὲν, χρειώδη δὲ ἄλλως.

43. In the *Republic*, Socrates also clarifies the nature of different types of persons on the basis of their attitude towards pleasures. *The Socratic position in Plato’s Republic* has been characterized thus: ‘Socrates now claims that there is a tripartition of pleasures corresponding to that of the soul, as well as a threefold division of desires and kinds of rule. One part of the soul learns, a second part is the seat of spiritedness. The third and largest part is called by the general name of “desire” and is also referred to as the money-loving part, since the main desires are satisfied by money. I remind the reader that sex is the strongest desire; to associate it with money is to distinguish it from the love that characterizes friendship. Spiritedness is victory and love of honor, whereas the intellect, with which we learn, cares least for money and is always directed toward knowing the truth, and it may appropriately be called the love of learning and wisdom ... Thus Socrates infers from what has just been said that there are three primary kinds of human being: *philosophon*, *philonikon*, *philokerdes* (581c2-3), that is, lovers or friends of wisdom, victory, and gain, respectively’ (Rosen, *Plato’s Republic*, p. 335).

get drunk, nor run riot as we eat' (οὔτε πίνοντες μεθυσκόμεθα οὔτε ἐσθίοντες ἐξυβρίζομεν) (*Leg. All.* 2.29).⁴⁴

Nonetheless, the stance that bodily life is essentially incompatible with virtuous life (cf. *Leg. All.* 1.103) is also maintained in *Leg. All.* 2. Hence, in an interpretation of the reference to the nakedness of Adam and Eve (Gen. 2.25), Philo points out that the soul that loves God (ἡ φιλόθεος) takes hold of (λαμβάνει) a fixed and assured settlement in the perfect decrees of virtue (πῆξιν καὶ βεβαίωσιν καὶ ἴδρυσιν ἐν τοῖς τελείοις ἀρετῆς δόγμασι), having unclothed itself of the body and the things that are dear to the body (ἐκδύσα τὸ σῶμα καὶ τὰ τούτῳ φίλα) (*Leg. All.* 2.55). In this regard, Philo draws attention to the two sons of Aron, Nadab and Abihu, as examples of those who have unclothed themselves of the things that are dear to the body, clarifying that Nadab and Abihu had broken every fetter of passion and bodily necessity (πάντα δεσμὸν πάθους καὶ σωματικῆς ἀνάγκης διαρρήξαντες) (*Leg. All.* 2.57).

This passage ought to be mentioned here, because it defines the bonds of necessity (cf. *Deus Imm.* 47) as the bonds of passion and of bodily necessity. This is highly significant, as it shows that Philo may apply the concept of the bonds of necessity as a reference to passion, in a context in which the discourse on its proper use is within the bounds of the argument.

Freedom from Necessity in Legum Allegoria 3

The final passage from *Legum Allegoria* that must be included in this discussion is *Leg. All.* 3.151-159. Interpreters of *Leg. All.* 3 often discuss the nature of Philo's argument in *Leg. All.* 3.129-134 and 3.140-144, where Philo, on the one hand, applies the Stoic ideal of *apatheia* to Moses, designating it as the highest form of ethical life, and where Philo, on the other hand, applies an ethic of moderation to Aron. However, as Maren Niehoff has highlighted, 'It is questionable whether the ideal of *apatheia* applies to regular human beings, who will not be able to measure up to Moses. Philo possibly raised the Stoic ideal to an unattainable level.'⁴⁵ Thus it is, perhaps, not surprising that

44. As seen above (n. 23), Plato can stress the need for reason both to cooperate with and to control the other parts of the soul. Philo's reference to a purification of the passion may reflect this duality.

45. Niehoff, *Philo of Alexandria*, p. 231. For further discussions of these passages, see David Winston, 'Philo of Alexandria on the Emotions', in John T.

the argument in *Leg. All.* 3.151-159 seems to lie in continuation of the general picture established already rather than of Philo's argument in *Leg. All.* 3.129-134 and 3.140-144.

In *Leg. All.* 3.151, Philo considers the possibility that 'we who have been bound to a body would not comply with bodily necessities' (ἡμᾶς ἐνδεδμεμένους σώματι οἷόν τε σωματικαῖς ἀνάγκαις μὴ χρῆσθαι). According to Philo, this is not an option, for how would that be possible? (πῶς ἔνεστιν;) (151). Since this is not possible, 'the hierophant [Moses] instructs the one who is led away by bodily necessity to comply with it only to the extent that is necessary' (ὁ ἱεροφάντης τὸν τρόπον παραγγέλλει τῷ ἀγομένῳ ὑπὸ σωματικῆς χρείας αὐτῷ μόνῳ χρῆσθαι τῷ ἀναγκαίῳ). Philo finds this instruction attested in the prescription given by Deut. 23.12 (LXX) that 'there must be a place for you outside the camp' (τόπος ἔστω σοι ἔξω τῆς παρεμβολῆς) (*Leg. All.* 3.151).

According to Philo's allegorical interpretation of this scriptural phrase, the camp refers to virtue (*Leg. All.* 3.151), and thus Philo points out that 'the soul cannot make use of some of the friends of the body while it abides with understanding and while it spends time in the house of wisdom' (οὐ δύναται ἡ ψυχὴ καταμένουσα μετὰ φρονήσεως καὶ ἐν τῷ οἴκῳ διατρίβουσα τῆς σοφίας χρῆσθαι τινι τῶν φίλων σώματος) (3.152). However, due to bodily necessities, the soul cannot simply stay in the house of wisdom forever, for which reason it must return to the material realm (152).⁴⁶ However, in the material realm, the soul

Fitzgerald (ed.), *Passions and Moral Progress in Greco-Roman Thought* (London: Routledge, 2008), pp. 201-20 (209-10). This is related to the question of whether ἀπάθεια (as argued by the Stoics) or μετριπάθεια (as argued by the peripatetics) ought to be regarded as the proper ethical goal. For a discussion of Philo's position in this regard, see John Dillon, 'Metriopatheia and Apatheia: Some Reflections on a Controversy in Later Greek Ethics', in J. Anton and A. Preuss (eds.), *Essays in Ancient Greek Philosophy Volume 2* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1983), pp. 508-17 and Richard Sorabji, *Emotion and Peace of Mind: From Stoic Agitation to Christian Temptation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 194-210.

46. In comparison, the philosopher in Plato's cave allegory must return to the cave. The philosopher returns with a new philosophical perception of reality. Informed by the acquired knowledge of the good, the philosopher must return to the community to share his knowledge and to shape the life of the community. Allan Silverman, 'Ascent and Descent: The Philosopher's Regret', *Social Philosophy and Policy* 24.2 (2007), pp. 40-69 (50) describes the philosopher's motivation thus: 'He [the philosopher] thus descends not because he wants to promote his own good, or

must lay bare (γυμνώσεις) the characteristics of drinking, eating and sexual pleasure (τὸ φαγεῖν, τὸ πιεῖν, τὸ τοῖς μετὰ γαστέρα χρῆσθαι) (157), acknowledging that ‘in none of these things is the good, only that which is necessary and useful’ (ὅτι ἐν οὐδενὶ τούτων ἐστὶ τὸ ἀγαθόν, ἀλλὰ τὸ ἀναγκαῖον μόνον καὶ χρήσιμον) (157). Hence, Philo points out that food, drink and sexual pleasure are useful and necessary, but not good.⁴⁷ However, the one who has stayed in the house of wisdom knows how to make use of these necessary and useful things.

As Philo’s argument in *Leg. All.* 3 approximates its conclusion, it becomes clear that the wise human being is free as opposed to the fool who behaves like a slave. Philo is interested in the difference between the response of the wise mind and that of the foolish mind in terms of what they experience through the senses, comparing the former to an athlete and the latter to a slave. The foolish mind behaves like a slave, as the unreasoning mind (ὁ ἀλόγιστος) (*Leg. All.* 3.202) submits to another as slaves submit to punishment (ἀνδραπόδων δίκην ἑτέρῳ ὑπείκει) and surrenders to grief as to insufferable mistresses (ὡς ἀφορήτοις δεσποίνας), not being able to draw out free, male thoughts (ἄρρενας καὶ ἐλευθέρους σπᾶν μὴ δυνάμενος λογισμούς) (202).⁴⁸ In contrast, ‘the man of knowledge’ (ὁ ἐπιστήμων) ‘blows a counterblast towards all grievous things’ (πρὸς τὰ ἀλγεινὰ πάντα ἀντιπνεῖ), ‘so that he is not wounded by them but is utterly indifferent to each of them’ (ὡς μὴ τιτρώσκεισθαι πρὸς αὐτῶν, ἀλλ’ ἐξαδιαφορεῖν ἕκαστον) (*Leg. All.* 3.202).

Recently, Maren Niehoff has argued, in the allegorical commentaries, ‘Philo does not mention the most basic aspect of the Stoic theory of the passions, which any treatise, even a more popular one, would have conveyed’, namely that ‘the Stoics uniquely interpreted passion as the result of wrong

because he is thinking of the good of others, or because he wants to pay back debts. He aims solely to promote order, and his ruling does this.’

47. Philo lays out the structure of the Platonic tripartite soul in *Leg. All.* 3.115-118. Philo consistently operates with a bipartite soul, describing the soul as divided into a rational and an irrational part, using this bipartite model to find room for tripartition. See For the question of Philo’s appropriation of the Platonic notion of the soul, see the discussions in John Dillon, ‘Philo of Alexandria and Platonist Psychology’, *Études platoniciennes* 7 (2010), pp. 163-69 and Svebakken, *Philo of Alexandria’s Exposition on the Tenth Commandment*, pp. 33-65.

48. Notice the metaphor of the mistress (δέσποινα), which also appears in *Deus Imm.* 48.

judgment rather than as an intrinsic part of the soul'.⁴⁹ Nonetheless, Philo's argument in *Leg. All.* 2.16-18 (see above) and *Leg. All.* 3.202 suggests that he seeks to find some room for this Stoic idea, inasmuch as he describes the sage as the one who overcomes the passions by judging these as indifferent.⁵⁰

The wise mind is completely indifferent to all the grievous things that come its way, for which reason it is also free. The foolish mind, on the other hand, is unable to cope with the grievous things; therefore, the life of the foolish mind is comparable to the life of a slave. As is well known, grief or sorrow ranks as one of the Stoics' four primary passions (Stobaeus 2.88.8-2.90.6).⁵¹ The wise person, on the other hand, flourishes as the latter begets joy and not sorrow (ὁ σοφὸς χαίρων ἀλλ' οὐ λυπούμενος γεννᾷ) (*Leg. All.* 3.217), just as Abraham was about to give birth to happiness (μέλλει γεννᾶν τὸ εὐδαιμονεῖν) (*Leg. All.* 3.218).

Freedom from Necessity in Deus Imm. 45-50

Plato's Timaeus and Philo's Deus Imm. 20-50

Philo's argument in *Deus Imm.* 45-50 is part of an allegorical interpretation of the words of Gen. 6.5-7 (LXX). Philo's allegorical interpretation of this scriptural passage runs from *Deus Imm.* 20-73, and *Deus Imm.* 20-50 is concerned with the meaning of the words ἐνεθυμήθη ὁ θεός, ὅτι ἐποίησε τὸν ἄνθρωπον ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, καὶ διενόηθη (Gen. 6.5-6 LXX; *Deus Imm.* 33-50). Philo's argument in *Deus Imm.* 45-50 represents the final part of an essentially Stoic description of the various physical bodies of the cosmos (*Deus Imm.* 35-50), according to which human beings stand out from the rest of creation, by virtue of their rational soul (λογικὴ ψυχὴ) (35).⁵² However, this discussion

49. Niehoff, *Philo of Alexandria*, p. 230.

50. Compare, Philo's argument in *Leg. All.* 2.16-18 and *Leg. All.* 3.202 with his description in *Det.* 119-123 of the difference between the wretched human being and the sage.

51. See A.A. Long and D.N. Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers. I. Translations of the Principal Sources with Philosophical Commentary* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 410-11; Julia E. Annas, *Hellenistic Philosophy of Mind* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), pp. 103-105.

52. For a helpful account of Philo's use of the Stoic classification of the various physical bodies in the cosmos, see Fulco Timmers, 'Philo of Alexandria's Understanding of πνεῦμα in *Deus.* 33-50', in Jörg Frey and John R. Levison (eds.), *The*

(33–50) is preceded by one which questions whether God repented of the fact that he had created human beings (20–32). At first, Philo simply rejects this suggestion as an impious idea (21–22), but in 27–32, he clarifies in a more dogmatic fashion why God does not repent of anything.

Human beings, Philo observes, change their minds constantly, thereby disclosing the fickleness that characterizes human nature; in contrast, with God there is no fickleness (29). The reason for this is that God's life or form of existence (βίος—32) is fundamentally different from the form of existence that characterizes created reality. For God lives outside of time, insofar as God is the maker of time (δημιουργὸς δὲ καὶ χρόνου θεός) and the father of time's father, i.e. the cosmos (τοῦ πατρὸς αὐτοῦ πατήρ πατήρ δὲ χρόνου κόσμος) (*Deus Imm.* 31). The cosmos represents God's younger son, whereas the intelligible cosmos represents God's elder and firstborn son (*Deus Imm.* 32). Therefore, nothing is future from God's perspective (ὥστε οὐδὲν παρὰ θεῶν μέλλον) (*Deus Imm.* 32), for his life is not time but the archetype of time and the pattern of eternity (γὰρ οὐ χρόνος, ἀλλὰ τὸ ἀρχέτυπον τοῦ χρόνου καὶ παράδειγμα αἰῶν ὁ βίος ἐστὶν αὐτοῦ) (*Deus Imm.* 32). Hence, God exists in eternity in which nothing has passed away and nothing will come to pass, since in eternity there is only present existence (ἐν αἰῶνι δὲ οὔτε παρελήλυθεν οὐδὲν οὔτε μέλλει, ἀλλὰ μόνον ὑφέστηκεν) (*Deus Imm.* 1.32).

This argument is clearly dependent on Plato's *Tim.* 37–38, as Timaeus describes heaven here as an image of eternity, clarifying that days and nights, months and years came into being together with the creation of heaven (*Tim.* 37D-E).⁵³ Similarly, Timaeus points out that 'is' alone can be applied properly to the forms, whereas 'was' and 'will be' are applicable to the Becoming which proceeds in time (*Tim.* 38A). In the same vein, Philo's beliefs, that humans have received as much of a portion of freedom as they were able to receive (*Deus Imm.* 47) and that humans have been liberated from necessity as far as they might be (*Deus Imm.* 48), echo Timaeus's clarification that the Cause who constructed Becoming and the All desired that 'all should be, so far as possible, like unto himself' (*Tim.* 29E) and that 'God desired that, so

Holy Spirit, Inspiration, and the Cultures of Antiquity—Multidisciplinary Perspectives (Ekstasis, 5; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2017), pp. 265-92. See also Klaus Otte, *Das Sprachverständnis bei Philo von Alexandrien: Sprache als Mittel der Hermeneutik* (BGBE, 7; Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1968), pp. 79-81.

53. See Philo, *On the Unchangeableness of God* (trans. F.H. Colson and G.H. Whitaker; LCL, 247; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1930), p. 484.

far as possible, all things should be good and nothing evil' (*Tim.* 30A).⁵⁴ These observations make it probable that Philo's use of the concept of necessity in *Deus Imm.* 47–48—like his use of the concept in *Legum Allegoria*—is marked by the Platonic tradition, which is supported by the fact that Philo's argument in *Deus Imm.* 45–50 is also characterized by the ancient discussion of proper use (*ὀρθῶς χρῆσθαι*).

Deus Imm. 45–50 and the Question of the Proper Use of the Body

In *Deus Imm.* 45–50, Philo argues that human beings are superior in comparison with animals. Philo draws attention to the mind as the mightiest element of the human soul, noting that the mind was made of the same substance of which divine natures were made (*Deus Imm.* 45).⁵⁵ Philo points out that sight holds a leading position in the body, and that the mind is the sight of the soul (*Deus Imm.* 45–46).⁵⁶ This description of the mind corresponds thematically

54. So also Winston and Dillon, *Two Treatises of Philo of Alexandria*, p. 300. Like Plato and the Stoics, Philo was also concerned to exonerate God from responsibility for evil (*Abr.* 268). Plato insists that only good things can be attributed to God; see *Resp.* 379A–E. Cf. the words of Cleanthes in *Hymn to Zeus* 3: 'Not a single deed takes place on earth without you, God, nor in the divine celestial sphere nor in the sea, except what bad people do in their folly. But you know how to make the uneven even and to put into order the disorderly; even the unloved is dear to you' (Johan C. Thom, *Cleanthes' Hymn to Zeus* [Studies and Texts in Antiquity and Christianity, 33; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005], p. 40). For a helpful account of the significance of this view of God in Philo's writings, see Orrey W. McFarland, *God and Grace in Philo and Paul* (NovTSup, 164; Leiden: Brill, 2016), pp. 34–36.

55. Philo refuses to give specific accounts of the nature of the substance out of which the mind was made. See *Leg. All.* 1.91; *Somn.* 1.30–33; *Spec. Leg.* 4.123 and the discussion in John R. Levison, *The Spirit in First Century Judaism* (AGJU, 29; Leiden: Brill, 2002), pp. 144–51.

56. Philo's reference to the sight of the body and the sight of the soul echoes Aristotle. See Philo, *On the Unchangeableness of God*, pp. 484–85. However, it is highly unlikely that Philo would use this analogy in a strictly Aristotelian way, since Aristotle makes use of this analogy in an attempt to establish an alternative to Plato's theory of the forms (see *Eth. nic.* 1.6.12). It may be suggested that Philo uses this analogy as an equivalent to the Platonic notion of the eye of the soul, in which case the phrase refers to the mind's capacity to apprehend matters that cannot be comprehended through sense-perception. See Philo, *Plant.* 22; *Ebr.* 44; and *Migr. Abr.* 39, and David T. Runia, *Philo of Alexandria and the Timaeus of Plato*, pp. 324–28.

to Philo's description of the mind in *Leg. All.* 1.39-40. Moreover, Philo's argument in *Deus Imm.* 45-50 is also marked by a discussion relating to proper use, which was also prominent in both *Leg. All.* 2 and 3.

In *Deus Imm.* 47, Philo points out that each human being is fairly blamed for what it intentionally does wrong, because it has received (λαχῶν) a spontaneous and self-determining mind (ἐβελουργοῦ καὶ αὐτοκελεύστου γνώμης) and because it, for the most part, makes use of his energies with deliberate intention (προαιρετικαῖς χρώμενος τὰ πολλὰ ταῖς ἐνεργείαις). Correspondingly, in *Deus Imm.* 49, Philo claims that God has created each human being as unfettered and free (ἄφετον καὶ ἐλεύθερον), i.e. as someone who makes use of its energies (χρησόμενον ταῖς ἐνεργείαις) with voluntary actions and deliberate intentions (ἐκουσίους καὶ προαιρετικαῖς), having knowledge of both good and bad things (ἐπιστάμενος ἀγαθὰ τε καὶ κακά), and knowledge (ἔνοιαν) of beautiful and deformed things (καλῶν καὶ αἰσχυρῶν) in terms of justice and injustice (δικαίους καὶ ἀδίκους), and in general (ἔλως), in terms of the concepts relating to virtue and vice (τοῖς ἀπ' ἀρετῆς καὶ κακίας). Moreover, this gift of knowledge of good and evil is given with the specific intention that (ἵνα) each human being may make use of the better and flee from the worst (μὲν τῶν ἀμεινόνων, φυγῆ δὲ τῶν ἐναντίων χρῆται) (*Deus Imm.* 49).⁵⁷

The fact that Philo, in both *Deus Imm.* 47 and 49, makes use of the verb χράομαι, reveals that his argument reflects the ancient discussion relating to proper use (ὀρθῶς χρῆσθαι). In this respect, Philo's argument bears a close resemblance to his arguments in *Leg. All.* 2 and 3, as accounted for above. It is, thus, highly likely that his reference to the loosening of the fetters of necessity (τὰ τῆς ἀνάγκης δεσμά) (*Deus Imm.* 47) and the liberation from the hard and ruthless mistress, necessity (χαλεπῆς καὶ ἀργαλεωτάτης δεσποίνης, τῆς ἀνάγκης) (*Deus Imm.* 48), ought to be interpreted as a reference to liberation from the necessities that characterize bodily life.

Therefore, Philo's reference to God's gift of relative freedom from the bonds of necessity is best interpreted as God's gift of exercising control over the fetter of passion and bodily necessity (πάντα δεσμὸν πάθους καὶ σωματικῆς ἀνάγκης) (*Leg. All.* 2.57) that inevitably characterizes human existence. The

57. The question of the distinction between voluntary and involuntary sins is clearly within the horizon (as it is in *Leg. All.* 1.35). This question is also addressed in *Deus Imm.* 127-130 and 134-135. Here, Philo argues that humans are not to be blamed for sins committed in ignorance, but that reason, in the form of the human conscience, reveals to humans that sins committed in ignorance count as sin.

implications of this for Philo's notion of human freedom will be discussed in the following concluding discussion.

Concluding Discussion

In the introduction, I referred to Jonathan Hecht's description of the Platonic notion of human freedom. As Jonathan Hecht also outlines, 'there is something to be said for freedom as requiring the ability to act in one's own best interest. When reason does not rule, this is not the case, and when it does (and the other parts dutifully obey), it is.'⁵⁸ Philo's description of (a) the mind's God-given potential to break the bonds of necessity and (b) the realization of this God-given potential as the path to happiness (τὸ εὐδαιμονεῖν) (*Leg. All.* 3.218) indicates that Philo's argument represents a similar rationale. Freedom can be attained insofar as human beings act in their own best interest, i.e. insofar as human beings live their lives in accordance with right reason.

Philo describes God as the creator who gave human beings a portion of his own freedom, thereby enabling human beings to liberate themselves as far as possible from the bonds of necessity, that is, from the bonds of passion and bodily necessity. Therefore, Wolfson was correct in asserting that Philo describes human freedom as a concept relating to the relationship between the mind and the body. However, Wolfson was wrong in arguing that Philo describes human freedom as a means of freely rejecting the dictates of reason. Philo describes human freedom as a portion of right reason itself; therefore, it hardly makes sense to describe human freedom as the ability to reject the dictates of reason.

Philo does construe human freedom as the ability to choose between virtue and vice (*Deus Imm.* 49–50), but he does not construe human freedom as the ability to choose vice freely. For, according to Philo, human beings are under obligation to choose the better options before the worse (ὀφείλουσι πρὸ τῶν χειρόνων αἰρεῖσθαι τὰ κρείττω), inasmuch as they have reason within them (λογισμὸν ἔχοντες ἐν ἑαυτοῖς). This reason operates as an incorruptible judge (τινὰ δικαστὴν ἀδωροδόκητον), convincing human beings, on the one hand, of what right reason induces (οἷς ἂν ὀρθὸς ὑποβάλλη λόγος πειθησόμενον) and resisting, on the other hand, that which is induced by its opposite (οἷς ἂν ὁ ὀρθὸς ἐναντίος ἀπειθήσοντα) (*Deus Imm.* 50).

58. Hecht, 'Freedom of the Will in Plato and Augustine', p. 204.

It follows from this description that the concepts of freedom and obligation do not relate to one another according to the rules of a zero-sum game. Rather, Philo's argument in *Deus Imm.* 45–50 implies that human freedom can only flourish and manifest itself insofar as human beings follow the obligations induced by right reason. This is equivalent to living a self-determining life, insofar as right reason constitutes what it means to be human.

David Winston has rightly drawn attention to the many passages in which Philo clarifies 'that man's virtue is not really his own'.⁵⁹ Similarly, Winston mentions that 'he [Philo] writes ... in *Cher.* 128: "For we are the instruments, now tensed now slackened, through which particular actions take place; and it is the Artificer who effects the percussion of both our bodily and psychic powers, he by whom all things are moved."⁶⁰ However, this is not necessarily equivalent to the Stoic notion, even though Winston points out that 'the Stoics similarly say: "The movement of our minds are nothing more than instruments for carrying out determined decisions since it is necessary that they be performed through us by the agency of fate."⁶¹ Philo does, indeed, describe human virtue as the result of divine agency, but that does not mean that human minds are described as instruments for determined decisions that originate in the divine fate. Virtue manifests itself in the subjection of bodily necessity; not in the realization of preordained decisions made by the divine fate.⁶²

Philo construes human freedom as freedom with respect to the constraints which characterize human beings, who exist as composite, bodily creatures and which Philo associates with the concept of necessity. In Philo's scheme, freedom can only be partially attained, as human beings, *qua* composite, bodily creatures, cannot disassociate themselves completely from bodily necessities. For this reason, human freedom is a concept that must be defined in terms

59. Winston, 'Philo's Doctrine of Free Will', p. 188. See for example *Leg. All.* 1.48-49; *Leg. All.* 3.136; *Cher.* 128; *Ebr.* 77, 107; *Congr.* 122–130.

60. Winston, 'Philo's Doctrine of Free Will', p. 188.

61. Winston, 'Philo's Doctrine of Free Will', p. 188. The Stoic phrase is Winston's translation of *SVF* 2.943 (p. 194 n. 24).

62. Philo does not attempt to reconcile his notion of human freedom with his notion of divine foreknowledge. As Wolfson points out, 'This freedom of action which man enjoys as a gift of God does not in any way, according to Philo, contravene the prescience of God' (Wolfson, 'Philo on Free Will', p. 164).

of a continuum between slavery and freedom, i.e. in terms of a continuum on which the sage and the fool find themselves at opposite ends.

Philo construes human freedom as a limited freedom because the human mind cannot liberate itself completely from the constraints and necessities that characterize created reality. Thus, human freedom and self-determination can never be fully actualized insofar as human beings live their lives as bodily, composite creatures, for which reason they can never completely disassociate themselves from the desire of the body which stands opposed to the desire of the mind.

In contrast, God does not belong to created reality. God exists outside of time (*Deus Imm.* 27–32) and God exists as an uncomposite being (*Leg. All.* 2.1–4). For this reason, only God enjoys an unlimited degree of freedom. The created is necessity (*Somn.* 2.253), but necessity can be manipulated by reason, albeit only to a certain extent. Therefore, it is beyond the scope of ordinary human life to be liberated completely from the bonds of necessity (*Leg. All.* 2.16), and it is for this reason that Philo describes human freedom as a relative freedom. Human beings can indeed act against the dictates of reason, but they cannot do so freely. If they act against the dictates of reason, it is because they have come under the hegemony or tyranny of some sort of bodily impulse, that forces or seduces them to act against their own best interest.⁶³ In that case, they are not acting as free agents, as they are tyrannized by the dominant rule of passion.

Philo's arguments in *Leg. All.* 1.31–42 and *Deus Imm.* 45–50 strike an optimistic tone regarding the human opportunity to attain virtue. However, Philo's writings also contain arguments that strike a more pessimistic tone. For Philo's ethical thought is ultimately determined by his conviction regarding the fundamental difference between God and created reality. According to Philo, God alone, in the true sense, celebrates a festival (*μόνος ὁ θεὸς ἀψευδῶς ἑορτάζει*), as God alone is free from sorrow (*ἄλυπός*), free from fear (*ἄφοβος*), does not share in anything bad (*ἀκοινωνητος κακῶν*), is unyielding (*ἀνένδοτος*), is free from pain (*ἀνώδυνος*), is unwearied (*ἀκμής*) and is full of unmixed happiness (*εὐδαιμονίας ἀκράτου μεστός*) (*Cher.* 86). Accordingly, Philo also points out that the full acquisition of virtue is impossible for man,

63. Philo uses the language of seduction in *Leg. All.* 3.212. Compare this with Socrates' description of the oligarchic soul (*Resp.* 553C–D) referred to above.

as we know him, to achieve (τῶν δ' ἀρετῶν ἢ ἐντελής κτήσις ἀδύνατος ἀνθρώπων καθ' ἡμᾶς) (*Mut. Nom.* 50):

for who, as Job says, is pure from defilement, even if life lasts just one day? The things that defile the soul are countless, it is impossible to wholly purge or wash these things away, for calamities which are akin to every mortal man remain with necessity, calamities which in all likelihood is possible to abate, but which it is impossible to completely take away (*Mut. Nom.* 48–49).⁶⁴

Similarly, Philo points out that sinning (τὸ ἀμαρτάνειν) is congenital (συμφυές) in the case of every created being (παντὶ γενητῶ) who has been born (παρόσον ἤλθεν εἰς γένεσιν) (*Mos.* 2.147; cf. *Spec. Leg.* 1.252), for not to sin belongs to God, whereas repentance belongs to the sage (τὸ μὲν μηδὲν ἀμαρτεῖν ἴδιον θεοῦ, τὸ δὲ μετανοεῖν σοφοῦ) (*Fug.* 157; see also *Deus Imm.* 75 and *Abr.* 6).

64. 'τίς γάρ', ὡς ὁ Ἰώβ φησι, 'καθαρὸς ἀπὸ ρύπου, κὰν μία ἡμέρα ἐστὶν ἡ ζωὴ' ἄπειρα μὲν ἐστὶ τὰ καταρρυπαίνοντα τὴν ψυχὴν, ἅπερ ἐκνίψασθαι καὶ ἀπολούσασθαι παντελῶς οὐκ ἔνεστιν. ἀπολείπονται γὰρ ἐξ ἀνάγκης παντὶ θνητῶ συγγενεῖς κήρες, ἃς λωφῆσαι μὲν εἰκός, ἀναιρεθῆναι δ' εἰσάπαν ἀδύνατον.