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THE VALUE AND VARIETY OF ALLEGORY: A GLANCE AT PHILO'S *DE GIGANTIBUS*[*]

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Philo's fascinating account of allegory has received a great deal of well-deserved scholarly attention in diverse aspects. Thus, for example, his exegetical nomenclature and his original criteria for identifying figurative expressions have been carefully examined.[1] His pivotal role in the history of allegorical interpretation and his profound influence on the development of later allegoresis have likewise been convincingly demonstrated.[2] More recently, Philo's relation to Jewish Bible exegesis and to Homeric scholar-

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[1] See, e.g., the classic work by Carl Siegfried, *Philo von Alexandria als Ausleger des Alten Testaments an sich selbst und nach seinem geschichtlichen Einfluss betrachtet. Nebst Untersuchungen über die Graecitaet Philo's* (Jena: Hermann Dufft, 1875), esp. 31–137 (on Philo's "Sprache") and 160–97 (on Philo's "hermeneutischen Grundsätze," i.e., his "Regeln vom Ausschlüsse des Wortsinns" and his "Regeln der Allegorie") or the seminal study by Jean Pépin "Remarques sur la théorie de l'exégèse allégorique chez Philon," in *Philon d'Alexandrie. Lyon. 11–15 septembre 1966*, ed. Roger Arnaldez, Claude Mondésert, Jean Pouilloux, and Antoine Guillaumont (Paris: Éditions du CNRS, 1967), 131–67. For a more recent and extremely useful discussion, see Adam Kamesar, "Biblical Interpretation in Philo," in *The Cambridge Companion to Philo*, ed. Adam Kamesar, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 65–91, esp. 77–85 (on the "Rationale for Allegorical Interpretation").

[2] While the literature on the topic is abundant (see, e.g., Jean Pépin, *Mythe et allégorie: Les origines grecques et les contestations judéo-chrétiennes* [Paris: Études augustiniennes, 1976] or Christoph Blönnigen, *Der griechische Ursprung der jüdisch-hellenistischen Allegorese und ihre Rezeption in der alexandrinischen Patristik* [Frankfurt a. M.: Lang, 1992]), important work on Philo's reception has been done by Annewies van den Hoek and David T. Runia. See esp. Annewies van den Hoek, *Clement of Alexandria and* His *Use of Philo in the* Stromateis*: An Early Christian Reshaping of a Jewish Model* (Leiden: Brill, 1988); David T. Runia, *Philo in Early Christian Literature: A Survey*, CRINT 3.3 (Assen: Van Gorcum; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993); Runia, *Philo and the Church Fathers: A Collection of Papers* (Leiden: Brill, 1995); Annewies van den Hoek, "Philo and the Grigen: A Descriptive Catalogue of Their Relationship," *SPhiloA* 12 (2000): 44–121; David T. Runia, "Philo in Byzantium," *VC* 70 (2016): 259–81.

ship in Alexandria has also been extensively investigated.[3] While Philonic research has greatly advanced in all these areas, the modest purpose of the present article is to look at the types and functions of allegory in a text that nicely illustrates the idiosyncrasy and complexity of Philo's approach.

On the Giants and its twin treatise *On the Unchangeableness of God* belong to the most frequently discussed works of Philo.[4] While David Winston and John Dillon have produced a detailed commentary that covers the formal, stylistic and philosophical aspects of the pair of tracts,[5] it is their structure that has been particularly thoroughly examined.[6] As things stand, it may not be an exaggeration to say that this is still as—David T. Runia has once diagnosed—one of Philo's best known works.[7] This does not mean, however, that there is complete consensus on every issue. Consider this following observation:

> Nul n'est tenu d'aimer l'allégorie comme moyen de compréhension. Nul ne doit non plus la dénigrer ou la réduire, sans l'avoir longtemps mesurée. Elle a chez Philon la puissance régulatrice de l'aimant : il ordonne en lignes de force répondant à une structure unique et constante tous les atomes du métal. Il ne semble pas qu'on puisse trouver dans le *De gigantibus* une seule phrase qui ne participe étroitement à la Cité unifiée, pleine, des deux traités réunis.[8]

[3] See esp. Maren R. Niehoff, "Homeric Scholarship and Bible Exegesis in Ancient Alexandria: Evidence from Philo's 'Quarrelsome' Colleagues," *CQ* 57 (2007): 166–82; Niehoff, *Jewish Exegesis and Homeric* Scholarship *in Alexandria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Niehoff, "Philo and Plutarch on Homer," in *Homer and the Bible in the Eyes of Ancient Interpreters*, Jerusalem Studies in Religion and Culture 16, Maren R. Niehoff (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 127–53.

[4] The testimony of Eusebius (*Hist. eccl.* 2.18.4) makes it clear that the two were originally one.

[5] David Winston and John Dillon, *Two Treatises of Philo of Alexandria: A Commentary on* De Gigantibus *and* Quod Deus Sit Immutabilis, BJS 25 (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1983).

[6] Among the most important contributions are the following: Valentin Nikiprowetzky, "L'exégèse de Philon d'Alexandrie dans le *De Gigantibus* et le *Quod Deus sit Immutabilis*," in *Two Treatises*, 5–75 (this study develops ideas presented already in: Nikiprowetzky, *Le commentaire de l'écriture chez Philon d'Alexandrie: Son caractère et sa portée; Observations philologiques* [Leiden: Brill, 1977], esp. 170–80); David T. Runia, "The Structure of Philo's Allegorical Treatises: A Review of Two Recent Studies and Some Additional Comments," *VC* 38 (1984): 209–56; Runia, "Further Observations on the Structure of Philo's Allegorical Treatises," *VC* 41 (1987): 105–38 (both papers reprinted in: Runia, *Exegesis and Philosophy: Studies on Philo of Alexandria* [Aldershot: Variorum, 1990]) and Peder Borgen, *Philo of Alexandria: An Exegete for his Time* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), esp. 102–23.

[7] Cf. Runia, "Further Observations," 106.

[8] Jacques Cazeaux, *La trame et la chaîne, II: Le cycle de Noé dans Philon d'Alexandrie*, ALGHJ 20 (Leiden: Brill, 1989), 56–57. This work is a continuation of Cazeaux, *La trame et la chaîne ou les Structures littéraires et l'Exégèse dans cinq des Traités de Philon d'Alexandrie,* ALGHJ 15 (Leiden: Brill, 1983). Cf. also the next note.

While much has been written about the problems of reading Philo's works through the lens of structuralist literary criticism,[9] the present paper will focus on Philonic allegory understood as "moyen de compréhension" rather than "puissance régulatrice." Of course, this is not to deny that there is a systematic structure in Philo's works: modelled on Middle Platonist interpretations of the *Odyssey*, Philo's exegeses build on the assumption that the Pentateuch is an allegory of the soul's ascent to the divine.[10] Thus, the belief that Scripture contains guidance for the soul provides also *De gigantibus* with a fairly consistent structure. However, this article will be concerned primarily with an "instructive" or—*sit venia verbo*—"explanatory" value that Philo ascribes to allegory in his treatise: whether he interprets a biblical verse, etymologizes a scriptural name or appropriates a philosophical concept, Philo often employs allegory for elucidatory purposes. Accordingly, this article will touch upon three issues in *Gig*.: (1) the interaction between allegorical expressions and allegorical interpretations, (2) the coalescence of allegoresis and etymology, and (3) the difference between literal and allegorical appropriation in Philo. It will be argued that *De gigantibus* shows allegory to take many forms in Philo, as it helps him to make his exegeses more accessible and compelling.

1. *The Interrelationship between Allegorical Expressions and Allegorical Interpretations*

A remarkable feature of Philo's exegeses is a constant movement between allegory and allegoresis. Following the established tradition, we may characterize the former as a mode of *composing* a text (i.e., an *expression*) and the latter—as a mode of *reading* (i.e., an *interpretation*). The distinction has been aptly put by Jean Pépin, according to whom the former "consiste à cacher un message sous le revêtement d'une figure," whereas the latter—"à décrypter la figure pour retrouver le message."[11] It is a distinctive feature of

[9] See, e.g., Runia, "The Structure," 211–26 or John Dillon's review in *VC* 46 (1992): 83–87.

[10] See, e.g., Borgen, *Philo of Alexandria*, 11; Kamesar, "Biblical Interpretation," 86 or, more recently, Gregory E. Sterling, "When the Beginning Is the End: The Place of Genesis in the Commentaries of Philo," in *The Book of Genesis: Composition, Reception, and Interpretation*, ed. Craig A. Evans, Joel N. Lohr, and David L. Petersen, V T Sup 152 (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 440.

[11] Pépin, *Mythe et allégorie*, 488. See further Mikolaj Domaradzki, "The Sophists and Allegoresis," *AncPhil* 35 (2015): 247–58; Domaradzki, "The Beginnings of Greek Allegoresis," *CW* 110 (2017): 299–321 and Domaradzki, "Democritus and Allegoresis," *CQ* 69 (forthcoming).

his exegeses that Philo frequently makes the two interact so that his allegorical interpretations are interspersed with and supported by various allegorical expressions.[12] Thus, two important traditions converge in Philo: that of allegorical interpretation and that of allegorical composition.[13]

Allegory is, of course, primarily the achievement of Moses: Philo sees himself as merely elucidating this allegorical composition. But if allegory was of great didactic value for the prophet, would it not (at least sometimes) be a useful tool of explanation for his interpreter? That Philo makes frequent and abundant use of various metaphors and personifications in his exegeses is common knowledge. Whether his strongly figurative language is categorized as "allegorical" depends, obviously, on how one understands the term "allegory."[14] In what follows, it will be assumed that it is legitimate to speak of allegorical *composition* in Philo when his continuous interweaving of personifications and other metaphors produces a sustained figurative meaning.[15] Indeed, *On the Giants* shows that in his

[12] To this best of my knowledge, this interplay between allegorical interpretations and allegorical expressions in Philo has not received any special attention in Philonic research. Needless to say, however, various scholars have stressed that Philo employs diverse techniques of instruction. Thus, for example, in his exquisite discussion of Philo's style and diction (*Two Treatises*, 129–78), John Leopold frequently emphasizes the illustrative purpose and unique richness of poetic imagery in Philo (metaphors, personifications, similes, extended comparisons, etc.). See, esp. his "Philo's Vocabulary and Word Choice," 137–40; "Characteristics of Philo's style in the *De Gigantibus* and *Quod Deus*," 141–54 and "Rhetoric and Allegory," 155–70. Also, Adam Kamesar has convincingly shown Philo's assumption about the educational or pedagogic value of the Pentateuch (the pan-Scriptural didacticism). See esp. his "The Literary Genres of the Pentateuch as Seen from the Greek Perspective: The Testimony of Philo of Alexandria," *SPhiloA* 9 (1997): 143–89 and "Philo, the Presence of 'Paideutic' Myth in the Pentateuch, and the 'Principles' or *Kephalaia* of Mosaic Discourse," *SPhiloA* 10 (1998): 34–65.

[13] On the two traditions, see esp. Jon Whitman, *Allegory. The Dynamics of an Ancient and Medieval Technique* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987), 3–10. While the scholar argues that the two allegorical traditions converge in Bernard Silvestris's *Cosmographia* (218–60), the present paper suggests that the process—at least in embryonic form—can also be found in Philo. Importantly, Whitman uses the term "allegory" in relation to both the technique of interpretation and the technique of composition. However, I side with those scholars who prefer to reserve the term "allegory" for the strategy of *expressing* an idea and the term "allegoresis" for the strategy of *revealing* it (see, e.g., my "The Beginnings," 300–302).

[14] For example, Leopold, "Characteristics of Philo's style," points briefly to the use of allegorical language "in both Moses and Philo" (143–44), but does not pursue the matter further.

[15] See Whitman, *Allegory*, to whose excellent discussion this paper is greatly indebted here.

exegeses Philo often employs this strategy in the service of allegorical *interpretation*. Let us look at some examples.[16]

The second exegetical unit in *Gig*. 6–18 deals with Gen 6:2, which reports that the "angels (ἄγγελοι) of God"[17] took to themselves wives from the "daughters (θυγατέρας) of men." While the problem resides naturally in how disembodied spirits can marry mortals, the answer is provided by a sophisticated allegoresis, in the course of which the angels are equated (§§6, 16) with "demons" (δαίμονες) and "souls" (ψυχαί), whereas the daughters are identified (§§17–18) with "pleasures" (ἡδοναί). The upshot is that the biblical lemma is revealed to actually depict a seduction of wicked individuals (fallen souls) by various sensual pleasures: those who descend into the body "as though into a river" (ὥσπερ εἰς ποταμόν)[18] and abandon philosophy, make various unwise choices, which is why they are defeated by corporeality and drown in spiritless hedonism. While the explanation builds on what is customarily referred to as "Philo's demonology" (§§6–16),[19] the argument is also buttressed (§17) by a quotation from Ps 77:49

[16] In what follows, all quotations from *Gig*. (at times modified) are taken from David Winston, *Philo of Alexandria: The Contemplative Life, The Giants, and Selections* (New York: Paulist, 1981).

[17] On the substitution of οἱ ἄγγελοι τοῦ θεοῦ for οἱ υἱοὶ τοῦ θεοῦ, see, e.g., Peter Katz, *Philo's Bible: The Aberrant Text of Bible Quotations in Some Philonic Writings and Its Place in the Textual History of the Greek Bible* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1950), 20–21 or David Gooding and Valentin Nikiprowetzky, "Philo's Bible in the *De Gigantibus* and the *Quod Deus sit Immutabilis*," in *Two Treatises*, 106–7.

[18] *Gig*. 13. This is an appropriation from *Tim*. 43a6. For a survey of other uses of this imagery, see David T. Runia, *Philo of Alexandria and the* Timaeus *of Plato* (Leiden: Brill, 1986), 260–61.

[19] See, e.g., Valentin Nikiprowetzky, "Sur une lecture démonologique de Philon d'Alexandrie, *De Gigantibus* 6–18," in *Hommage à Georges Vajda. Études d'histoire et de pensée juives*, ed. Gérard Nahon and Charles Touati (Louvain: Peeters, 1980), 43–71; John Dillon, "Philo's Doctrine of Angels," in *Two Treatises*, 197–205 and, more recently, Francesca Calabi, *God's Acting, Man's Acting: Tradition and Philosophy in Philo of Alexandria* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 111–25. Philo's demonology has been classified as "essentially Middle Platonic" (John Dillon, *The Middle Platonists: A Study of Platonism 80 B.C. to A.D. 220* [London: Duckworth, 1977; rev. ed., Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996], 174). For further discussions of the question whether Philo can be categorized as a Middle Platonist, see, e.g., Runia, *Philo of Alexandria and the* Timaeus *of Plato*, 505–19; Gregory E. Sterling, "Platonizing Moses: Philo and Middle Platonism," *SPhiloA* 5 (1993): 96–111; David T. Runia, "Was Philo a Middle Platonist? A Difficult Question Revisited," *SPhiloA* 5 (1993): 112–40 and Thomas H. Tobin, "Was Philo a Middle Platonist? Some Suggestions," *SPhiloA* 5 (1993): 147–50. Finally, it is worth noting that the above passage in *Gig*. (along with such parallel texts as *Plant*. 14 and *Somn*. 1.138–141) sheds some light on Philo's view of reincarnation. For an extensive discussion, see Sami Yli-Karjanmaa, *Reincarnation in Philo of Alexandria*, SPhiloM 7 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2015) and Yli-Karjanmaa, "The Significance of Reading Philonic Parallels: Examples from the *De plantatione*," *SPhiloA* 29 (2017): 159–84.

[78:49] about the sending of "evil angels" (ἀγγέλων πονηρῶν).[20] Hence, the bad angels/demons are deciphered as allegories of incarnated souls that choose the life of pleasures ("wed the daughters of humans").

Notably, this allegoresis is intertwined with various figurative expressions that help to elucidate the point. For example, the wicked ones are diagnosed (§17) not to know the "daughters of right reason" (ὀρθοῦ λόγου θυγατέρας), that is, "sciences and virtues" (ἐπιστήμας καὶ ἀρετάς), which is why they "woo the pleasures" (ἡδονὰς μετερχόμενοι), that is, "mortal descendants of mortal men" (τῶν ἀνθρώπων θνητὰς θνητῶν ἀπογόνους). Thus, Philo allegorically interprets the Genesis story, while at the same time creating suggestive allegorical agents. He thereby uses the strategy of personification for the purpose of explaining his interpretation, and in the course of doing so he produces an extended non-literal sense. The resulting allegory conveys that the souls who become enamored of the daughters of right reason (i.e., "marry sciences and virtues") strive to liberate themselves from incarnation by virtue of philosophy (i.e., the art of dying to the life in the body). The figurative expression used to designate the sciences and virtues reinforces the explanation put forward: the evil angels (i.e., seduced souls) are the enemies of right reason, because their love for pleasure is antithetical to science and virtue. Thus, in this exegesis the "daughters of humans" from the biblical lemma are *interpreted* as "sensual pleasures," whilst the aforementioned "sciences and virtues" are allegorically *portrayed* as the "daughters of right reason." The exegesis illustrates, then, how Philo lets the technique of *interpretation* ("allegoresis") interact with the technique of *composition* ("allegory") so that the personification of the daughters of right reason explicates the allegoresis of the daughters of humans from the biblical lemma. This shows that Philo's allegorical exegeses can have a compositional dimension: in *Gig*. 17 the Alexandrian not only unveils the hidden meaning of the Genesis story, but also makes use of personification combined with other metaphors to elucidate and strengthen his point. This is not an isolated case.

The first exegetical unit in *Gig.* 1–5 deals with Gen 6:1, which has it that "men (ἄνθρωποι) began to become numerous (πολλοί) on earth and daughters (θυγατέρες) were born to them." Philo raises (§1) the question about the "numerous population" (πολυανθρωπία) that followed Noah and his sons (though later discussion shows that the problem resides not only in the multiplication of the human race, but also in the appearance of *female*

[20] On which, see Naomi G. Cohen, *Philo's Scriptures: Citations from the Prophets and Writings: Evidence for a Haftarah Cycle in Second Temple Judaism* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 141, 147, 155.

progeny) and proposes the following solution: the existence of that which is "rare" (σπάνιον) highlights the presence of that which is "very numerous" (πάμπολυ). While the ensuing allegoresis reveals that the biblical lemma in fact concerns a spiritual procreation, the explanation builds precisely on the idea that the scarcity of justice brings out the widespread prevalence of injustice.

The allegorical interpretation that Philo puts forward (§§4–5) has it that the just Noah fathers "sons" (i.e., virtues), whereas the numerous unjust ones can only be parents of "daughters" (i.e., vices and passions). The explanation that Noah's descendants are few and virtuous presupposes obviously the superiority of the male (i.e., "just") over the female (i.e., "unjust"), which is pervasive in Philo's writings.[21] However, it is noteworthy that the allegorical interpretation (few sons = virtues, numerous daughters = vices and passions) is, again, reinforced and explicated by a host of non-literal expressions that yield a sustained figurative meaning. The following deserve to be mentioned: the begetting of "male offspring in the soul" (ἄρρενα γενεὰν ἐν ψυχῇ), the thoughts that are "unmanly, emasculate and effeminate" (ἄνανδροι καὶ κατεαγότες καὶ θηλυδρίαι), the tree "of virtue" (ἀρετῆς) and the trees of "vice and passions" (κακίας καὶ παθῶν), whose "shoots" (βλάσται) are "feminine" (γυναικώδεις), the "male" (ἄρρενα) reason that the just Noah pursues and the injustice of the many that is "bearing females" (θηλυτόκος). Again, there is an interplay between allegoresis and allegory, which results in that the latter elucidates the former and makes the explanation more appealing and vivid. One more time, then, Philo's approach has at once an interpretative and a compositional aspect: his allegorical interpretation of the Genesis story is supported by an extended figurative description.

Interestingly, the two above exegeses are slightly inconsistent. On the one hand, the daughters in *Gig*. 4–5 signify vices and passions (the implication being that "female is bad" and "reason is male") and, on the other, *Gig*. 17 mentions the "daughters of right reason" (which entails that—at least sometimes—"female can be good and rational"). While such incongruities abound in Philo, they can easily be accounted for in terms of the primacy of the biblical text and the modesty of the Philonic text.[22] As the task of an exegete is first and foremost to explain Scripture inspired by

[21] As has been stressed by Carl Siegfried, *Philo von Alexandria als Ausleger*, 189: "Das Männliche ist das Tüchtigere, Bessere, daher sind männliche Geburten Tugenden." For a more recent discussion, see Richard A. Baer, *Philo's Use of the Categories Male and Female* (Leiden: Brill, 1970), esp. 40–44.

[22] See Runia, "The Structure," 237–38.

God, philosophical coherence is hardly the first priority.[23] Thus, we can say that Philo allows his allegories to be somewhat at odds with one another when he focuses on the different aspects of an issue and/or highlights its distinct characteristics.[24] The first exegesis (§§1–5) deals with daughters in general (contrasted with Noah's son), whereas the second one (§§6–18) deals with specific daughters (those that the "angels" choose). That is why in the former case the female as such is valued negatively (the unjust ones have no male offspring, their thoughts are unmanly, emasculate and effeminate, they plant solely trees of vice and passions, etc.), whereas in the latter case the female can be virtuous (as is testified by the aforementioned personification: the daughters of right reason = sciences and virtues).

2. *The Coalescence of Allegoresis and Etymology*

Philo's proclivity for using etymology as a technique of allegorical interpretation has been generally recognized.[25] Notwithstanding this, some scholars have opposed etymology and allegorical interpretation. David Dawson, for example, has stressed that the two should be clearly distinguished, since etymology "lacks a narrative dimension."[26] Anthony A. Long has even more forcefully argued that etymology explains "atomic units of language," whilst allegory requires "a whole story, a narrative."[27]

[23] As has been aptly emphasized by Giovanni Reale and Roberto Radice, "La genesi e la natura della filosofia mosaica. Struttura, metodo e fondamenti del pensiero filosofico e teologico di Filone di Alessandria. Monografia introduttiva ai diciannove trattati del «Commentario allegorico alla Bibbia»," in *Filone di Alessandria: Tutti i trattati del Commentario allegorico alla Bibbia*, ed. Roberto Radice, in collaboration with Giovanni Reale, Clara Kraus Reggiani and Claudio Mazzarelli (Milano: Bompiani, 2005), XXXI: "la coerenza filosofica è subordinata all'intenzione e alla finalità esegetica."

[24] This seems to be corroborated by the fact that Philo's hermeneutics allows a shift of focus and emphasis. While Gen 6:2 is not discussed in *QG*, Gen 6:1 is. *QG* 1.89 also wrestles with the question about the multiplication of the human race, but here the question is placed in the context of the imminent flood (not the preceding birth of Noah and his sons), and the answer points not to the rarity of justice, but to the fact God's favors precede His judgments.

[25] See esp. David T. Runia, "Etymology as an Allegorical Technique in Philo of Alexandria," *SPhiloA* 16 (2004): 101–21 or, more recently, Tessa Rajak, "Philo's Knowledge of Hebrew: The Meaning of the Etymologies," in *The Jewish-Greek Tradition in Antiquity and the Byzantine Empire*, ed. James K. Aitken and James Carleton Paget (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 173–87.

[26] David Dawson, *Allegorical Readers and Cultural Revision in Ancient Alexandria* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1992), 6–7.

[27] Anthony A. Long, "Stoic Readings of Homer," in *Homer's Ancient Readers: The Hermeneutics of Greek Epic's Earliest Exegetes*, ed. Robert Lamberton and John J. Keaney

Although it goes without saying that one should not indiscriminately equate allegoresis with etymology, Philo's hermeneutics shows that it would be misguided to radically oppose the two. What deserves to be particularly highlighted here is that positing a sharp opposition between etymology and allegoresis frequently leads to an unwarranted denigration of the importance of the former interpretative strategy. Tellingly, Anthony A. Long asserts that etymology "plays but a small role in Philo's exegesis."[28] This assessment is difficult to reconcile with what we find in *De gigantibus*.

Let us briefly look at the fourth exegetical unit in *Gig*. 58–67.[29] The exegesis deals with Gen 6:4, which relates that "the giants (γίγαντες) were on the earth in those days." While the exegesis begins with a flat dismissal of the idea that the Lawgiver "hints enigmatically" (αἰνίττεσθαι) at the myths of the poets (§58), it provides the solution that Moses shows humans to divide into three distinct classes: the earth-born, the heaven-born and the God-born (§60). In the course of ensuing discussion, etymology plays an instrumental role in Philo's exegesis and often transmogrifies into a type of allegoresis.

(Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), 54. In his later paper, the scholar specifically opposed Stoic etymology to Philo's allegorical interpretation: Long, "Allegory in Philo and Etymology in Stoicism: A Plea for Drawing Distinctions," *SPhiloA* 9 (1997): 198–210. Cf. also the next note.

[28] Long, "Allegory in Philo," 206–7. For an excellent discussion of the role of etymology in Philo's allegoresis, see Runia, "Etymology as an Allegorical Technique," 101–21. For scholars who stress the coalescence of etymology with allegoresis (particularly in Stoicism) and explicitly reject Long's positon, see, e.g., Ilaria Ramelli and Giulio Lucchetta, *Allegoria*. vol. 1: *L'età classica* (Milano: Vita e Pensiero, 2004), esp. 79–81, 98–99, 458–59, 464–69; Richard Goulet, "La méthode allégorique chez les stoïciens," in *Les stoïciens*, ed. Gilbert Romeyer Dherbey and Jean-Baptiste Gourinat (Paris: Vrin, 2005), 112–17; Jean-Baptiste Gourinat, "*Explicatio fabularum*: La place de l'allégorie dans l'interprétation stoïcienne de la mythologie," in *Allégorie des poètes, allégorie des philosophes: Études sur la poétique et l'herméneutique de l'allégorie de l'Antiquité à la Réforme*, ed. Gilbert Dahan and Richard Goulet (Paris: Vrin: 2005), 11–12, 25–26; Ilaria Ramelli, "The Philosophical Stance of Allegory in Stoicism and Its Reception in Platonism, Pagan and Christian: Origen in Dialogue with the Stoics and Plato," *IJCT* 18 (2011): 339–40 and Mikolaj Domaradzki, "Theological Etymologizing in the Early Stoa," *Kernos* 25 (2012): 139–41.

[29] The present paper follows scholars who regard *Gig*. 19–57 as a single unit rather than two separate sections. See, e.g., Winston and Dillon "Commentary," 244–66; Runia, "Further Observations," 121, 133–34; Borgen, *Philo of Alexandria*, 107–11. David Runia has persuasively argued that the exegetical problem of *Gen* 6.3b is here integrated into that of *Gen*. 6.3a ("Further Observations," 121). For scholars who consider §§19–55 and 55–57 to be two separate sections, see, e.g., Nikiprowetzky, "L'exégèse de Philon d'Alexandrie," 13–21; Cazeaux, *La trame et la chaîne, II*, 17–21 or Radice, *Filone di Alessandria: Tutti i trattati del Commentario allegorico alla Bibbia*, 637–38.

First, the "giants" (γίγαντες) from the biblical lemma are not only derived from the "earth-born" (γηγενεῖς), but also allegorized as those who "hunt after the pleasures of the body" (θηρευτικοὶ τῶν σώματος ἡδονῶν) and preoccupy themselves solely with their enjoyment. This means that these "men of earth" (i.e., slaves of the sensual and carnal) are very much like those who previously were said (§§17–18) to have "married the daughters of humans" (i.e., embraced the life of pleasures).[30] Not only does this etymology have a clear narrative dimension, but it also combines with other etymological interpretations and gradually metamorphoses into a complex allegoresis that additionally utilizes several allegories.

Philo gives Nimrod as an example (§65) of those "sons of earth" (γῆς παῖδες) who abandon God for pleasures of the flesh, upon which he etymologizes this name (§66) as signifying "desertion" (αὐτομόλησις).[31] This interpretation reveals, then, that Nimrod symbolizes rebellion against God: the giant strays from the path of God (the "royal road"), breaks the covenant with Him (ceases to be "God's ally") and wages war against Him (becomes "God's enemy"). It is for this reason that giants are called "deserters." While Nimrod represents the soul/mind overwhelmed by the flesh, this etymological allegoresis makes it now possible for Philo to explain ((§66) why Moses ascribes Babylon to Nimrod: the name "Babylon" stands for "alteration" (μετάθεσις), i.e., something "akin to desertion" (συγγενὲς αὐτομολίᾳ), since every desertion commences with a "change and alteration of judgment" (γνώμης μεταβολὴ καὶ μετάθεσις). Hence, the beginning of Nimrod's reign is termed "Babylon," because it means a change of heart that results in a repudiation of God. Thus, the giants' rejection of the spiritual corresponds to the fall of the aforementioned "angels" that likewise choose the carnal.

Evidently, the three etymological interpretations are woven into the fabric of a complex allegoresis: (1) the giants are "men of earth" who seek bodily pleasures rather than God, (2) the first man to begin this betrayal has appropriately been called a "defector," and (3) the kingdom he reigns over has fittingly been named "conversion." Far from playing a minor role, etymology validates the entire allegorical exegesis. While similar coalescence of etymology with allegoresis can be observed in Philo's explana-

[30] It may not be superfluous to note that in *QG* 1.92 the giants are sons of angels and mortal women.

[31] To support his interpretation Philo adduces (§66) Gen 10:8, which has it that Nimrod "began to be a giant (γίγας) on the earth." While in *QG* 1.82 Nimrod is also a paradigm of opposition to God, the passage further suggests that the name means "Ethiopian," on which see Lester L. Grabbe, *Etymology in Early Jewish Interpretation: The Hebrew Names in Philo*, BJS 115 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988), 130.

tions of Abram (§62), Abraham (§63) and many others, it is a characteristic feature of ancient ἐτυμολογία in general that (more often than not) this etymologizing transforms into some sort of allegorizing.[32] Philo's hermeneutics is no exception here.

What is exceptional about Philo's etymological allegoresis (or allegorical etymology) is that it is frequently interspersed with and supported by various non-literal expressions that often produce an extended figurative meaning. Thus, for example the giants are said (§65) to have "derailed the mind from the tracks of reason" (τὸν νοῦν ἐκβιβάσαντες τοῦ λογίζεσθαι)[33] and "adulterated the best coinage" (τὸ ἄριστον ἐκιβδήλευσαν νόμισμα). Again, these expressions help to clarify and bolster the explanation put forward: they indicate figuratively that the men of earth subjugate the higher (i.e., mind) to the lower (i.e., body) and exchange the superior (i.e., reason) for the inferior (i.e., flesh). Hence, this composition strengthens the interpretation which unravels that the giants from the biblical lemma are opponents of God who value the carnal over the spiritual and, thereby, desert Him.

The foregoing analyses suggest that in his exegeses Philo frequently integrates the act of allegorical interpretation with an act of allegorical composition: whether he explains a biblical verse (section 1) or etymologizes a scriptural name (section 2), he often has recourse to various non-literal expressions that frequently produce a sustained figurative meaning. It is important to note here, though, that while Philo takes the whole Pentateuch to be an allegory of the soul's progress towards virtue, he is prepared neither to allegorize everything (e.g., the figure of God) nor to completely deny the literal meaning of Scripture (e.g., observance of the Law). Indeed, in a well-known passage, Philo compares (*Migr*. 89–93) the literal meaning of the text to the body and the allegorical one to the soul, thus, putting it in no uncertain terms that the literal sense is not to be

[32] This has been well established in research on the history of allegoresis. For example, Andrew Ford has aptly observed that when the ancients interpreted poetry "there was little difference between allegorizing a divine figure in the tradition of Theagenes or etymologizing an apparently opaque word in the tradition of the sophists and grammarians" (*The Origins of Criticism: Literary Culture and Poetic Theory in Classical Greece* [Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002], 88). In a similar vein, Monique Dixsaut stresses that etymology frequently becomes "même exégèse" (*Platon et la question de la pensée* [Paris: Vrin, 2000], 162), whereas David Sedley emphasizes that ancient etymology is "more closely analogous to modern literary criticism than to modern etymology" (*Plato's* Cratylus [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003], 37).

[33] This is buttressed by quotation of Gen 2:24 ("the two became one flesh"), which is taken to illustrate how one becomes a giant. *Leg*. 2.49 further informs us that the mind (symbolized by Adam) becomes ensnared by the irrational part of the soul (symbolized by Eve), which leads to abandoning God, virtue and wisdom.

discarded: one must not neglect the "body," as it is the "abode" of the "soul" (cf. also *Contempl*. 78). Hence, it is necessary to examine how the literal meaning is preserved in *De gigantibus*.

3. *The Literal and Allegorical Appropriation*

The distinction between a literal and an allegorical exegesis in Philo is of paramount importance for understanding his hermeneutics.[34] While the difference may at first sight seem rather obvious, it should be borne in mind that our understanding of the literal/allegorical opposition does not have to tally with that of Philo. Indeed, this point has been brilliantly made by Jaap Mansfeld in his study on Philo's exegetical strategies:

> Some of the interpretations called literal by Philo may strike us as being allegorical, for instance the one concerned with the Platonic cosmology, which he finds in the first chapters of Genesis. For Philo, however, the allegorical or, as he often calls it, the deeper interpretation pertains to the inner, not the outer, world. It follows that philosophical theories that are useful at the literal level need not be so at the allegorical, and conversely.[35]

Let us take another example from the second exegetical unit. In the course of his exposition, Philo makes (§8) two important identifications: first, the "stars" (ἀστέρας) are equated with "souls divine and pure throughout" (ψυχαὶ ὅλαι δι' ὅλων ἀκήρατοί τε καὶ θεῖαι) and, then, each of the stars is also characterized as "most immaculate mind" (νοῦς ἀκραιφνέστατος).[36] While both these identifications may look quite allegorical to us, they would not be perceived as such by Philo, since they build heavily on Plato's cosmology (see esp. *Tim*. 40a–d),[37] which was taken literally not figuratively. The first equation reflects the view that in the beginning all souls are pure and unsullied, whereas the second—that every star is a rational mind.[38] On the

[34] On this issue, see esp. the collection of essays in David M. Hay, ed., *Both Literal and Allegorical: Studies in Philo of Alexandria's* Questions and Answers on Genesis and Exodus, BJS 232 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1991).

[35] Jaap Mansfeld, "Philosophy in the Service of Scripture: Philo's Exegetical Strategies," in *The Question of "Eclecticism": Studies in Later Greek Philosophy*, ed. John M. Dillon and Anthony A. Long (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1988), 71.

[36] This sentence does not appear in Winston's (otherwise excellent) translation.

[37] On Philo's appropriation thereof, see esp. Runia, *Philo of Alexandria and the* Timaeus *of Plato*, 227–31.

[38] This characterization of the stars as pure souls/minds has given rise to the controversy as to whether the stars are here regarded as incorporeal and invisible (see esp. Harry A. Wolfson, *Philo: Foundations of Religious Philosophy in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*, 2 vols., rev. ed. [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968], 1:364; but cf.

other hand, the above discussed identification of the angels from Gen 6:2 with demons and souls is clearly allegorical: as is characteristic of allegoresis, this equation extracts a hidden (esoteric) meaning from the biblical lemma. Thus, if we compare the two identifications, we can see that for Philo the former represents a relatively uncontroversial ("Middle Platonist") view (stars = souls = minds), whereas the latter represents a highly unpalatable one (disembodied angels have mortal spouses), which requires an (allegorical) explanation.

The two equations illustrate an important exegetical strategy frequently employed by Philo: appropriation. Basically, the strategy consists in adopting and adapting a concept to suit the exegete's needs.[39] This often involves a modification of meaning and/or conflation with another doctrine, which leads to the result that the appropriated concept is reinterpreted and integrated into the new context.[40] While the aforementioned identifications instantiate cases of allegorical and literal appropriation, Philo's hermeneutics in general has a strong appropriative dimension. Obviously, this has ramifications for our assessment of Philo as a historian of philosophy: although Philo should not be dismissed as completely unreliable in this area, his reliability must be approached with a great deal of caution. What

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already Siegfried, *Philo von Alexandria als Ausleger*, 306: "die Sterne gewissermassen zu Leibern haben"). David Winston has persuasively argued that *Gig*. 8 presents the stars as "completely rational," rather than disembodied (*Logos and Mystical Theology in Philo of Alexandria* [Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1985], 33). This argument is particularly compelling in light of the ensuing description of the fallen souls/demons as the enemies of right reason (see above in the main text).

[39] The strategy is a hallmark of the Hellenistic age and it has been extensively covered in existing literature. In connection with Philo's sources and/or techniques of appropriation, the works of Carlos Lévy and Gregory E. Sterling deserve special mention here. See, e.g., Carlos Lévy, "Le concept de *doxa* des Stoïciens à Philon d'Alexandrie: Essai d'étude diachronique," in *Passions and Perceptions: Studies in Hellenistic Philosophy of Mind. Proceedings of the Fifth Symposium Hellenisticum*, ed. Jacques Brunschwig and Martha C. Nussbaum (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 250–84; Levy, "Éthique de l'immanence, éthique de la transcendence: Le problème de l'*oikeiôsis* chez Philon," in *Philon d'Alexandrie et le langage de la philosophie*, ed. Levy, (Turnhout: Brepols, 1998), 153–64; idem, "La conversion du scepticisme chez Philon d'Alexandrie," in *Philo of Alexandria and Post-Aristotelian Philosophy*, ed. Francesca Alesse (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 103–20; Gregory E. Sterling, "'The Jewish Philosophy': Reading Moses via Hellenistic Philosophy according to Philo," in *Reading Philo: A Handbook to Philo of Alexandria*, ed. Torrey Seland (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 129–54; Sterling, "Philo's Hellenistic and Hellenistic-Jewish Sources," *SPhiloA* 26 (2014): 93–97; Sterling, "From the Thick Marshes of the Nile to the Throne of God: Moses in Ezekiel the Tragedian and Philo of Alexandria," *SPhiloA* 26 (2014): 115–33. Cf. also the next note.

[40] Though sometimes this new use is foreign or even contrary to original one. Thus, e.g., Carlos Lévy examines how Philo can use the concept οἰκείωσις "d'une manière étrangère, ou même contraire à la doctrine stoïcienne" ("Éthique de l'immanence," 153).

sometimes makes Philo a problematic source for reconstructing the views of earlier thinkers is that—as noted above—he saw his task as being to explain Scripture inspired by God rather than to give an objective account of a philosophical doctrine. This means that Philo accommodates various views for the purpose of elucidating the Bible rather than presenting a historically faithful and unbiased account of them. Let us consider another example.

In his fourth exegesis, Philo ingeniously appropriates Plato's notorious denunciation of poetry. Having emphasized Moses's aversion to myth-making (§58), Philo stresses that the Lawgiver is equally critical of visual arts (§59). Thus, he explains that Moses has banished painting and sculpture from his *politeia*—as Plato exiled (*Resp*. 398a) poetry from his—because they belie the nature of truth and beguile the souls (§59). That Philo echoes here Plato is evident.[41] As is well known, Plato levels two charges (*Resp*. 603a–b) against poetic mimesis: imitative art is "far from" (πόρρω) all "truth" (ἀληθείας) and all "intellect" (φρονήσεως). These accusations reflect Plato's epistemological and ethical concerns, respectively: (1) by describing the sensible world, the poets produce merely copies of the copies and (2) their deceptive phantoms appeal to our emotions rather than to reason (*Resp*. 598b–605c). While Philo's use of Platonic criticism must be placed in the context of the Second Commandment,[42] it instantiates a literal appronpriation of a pagan view in the service of Jewish monotheism: this reference to πολιτεία is not figurative. There is, however, a reference to the term in the fourth exegesis that is allegorical.

When discussing the God-born (exemplified by priests and prophets), Philo explains (§61) that these men of God leave the *politeia* of this world, rise above the Cynic-Stoic ideal of becoming a *cosmopolites* (see, e.g., Diogenes Laertius 6.63; 7.88), transcend the sensible sphere and "migrate to the noetic cosmos" (εἰς τὸν νοητὸν κόσμον μετανέστησαν), where they "dwell

[41] The Platonic origins of this criticism have already been emphasized by Émile Bréhier: "dans cette exclusion des mythes de la cité mosaïque, Philon suit incontestablement Platon" (*Les idées philosophiques et religieuses de Philon d'Alexandrie* [Paris: Picard, 1908], 65).

[42] The context of the Second Commandment has been stressed, for example, by Monique Alexandre: "Le rejet de la fabulation est ici lié au second commandement du Décalogue proscrivant les représentations" ("Monarchie divine et dieux des nations chez Philon d'Alexandrie," in *Philon d'Alexandrie: un penseur à l'intersection des cultures gréco-romaine, orientale, juive et chrétienne*, ed. Sabrina Inowlocki and Baudouin Decharneux [Turnhout: Brepols, 2011], 121). For a general discussion of Philo's account of the Second Commandment, see Sarah Pearce, "Philo of Alexandria on the Second Commandment," in *The Image and Its Prohibition in Jewish Antiquity*, JJSSup Series 2, ed. Sarah Pearce (Oxford, Journal of Jewish Studies, 2013), 49–76.

enrolled as citizens of the *politeia* of incorruptible and incorporeal ideas" (ᾤκησαν ἐγγραφέντες ἀφθάρτων <καὶ> ἀσωμάτων ἰδεῶν πολιτείᾳ). Thus, we see again how Philo combines various figurative expressions to allegorically convey that the men of God overcome Cynic-Stoic materialism and nominalism: as the God-born engage in contemplation of the intelligible world, they disengage from the realm of sense-perceptible reality. The fourth exegesis shows, then, that when appropriating a philosophical concept, Philo would often incorporate it in a non-literal description.

4. *Conclusion*

The foregoing discussion has been confined to only a few passages from the first part of Philo's beautiful double-treatise. Still, if the above remarks are correct, then Philo (at least sometimes) employs allegory in a function that can be characterized as "instructive" or—even better—"explanatory": when interpreting a biblical verse, etymologizing a scriptural name or appropriating a philosophical concept, Philo has frequently recourse to allegory for explicative purposes. Thus, instead of being simple rhetorical embellishments or stylistic ornaments that merely spice up his style, Philo's allegories enable him to clarify his exegeses and/or make his arguments more cogent. It is for this reason that one so often encounters series of figurative expressions in Philo's complex exegeses.

Allegory in Philo is neither accidental nor incidental, but stems from the very nature of his exegetical project. The few passages of *Gig*. that have been analyzed here show the variety of Philo's allegory (which can be embedded in a complex allegoresis, etymology or appropriation). However, this diversity of allegory manifests itself not only in its form but also in its function: Philo's use of allegory for elucidatory purposes is obviously not the whole picture. Clearly, the apologetic dimension must always be borne in mind. To exonerate Scripture from the charges of irrationality, implausibility or inconsistency, Philo brings to light the latent meaning of various biblical lemmata so that a profound wisdom is excavated from underneath these *prima facie* embarrassing and/or outrageous passages. The hidden sense that Philo unveils is, then, explicated by a host of non-literal expressions that often yield an extended allegorical meaning. But ultimately Philo wants his reader not only to understand the law of Moses but also to live by it. Thus, Philonic allegory is supposed to help one pass from flesh (the literal) to spirit (the figurative). This "salvific"—so to say—function of allegory is as important as is the apologetic and/or the explanatory one. Hence, Philo's allegory emerges as a dynamic interplay of

various types and functions. Needless to say, however, more empirical analyses of Philo's exegetical practice will have to be conducted to corroborate this observation.

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