

DAVID T. RUNIA

Philo of Alexandria

Collected Studies 1997–2021

*Texts and Studies in
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187*

Mohr Siebeck

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Edited by

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Annette Y. Reed (Cambridge, MA)
Seth Schwartz (New York, NY)
Moulie Vidas (Princeton, NJ)

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David T. Runia, born 1951; 1976 MA University of Melbourne; 1983 LittD Free University Amsterdam; 2003 DLitt University of Melbourne; Professorial Fellow, University of Melbourne; Honorary Professor, Australian Catholic University; and Professor Extraordinarius, Stellenbosch University, South Africa.
orcid.org/0000-0003-4020-5249

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To my fellow-Philonists past and present,
loyal companions in a common quest
over a period of more than four decades

Preface

The present volume collects together twenty-six studies on the writings and thought of Philo of Alexandria, written over a period of a quarter of a century. It follows on from an earlier collection of studies, *Exegesis and Philosophy: Studies on Philo of Alexandria*, published in 1990, which covered the period 1981–1989 and were connected, to a greater or lesser extent, with research carried out for my Amsterdam dissertation, *Philo of Alexandria and the Timaeus of Plato* first published in a provisional edition in 1983, then in the slightly revised version in 1986. By that time I was well on the way to producing a second monograph, *Philo in Early Christian Literature*, which saw the light of day in 1993. It in turn gave rise two years later to a second collection of studies, *Philo and the Church Fathers: A Collection of Papers*, written in the years 1989–1993. By this time the delightful period of my life when I could devote most of my time to research had ended. But the subject matter of the two monographs written early in my career, each initiating a separate though intimately related line of research, has continued to engage and motivate me ever since.

The origin of the collection of articles presented in this volume lies in a conversation during a visit to the book exhibit at the Annual Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature held in New Orleans in November 2009. Dr Henning Ziebritzki of the publishing house of Mohr Siebeck approached me and suggested that I should publish another volume of studies on the great Jewish-Alexandrian thinker. I agreed that it would be a good idea and after returning from the conference put together a proposal, which was readily accepted. The lengthy delay in carrying it out was mainly caused by my involvement in the completion of a large-scale project in the field of ancient philosophy, conducted together with my Utrecht colleague Jaap Mansfeld. The edition and commentary on the *Placita* of the doxographer Aëtius was published in the middle of the pandemic in 2020 (on this project see further below p. 4 & n. 18). But there was a silver lining. The delay has meant that I could include a number of further studies which make the present volume a more rounded collection than it otherwise would have been. The past decade has been a very fruitful period in the development of Philonic research, and this is reflected in a number of recent articles that I have written.

In order to limit and focus the present collection, I have excluded all the articles written during the same period that have as their main theme aspects of the reception of Philo. It is of course somewhat artificial to separate Philo himself from his reception, since we can only view and interpret his writings and thought on the basis of evidence that has come down to us, and the survival and the nature of that evidence is heavily dependent on the way it was transmitted to us in the pre-modern period. Nevertheless the exclusion of reception studies seemed a relatively clear-cut strategy allowing the present collection to be confined within reasonable bounds. This meant, for example, that I have omitted the article written in honour of my mentor Professor Eric Osborn in 2004, because its primary focus is on Clement of Alexandria, even though it has much to say on the Philonic doctrine of the divine powers and could have fittingly found a place in the present collection.

Sincere thanks are due to a number of persons and institutions which have made this volume possible. My greatest debt is to the publishing house of Mohr Siebeck and to its (until recently) Director, Dr Henning Ziebritzki. His role as initiator of the project has already been mentioned. He has been very patient with me and continued to encourage me over a long period of time. More recently Ms Elena Müller and Mr Markus Kirchner have been most helpful in guiding the project to completion.

I also wish to thank the publishers of all the books and journals for their permission to reprint the studies contained in this volume. Their names are to be found in the list of where the articles were first published at the end of the volume. Many of the articles had their origin in the Journal devoted to Philonic and Hellenistic-Jewish studies, *The Studia Philonica Annual*, which I have edited since its inception in 1989. I wish to thank Brown Judaic Studies in the period up to 2005, and since then SBL Press, Atlanta, for the generous support they have given to this publication, which has come to play such a key role in Philonic scholarship. Seven of the studies appeared in publications of Brill, Leiden, the publisher which whom I have had an even longer relationship, dating back to the time that it published my dissertation in 1986. I take the opportunity to thank the firm and its staff for all the assistance given over the years.

This volume is dedicated to my fellow Philonists, past and present. Scholarship is a collective and cumulative enterprise. It has been a joy and source of inspiration to work together with older and younger scholars in international disciplinary and inter-disciplinary contexts. As I will explain in the Introduction, many of the essays have their origin in projects and events in which I was asked to participate or in volumes which honoured leading figures in the fields of Philonic and other studies. As often indicated in prefatory and concluding notes to the articles, I owe numerous debts to individual scholars for invitations and other forms of assistance. But I also wish to acknowledge in more general terms the ties of friendship and collegiality that have greatly enriched my life as a scho-

lar and a person. May this volume be a stimulus to further research on the fascinating and complex figure of Philo of Alexandria and the world in which he lived and wrote.

Melbourne, Australia, December 2022

David T. Runia

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Abbreviations

For abbreviations of ancient sources this volume follows those of the Oxford dictionaries of Liddell & Scott, Glare and Lampe, of the *SBL Handbook of Style* second edition, and of *The Studia Philonica Annual*. Philonic treatises are always referred to by their traditional Latin titles, with abbreviated titles conforming to the practice of the *The Studia Philonica Annual* and the *SBL Handbook of Style*.

(a) Editions, Translations and Reference works on Philo of Alexandria

- PCH *Philo von Alexandria: die Werke in deutscher Übersetzung*. Edited by L. Cohn, I. Heinemann *et al.*, 7 vols. (Breslau and Berlin, 1909–1964).
- PCW *Philonis Alexandrini opera quae supersunt*. Edited by L. Cohn, P. Wendland, and S. Reiter, 6 vols. (Berlin, 1896–1915).
- PLCL/PLCLSup *Philo in Ten Volumes (and Two Supplementary Volumes)*. English translation by F. H. Colson, G. H. Whitaker (and R. Marcus), 12 vols., Loeb Classical Library (London and Cambridge, MA, 1929–1962).
- PACS Philo of Alexandria Commentary Series
- PAPM *Les œuvres de Philon d'Alexandrie*. French translation under the general editorship of R. Arnaldez, J. Pouilloux, and C. Mondésert, 36 vols. (Paris, 1961–1992).

(b) Other Abbreviations

- CJHNT Corpus Judaeo-Hellenisticum Novi Testamenti
- EAJS European Association of Jewish Studies
- MS/MSS manuscript/manuscripts
- SAPERE Scripta Antiquitatis Posterioris ad Ethicam Religionemque pertinentia

Introduction

Since the two books that I wrote at the beginning of my career as an academic researcher,¹ I have not published any more monographs on Philo. The focus has been on commentaries for the Philo of Alexandria Commentary Series initiated by Greg Sterling in 1995.² But it goes without saying that a strong interest in the many subjects associated with Philo, his situation in Alexandria, his writings and his thought has continued unabated. This has led me to write essays and articles on a broad range of topics, many of which have been included in the present volume.

It is important to emphasize the occasional nature of many, if not most, of the articles collected here. Quite a few were written at the request of other scholars for conferences they were organizing or for collections of studies on a particular topic that they were putting together. Others were written to honour distinguished members of our scholarly guild. I have not wished to conceal the ‘occasionality’ so to speak of the essays. Not only does it give insight into developments in Philonic scholarship, but also it often influenced the choice of topic and the direction taken in its treatment. One should indeed be grateful for such invitations, because they not seldom lead to forays into areas that one might otherwise not have thought of, or at least not taken in hand. It is pleasing to observe however, when casting a retrospective glance over studies produced during quite a long period of time, that a certain coherence does appear to emerge, centred around a number of main themes that are all inter-related. I have accordingly not presented the studies chronologically, but rather divided them into four main parts preceded by two general presentations by way of introduction.³ I will now make some brief comments on these parts and the articles they contain.

¹ Runia (1986); (1993a). As mentioned in the Preface, these studies resulted in two earlier collections of essays: (1990); (1995a).

² Runia (2001a); Geljon–Runia (2013); (2019). I have also produced three further bibliographical compilations following the initial work done with Roberto Radice, Radice–Runia (1988); Runia (2000a); (2012); (2022).

³ Within the resultant five parts the articles are in chronological order.

1. Introductory Essays

The first two essays are introductory and cover a broad area in a rather general and even cursory way. I have included them because they each make an important point. The first study was presented to a gathering of mainly European Philonists in Brussels in 2007.⁴ Its primary aim was to set out the astonishing breadth of studies to which the Philonic legacy contributes, illustrated by a seven-pointed star. The seven areas of study outlined intersect a number of established disciplines: classics and ancient history, philosophy, biblical studies, Jewish studies, patristics, as well as more specialized subdisciplines such as codicology and Armenian studies. An important consequence is that a study of Philo in the round demands a breadth of knowledge and expertise that is rarely encountered in a single scholar. In my own case, the starting point has been classical studies and philosophy, with broad but less developed interests in other areas. This personal background will be evident in the studies contained in the present volume and in the methodologies used to carry out the research. A further corollary is the obvious value and need for interdisciplinary research.

It was an honour for me to be asked in 2017 to give an overview of fifty years of Philonic research in the hallowed halls of the Sorbonne in Paris, commemorating the famous colloque on Philo held at Lyon in 1966.⁵ This event had taken place only just over a decade before I embarked on the study of Philo in 1977 and at the time I studied the conference volume very carefully. Looking back, I not only realized how much had been achieved in Philonic studies since then, but also how much had changed in our approach to our author. The greatly increased role of inter-disciplinary cross-fertilization played a key role in these developments and is greatly to be welcomed. One could also see that shifts in scholarly interests had exerted considerable influence.⁶ But it also emerged that in certain areas, notably in textual studies requiring philological expertise, much less progress had been made. I will return to this in section 5 below.⁷

2. Philo and Ancient Philosophy

Philo has never belonged to what we might call the ‘canon’ of ancient philosophers, and it is not likely that he ever will. He might have thought of himself a *philosophos*, but it would not have been in the same sense that an Antiochus

⁴ Runia (2011) = article 1. It was earlier given to audiences in Coimbra and Lisbon, Portugal.

⁵ Runia (2021a) = article 2.

⁶ This might have been emphasized more in the article, esp. the rise and importance of women studies and very recently of post-colonial studies as well.

⁷ See text below at n. 47.

or a Eudorus or later a Plotinus were thus regarded. He can be more suitably compared with a Cicero or a Plutarch or a Musonius Rufus, but even then his status as a loyal Jew sets him apart. Against this background there are two key questions that recur when Philo's relation to ancient philosophy is investigated: (1) what information do Philo's writings provide about developments in ancient philosophy prior to and during his lifetime; and (2) how do insights from ancient philosophy assist us in understanding what he is aiming to achieve in his writings.

Both these questions came to the fore in the Kassman lecture that I delivered at the University of London in 2004 at the invitation of Richard Sorabji.⁸ The term 'rehabilitation' in its title was carefully chosen. The great British classicist E. R. Dodds in a seminal article published nearly a century ago was contemptuous of what he regarded as Philo's eclecticism, comparing him to a loquacious and thievish bird.⁹ I explain that a more positive appreciation of what Philo can offer by students of ancient philosophy is well under way and illustrate it by discussing the Philonic evidence on the theological question of the unity and transcendence of God which gave rise to Dodds' comment. Similarly I had been invited some years earlier to contribute a paper to the meeting of the prestigious Symposium Hellenisticum held in Lille in 1999, which focused on questions of Hellenistic theology.¹⁰ My starting point was a text on Plato's theology found in the *Placita* of Aëtius. I argued that it reflects the confident and direct approach the question of the divine nature that is characteristic of Hellenistic philosophy. Something of this attitude can also be discerned in some Philonic texts, but others that are much less confident and introduce a negative theology that spells the end of Hellenistic theology. Here Philo with his distinctive vantage-point may have been in the vanguard of philosophical developments, even if it is too bold to claim him as the father of negative theology.¹¹

In 2003 Gretchen Reydamas-Schils organized a conference at the University of Notre Dame on 'Plato's *Timaeus* as Cultural Icon.'¹² It gave me the opportunity to revisit some themes of my dissertation and place them in a wider context of development from Philo to Augustine.¹³ This article too studies the role of first principles in Philo's thought and particularly the status of matter, a question that is central to the problem of whether the Alexandrian had any thoughts that come in the vicinity of what subsequently developed into the Christian doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo*. There are questions here that still remain controversial and

⁸ Runia (2007) = article 6.

⁹ Dodds (1928); see quotation on p. 132, cited in article 6 at n. 4.

¹⁰ Runia (2002a) = article 4.

¹¹ Wolfson (1947), discussed in section 7 of the article.

¹² Runia (2003a) = article 5.

¹³ A retrospective look at my dissertation and its scholarly reception had been published in Runia (1993d). It is not included in this collection.

perhaps will never be fully resolved, not only because the textual evidence is not as clear as we would like, but also – and perhaps more significantly – because the answer one gives very much depends on one's views on how Philo should be read and interpreted. This is the only essay in the collection in which Philo is placed in a larger diachronic perspective, but I do not raise the question of whether Philo exerted influence on these doctrinal developments, so questions of reception are not broached.

But it was not only the conceptuality and doctrines of ancient philosophy that are important for trying to understand what Philo aims to achieve in his writings. Also its organizational features and the methods of philosophizing that were being developed in his day furnish a significant backdrop. In my article on Philo and the Greek *hairesis*-model¹⁴ I build on the work of John Gucker and David Sedley and focus on the notion of *hairesis*, best translated as 'school of thought' and denoting an 'affiliation' or 'allegiance' that presupposes varying degrees of institutional loyalty and participation.¹⁵ Philo's presentation of Moses as the founder of a *hairesis* with disciples who are devoted to his thought and the interpretation of his writings has obvious apologetic advantages in his Alexandrian context and certainly glosses over significant differences owing to his Jewish context. Of central importance is the conviction that God has revealed the truth to Moses, which then has to be studied and further articulated by his disciples. Philo is not partial to pluralistic tendencies. At most he believes philosophers may have seen something of the truth if they did not learn it from Moses himself. This will pave the way for later concepts of orthodoxy and heterodoxy.¹⁶

Some years later I was delighted to participate in a volume instigated and edited by Francesca Alesse on Philo and post-Aristotelian philosophy, in which his relation and debts to the new strains of philosophy in the Hellenistic period were investigated.¹⁷ My theme was Philo and doxography, a quasi-genre of philosophical writing instigated by Aristotle and Theophrastus in the Peripatos, but then further expanded and developed in the Hellenistic and early Imperial periods. This article linked up beautifully with another field of research on which I had already embarked during my years as a post-doc researcher. It initially studied doxography as a method and form of ancient philosophical literature, but then – in a long-time collaboration with my Utrecht colleague Jaap Mansfeld – narrowed to a reconstruction, edition and commentary on the *Placita* of Aëtius, the most important surviving doxographical work from antiquity.¹⁸

¹⁴ Runia (1999a) = article 3.

¹⁵ Gucker (1988); Sedley (1999).

¹⁶ See further below at n. 26 on Runia (2010) = article 13.

¹⁷ Runia (2008a) = article 7.

¹⁸ Culminating in the recently published work of Mansfeld–Runia (2020), but preceded by four preparatory volumes, Mansfeld–Runia (1997–2018). See the excellent review of the edition by Inwood (2021), who emphasizes the importance of the Philonic evidence for the understanding of the *Placita* and of the *Placita* for our reading of Philo. The article on Philo

Philo was, it may be concluded, an almost exact contemporary of the otherwise unknown Aëtius. Not only is he a crucial witness for the development of the method and content of the *Placita*, but this work also sheds crucial light on his own approach to philosophy. Philo was most assuredly not the kind of ancient student of philosophy who relied on second-hand distillations of *doxai* for his knowledge of philosophical doctrines. But, like his contemporaries, he is not averse to using such compact summaries when it suits his purposes. More importantly he exploits their method and content when he wishes to outline the kinds of answers that are given to key questions in Greek philosophy, either as a phase in the search for the truth, or in opposition to the truth as set out by Moses. Philo well understands that the methods of division (*diaeresis*) and opposition (*diaphonia*) are intrinsic to the method of the *Placita* and it suits him very well, both in his exegetical and in his philosophical works. This article was to have a sequel in which the concept of philosophical doxa in his writings was further investigated.¹⁹

In addition to the two key questions on Philo's relation to ancient philosophy which I outlined at the beginning of this section, there is a third which so far has gone under the radar. What are the deeper effects on Philo's thought brought about by his manifest attraction to Greek philosophy? How does it affect the way that he understands and interprets Mosaic thought? This question came to the fore when I received an unexpected invitation, to participate in a doctoral examination in Turku, Finland. Under the supervision of Antti Laato, the doctoral researcher Sami Yli-Karjanmaa had prepared an impressive dissertation²⁰ in which he argued that, contrary to the opinion of most recent Philonists including myself, Philo espoused the doctrine of reincarnation and assumes it in his presentations of the journey of the soul, the key component of his allegorical interpretation of scripture. It was no objection, he argues, that this doctrine is mentioned only a handful of times in his entire corpus, and only once in a clear and explicit way. Philo knew that this view would meet with opposition among his Jewish contemporaries, so he downplays it. It is illustrative of the deep subterranean influence of Platonism, which ultimately determines the direction of his thought. Since the publication of his study, many Philonic scholars have been persuaded by his arguments and this view may well become the new orthodoxy. Somewhat stubbornly, perhaps, I have resisted full acceptance of his interpretation, despite my admiration for the thorough and methodologically precise

and doxography was already reprinted in vol. 3, (2011) 271–312. Given its significance in the context of the present volume, I thought it should be reprinted again.

¹⁹ See further below at n. 26.

²⁰ Yli-Karjanmaa (2013), provisional edition for the purposes of the doctoral examination; (2015), commercial edition.

way it was presented. In a review article reprinted here I have put forward the reasons for my hesitation.²¹

One of the many virtues of Yli-Karjanmaa's study was that he drew attention to the importance of the *Phaedo*, Plato's classic dialogue on the nature and immortality of the soul, for Philo's thought. He was the first to make a thorough study of this key influence,²² which is hardly less than that other key Platonic work, the *Timaeus*, that I studied in my dissertation. So when I received an invitation to give a lecture at the XIth Symposium Platonicum, held in Brasilia in 2016, which focused on the *Phaedo*, I decided to build on his work and give an overview of how Philo utilized the dialogue and the influence it had on his thought. Because of space restrictions I did not publish the lecture in the conference proceedings, but was pleased, when she suggested it, to allow Marta Alesso to translate it into Spanish and publish it in an Argentinian journal.²³ The original English version now sees the light of day for the first time.

3. Biblical Interpretation in an Alexandrian Context

By far the majority of Philo's writings have biblical interpretation as their chief focus. Of course this applies in the first instance to his three major biblical commentaries. But also in the philosophical treatises and in a number of the historical-apologetical works the unwavering commitment to Mosaic scripture is never far below the surface. This interpretative activity finds place in the context of Greek-speaking Hellenistic Judaism, and particularly of the Alexandrian community in which Philo grew up and spent most of his life. The next group of essays examine a wide range of topics which have biblical interpretation as the connecting thread. It is appropriate to emphasize the role of Alexandria in them, since my focus has admittedly been more on this city than the other two significant cities in Philo's life, Jerusalem and Rome.

In the concluding chapter of his magisterial monograph on Philo as a commentator on scripture, Valentin Nikiprowetzky posited that a study on Philo had the best chance to be worthwhile if it concentrated on an exegetical theme rather than one that was 'properly philosophical.'²⁴ A good example of such a study is the essay on flight and exile in Philo's allegorical thought world, written at the invitation of Christoph Riedweg for a Zürich seminar on the theme of exile in literature.²⁵ There is no evidence to suggest that for Philo living in the diaspora was tantamount to a life in exile. But his Alexandrian situation is relevant to

²¹ Runia (2019a) = article 8.

²² See the list of references at (2015) 297. But there is no systematic discussion.

²³ Runia (2016).

²⁴ Nikiprowetzky (1977) 238.

²⁵ Runia (2009) = article 12.

the allegorical thought-world that he develops in his exegesis, in which biblical themes from the banishment out of paradise to the exodus out of Egypt are deepened when brought in relation to the history of the soul and the spiritual quest that culminates in a vision of the God of Israel. It is remarkable how this theme can be linked to many of the central themes of Philo's thought.

But even when exegetical themes are at the forefront, the structuring role of Greek philosophical concepts, particularly in Philo's allegories, remains quite indispensable. The essay on the concepts of *dogma* and *doxa*²⁶ in a sense forms a continuation of the research on Philo's use of the doxographical tradition.²⁷ He often uses these two terms (the difference between them is slight) in relation to philosophical doctrines and to specifically doxographical material. The main focus of the article, however, is their usage in relation to generalized philosophical and religious positions or points of view. In the context of allegorical exegesis these are frequently linked to biblical characters who represent directions of thought, both positive and negative. Compared with Greek allegorical practice, this usage is highly innovative. Spiritual and theological themes predominate, and its influence can be felt centuries later in the two opposed cities in Augustine's great work, the *City of God*.

The next article on eudaimonism in Philo and Hellenistic-Jewish literature also treats a key Greek philosophical concept that can be said to have a structuring role in Philo's thought and writings. The term *eudaimonia* denotes the good life which all human beings should strive for and attain, and so is the ultimate goal or end of human action. As such it plays a key role in Philo's allegory of the soul and his presentation of Jewish religion and spirituality. The article illustrates this with a survey of apologetic and exegetical themes which show how important this concept in his thought and how he often places it in a climactic position in the structure of his treatises. The article ends with an evaluative discussion that takes us to the heart of the question that motivated James Kugel to organize the conference for which it was written: what does it mean for Philo as a descendent of Shem to live in the tents of Japheth (Gen 9:27)? Is *eudaimonia* a Greek concept that is given a Jewish content, or does it enter into the marrow of his thought? An answer is provided through the observation that for Philo, unlike the Septuagint that he expounds, God himself can be said to be *eudaimôn* together with the consequences that can be drawn from that view.

When the Australian scholars David Sim and James McLaren commissioned a volume of articles on attitudes to Gentiles and asked me to contribute a chapter on Philo,²⁸ I did not think it would be a difficult or time-consuming task, because I knew that the expression *ta ethnê* occurred but rarely in his writings. These occurrences and their predominantly exegetical context were dealt with

²⁶ Runia (2010) = article 13.

²⁷ See above on article 7 in part B.

²⁸ Runia (2013) = article 14.

easily enough. But, moving on from there, the topic opens up complex issues on how Philo sees his place as a Jew and a member of the most prominent Jewish community in the diaspora. How do the descriptors Greeks, barbarians, Jews, and Israel, i. e. those ‘who see God,’ relate to each other? And how useful is it to use the term ‘Gentile’ more broadly in this context?

In my earlier collection of articles on Philo I included a piece which argued that, when in the opening pages of the *De opificio mundi* he formulates his famous image of the founding of a city to illustrate the role of the divine Logos in creation, he has his own city of Alexandria in mind.²⁹ A decade later I decided to devote a much broader investigation into Philo’s views on the city as a social and political phenomenon.³⁰ This included not only studying what he tells us about his Alexandrian context in the historical treatises and more incidentally in his other, mainly exegetical, works. The concept of the city also often occurs in the context of his allegorical and other forms of exegesis. Even though Philo is undoubtedly a *homo urbanus*, he can be very critical of the city and shows a predilection for the life of solitude or as lived in isolated small communities. All in all, Philo shows himself to be ambivalent towards the city, frequently espousing the ideal of the *polis* as developed in Greco-Roman thought, but also subverting it in light of his own particular situation and his religious and philosophical commitments.

The theme of the city, particularly as the locus of order and disorder, returns in an even broader context in a contribution that I prepared for the *Entretien* (conversation) on ‘Cosmologies and cosmogonies in ancient literature’ organized by Therese Fuhrer and Michael Eler in the delightful ambience of the Fondation Hardt in Vandœuvres, Switzerland.³¹ The subject was the interrelation of cosmos, *logos* and *nomos* in accounts and interpretations of the origin of physical reality, and so I returned once again, after thirty years, to the subject of my dissertation and to Philo’s best known exegetical treatise, the *De opificio mundi*. But this time I expanded the discussion beyond Philo and introduced a detailed comparison with the thought of the Church father Origen. So the Alexandrian context was of critical importance, as underlined in the title of the contribution. I emphasize how the triad of concepts studied all interconnect with the notion of order, so intensely desired by Philo amid the *anarchia* he was experiencing and offering a contrast with the salvation that Origen found through his different understanding of *nomos* and *logos*.

The final essay in this grouping continues further along the same lines. When the Italian scholars Angela Longo and Ludovica de Luca invited me to participate in a conference devoted to images, metaphors and allegories in the same treatise *De opificio mundi*, I did not want to cover the same ground again

²⁹ Runia (1989a), reprinted as article III in Runia (1990a). The passage is *Opif.* 17–18.

³⁰ Runia (2000b) = article 10. The same passage is cited at n. 12a of the reprinted article.

³¹ Runia (2015a) = article 15.

and so was grateful when they allowed me to deviate slightly from the main topic and examine the relation between this treatise and the Allegorical Commentary with its different method and audience.³² The article brings into special focus two significant developments in Philonic studies over the period of the last four decades. The first concerns the relationship between Philo's three main biblical commentaries. In the years after I wrote my dissertation there was a growing realization, not only that these three grand works each had their own methods and intellectual context – a fact which had long been recognized³³ –, but also that this had to be taken into account when utilizing and analysing their contents. Gone are the days when scholars could blithely list and enumerate passages from these commentaries on any given topic without taking those contexts into account.³⁴ The second is related but even more consequential. Very recently valiant attempts have been made, notably by Maren Niehoff in her innovative intellectual biography of Philo,³⁵ to fix the chronological relationship between these works (and also the remainder of his *œuvre*) and draw far-reaching conclusions from it. In my article I do not weigh in on that discussion because I believe that much remains uncertain and speculative. Instead I investigate the presence of citations and exegesis of the Mosaic creation account in the Allegorical Commentary, which turns out to be both limited and yet of fundamental significance for Philo's project in that work. In addition, the number of correlations and interaction with themes in the *De opificio mundi* was surprisingly high. The conclusion that could be drawn is that, even if there might have been a lapse of time between the dates that the works were written, it is possible to discern a pleasing unity in Philo's thought on essential aspects of the crucial doctrine of the origins of the cosmos and humanity.

4. Further Theological Themes

In light of the often repeated claim of Wilhelm Bousset that Philo was the 'first theologian,'³⁶ and the dominance of references to God and all the manifestations of the divine throughout the corpus, it is hardly surprising that many of the articles in this volume dwell on questions relating to theology. These include a

³² Runia (2021b) = article 16. The conference topic was inspired by De Luca's dissertation, (2021), to which I contributed a 'Prefazione' in the Italian manner, Runia (2021c).

³³ At least since Cohn's seminal article, (1899).

³⁴ Far-reaching examples of the application of this methodological insight are the dissertations of Noack (2000) and Ryu (2015), both on topics of Philonic theology. I myself had taken it into account when preparing my commentary on *Opif.*; see my remark at Runia (2001a) 4.

³⁵ Niehoff (2018).

³⁶ Also by myself, see Runia (1988a) 69 (= article XI in Runia, 1990), and (2003c) 603 = article 17 in this volume.

number of articles already introduced above.³⁷ I have grouped together a group of three further articles on theology which are linked by a common theme, namely how human beings experience the divine in the life of the mind and in what might be called the spiritual life.

When Antti Laato and Johannes de Moor invited me to contribute a chapter on Philo in a collected volume on theodicy in the world of the Bible, I readily accepted,³⁸ because I thought it important for Philo to be given a place in a work which covered a time span from Egyptian and Akkadian literature, via the Hebrew Bible, early Jewish writings (where Philo was placed) and the New Testament, and ending with rabbinic Judaism in the Targumim.³⁹ Since the volume in which it appeared, though scholarly, was written at a fairly general and introductory level, there was a need for me to provide more background on Philo and his milieu than in other articles in the present collection. In particular, I urged the editors to allow me to include a section on Greek philosophy, since the contribution of the Greek (and later Roman) philosophers – notably Plato and the Stoics – to reflection on the questions of the origins of evil and God's responsibility for human suffering was not treated elsewhere.⁴⁰ In this article, too, I emphasize the differing approaches that Philo takes in the various kinds of writings he wrote, with a prominent place being given to the philosophical treatises *On Providence* which tackle the theme of theodicy head on. His discussion there with his nephew Alexander may seem quite theoretical, but from his two surviving treatises on the events that occurred in Alexandria and Rome towards the end of his life,⁴¹ we may be certain that the theme had direct existential impact on him in light of the contemporary situation of the Jewish community in Alexandria.

In 2011 another gathering of Philonists took place in Europe, this time at the Sacred Heart University in Milan. The theme chosen for the conference was formulated as 'Potere e potenze,' the combination of verbal infinitive and plural noun neatly capturing the breadth of the theological theme of God's power(s).⁴² It was a privilege to be asked to give the opening address and I deliberately chose what I called a 'bottom-up approach',⁴³ setting out Philo's views on what God's power means for human beings who experience it in all the various aspects of

³⁷ Notably in articles 4–6 in part B and article 11 in part C. See also article 24 below, which could have been placed in this section. Because it focuses on a single text, I have preferred to place it in part E.

³⁸ Though it was written under some pressure as I was preparing to move from Leiden to Melbourne in early 2002.

³⁹ Runia (2003c) = article 17.

⁴⁰ See Runia (2003c) 580–583 = article 17, section 3.

⁴¹ *In Flaccum* and *Legatio ad Gaium*.

⁴² Contributions collected in Calabi *et al.* (2015), with the parallel French title 'Pouvoir et puissances.'

⁴³ Runia (2015b) = article 18; on this approach see esp. p. 246, in this volume text below n. 4 on p. 355.

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