

Eriugena and Philo Judaeus: Philosophy in Heaven, on Earth, and Underground  
A communication to the Atlantic Classical Association Annual Meeting  
October 27<sup>th</sup> 2007

Two weekends ago I suffered the great misfortune of being forced to skip a Workshop to which I had been invited in Toronto entitled (pretentiously?): “Rewriting the History of Philosophy in Late Antiquity.” Lest you worry that the Loyalist *nouveau riches* of Upper Canada have become revolutionary, be comforted by the fact that the participants accepted without demure the instruction that their enterprise “reflect the best of the Cambridge and Oxford approaches to the History of Philosophy.” For some of us this might sound like a demand that there be no history of philosophy at all or, at the very least, that the philosophers in Late Antiquity be excluded from it. What is, in fact, most likely is that, so far as “the Cambridge and Oxford approaches to the History of Philosophy” are reflected, the philosophical texts will either be mangled to conform to very much later and alien notions of philosophy or, alternatively, that present day professional philosophers will be unable to recognise them as philosophy. The proceedings of the Workshop indicated that the participants felt painfully seated upon the horns of this dilemma but did not see a way to escape their misery.

Some of their questions were as to whether terms like “Middle” and “Neo” Platonism had outlived whatever usefulness they had; these reflected the preoccupations of the organiser of the Workshop. Not surprisingly, however, most discussion revolved around the problem that the treatises and personages who comprise the content of the subject—the participants in the workshop were all would be contributors to a completely reworked edition of the *Cambridge History of Late Ancient and Early Medieval Philosophy* which our own Hilary Armstrong last edited in 1970—bear little or no resemblance to contemporary philosophy and philosophers. There are at least three reasons for this which are closely related:

1. Either philosophy and life are too mixed up together in the ancient texts and their authors,
2. or philosophy, moral life, religion, and mysticism compromise elements of a single whole for them,
3. or the genres in which the philosophy was written are unrecognisable as appropriate now.

Reading the synopsis of the discussion I kept hearing directly or indirectly the complaint that the figure being considered did not look like a “professional” philosopher—a person best described by Pierre Hadot. For him contemporary abstractly theoretical philosophy is the result of developments within the university:

the university is .. made up of professors who train professors, or professionals training professionals. Education was thus no longer directed toward people who were to be educated with a view to becoming fully developed human beings, but to specialists, in order that they might train other specialists.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Pierre Hadot, “Philosophy as a Way of Life” in *Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault* 270; see also *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie antique?* 389, quoted in my “Philosophy as a Way of Life for Christians,” 197.

Professional university philosophy thus described has become all but universal among us, in part at least because the separation of Church and State characterising and even defining contemporary “Western” European societies demands the separation of philosophy—as belonging to secular and public reason—from religion and revealed theology. One place in “Western” European societies where such a separation might, one would have supposed, be defied, namely the Catholic university, in fact cooperates with this dividing. This is because of the distorted modern form assumed by the Latin Christian demand that what nature does be clearly delimited in relation to what is given by grace, lest both be contaminated.<sup>2</sup> Thus, although late ancient and medieval theological and philosophical texts are more likely to be treated in Catholic universities like Notre Dame, for example, than they are in the Protestant Ivy League, the attempt to treat the revealed theological and the philosophical elements separately and in different departments often mangles the texts into incomprehensibility. Medieval institutes, like our Classics Department, which treat works in their epochal contexts rather than according to disciplinary divisions provide oasis of relief.

There is nothing new about these complaints, when I read what those meeting two weeks ago in Toronto said, I was reminded of the criticisms of Philo Judaeus of Alexandria by two foundational 20<sup>th</sup> century historians of philosophy, Émile Bréhier and Eric Dodds. Both were moved by the remains of 19<sup>th</sup> century idealism turned positivistic lingering in different ways in France and England in finding that Philo was not a philosopher.

Bréhier’s historical studies commenced with a consideration of the works of Philo. In his first book, Bréhier found that by means of the allegorical interpretation of Scripture “Philo had wished to reconcile Greek philosophy with his religious beliefs.”<sup>3</sup> Later in his *History of Philosophy*, he wrote: “Through this method Philo brings into his commentary every philosophical theme of his time, and his vast work is a veritable museum in which we find a jumbled assortment....”<sup>4</sup> Eric Dodds shared Bréhier’s assessment of Philo at this point, notoriously calling “his eclecticism that of the jackdaw rather than the philosopher.”<sup>5</sup>

In his “The Rehabilitation of the Jackdaw: Philo of Alexandria and Ancient Philosophy,” after giving us more of Dodds, David Runia tries to defend Philo by placing him in a different category, while still regarding him as contributing to ancient philosophy. He writes that for Philo

Philosophy...stands for the sum total of human efforts to reach the truth. Moses is one of the ‘great natures’ who could rise to great heights in this field. But [there is also]... a more direct form of instruction through divine revelation.... The crucial question is whether Philo considered himself to be one of the ‘great natures’ that could attain to knowledge in the way described in these two texts. The answer is I

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<sup>2</sup> See my “Aquinas at the Origins of Secular Humanism? Sources and innovation in *Summa Theologiae* 1.1.1,” *Nova et Vetera* [The English Edition of the International Theological Journal], 5:1 (2007): 17-40, “9/11 and the History of Philosophy,” *Animus* 11 (2006): 1-26. <http://www.swgc.mun.ca/animus/current.htm>, “Pope Leo’s Purposes and St. Thomas’ Platonism,” in S. Tommaso nella storia del pensiero, *Atti dell’ VIII Congresso Tomistico Internazionale*, 8 vol., ed. A. Piolanti, viii, Studi Tomistici 17 (Città del Vaticano: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1982), 39-52, “Making Theology Practical: Thomas Aquinas and the Nineteenth Century Religious Revival,” *Dionysius*, 9 (1985): 85-127 and “From Metaphysics to History, from Exodus to Neoplatonism, from Scholasticism to Pluralism: the fate of Gilsonian Thomism in English-speaking North America,” *Dionysius*, 16 (1998): 157-188.

<sup>3</sup> É. Bréhier, *Les idées philosophiques*, 314.

<sup>4</sup> Bréhier, *The History of Philosophy*, ii, 169.

<sup>5</sup> E.R. Dodds, “The *Parmenides* of Plato,” 132, note 1, see 142.

think quite plainly no. Philo sees himself first and foremost as an exegete or an interpreter, primarily of the books of Moses, but also, it seems, of other wisdom handed down in the tradition. In one of his dialogues with his nephew Alexander, who later severed his ties with the Jewish community, he says (§7): 'I shall begin but not with teaching, for I am an interpreter, not a teacher. Those who teach initiate others in their own skills, whereas those who interpret convey what they have heard from others through accurate use of memory.'

Runia goes on to judge that:

Philo is surely being excessively modest in this statement. Interpretation such as he practises involves more than recollection or regurgitation. But certainly it is interpretation or exegesis that is his basic manner of working. It is this insight, that Philo is first and foremost an exegete of scripture, which has gained almost universal acceptance in Philonic studies during the past three decades or so, creating a gulf which separates recent scholarship from the time of Dodds, or even of [H.] Wolfson, [É.] Bréhier and [Jean] Cardinal Daniélou.... In presenting himself as the interpreter of a great mind Philo agrees with a strong tendency in imperial philosophy that has been noted by scholars such as David Sedley and Michael Frede, namely that to practise philosophy through the interpretation of the great philosophers of the past. Moses the archetypal sage replaces Pythagoras or Plato or Epicurus or Pyrrho. *Presbyteron kreitton*, what is more ancient is superior, whether this goes back to the foundation of one's school or even further back.

This seems to me to be right, and we might add John Dillon's work on the Middle Platonists, among whom he places Philo, to the list of 20<sup>th</sup> century scholars who show how philosophy really worked in his period. Middle Platonism was characterised by at least three elements, besides working by means of interpreting great old philosophers and great old texts which are in the case of Philo, Moses and the LXX as inspired text:

1. the ideas were in the mind of the creator,
2. philosophy and religion are mixed together
3. religion is starting to manifest what will later be called theurgy.

In this situation the type of philosophy is Pythagoras—and thus the *De Vita Mosis* of Philo is modeled on the Lives of Pythagoras, just as what it contains will be echoed in Iamblichus's *The Pythagorean Way of Life*. Altogether crucial in Middle Platonism, as it will be also in the Neoplatonism which succeeds it, is that philosophy as that side of the ascent of the soul depending upon the inadequate but necessary efforts which our natural powers enable, can only be part of a greater whole including as equally essential what belongs to the operations of the divine towards us, what comes to be called Grace. In consequence, I regret that Runia goes on to diminish what Philo accomplishes as a philosopher:

Despite this affinity, however, I do not think that Philo should be regarded as a philosopher in the same way that an Antiochus or a Eudorus or even a Plutarch is, let alone a Plotinus. What is lacking is the desire to work towards a body of established doctrine. Apart from a few exceptional passages, notably his so-called 'credo' at the end of *De opificio mundi*, Philo is content to comment on scripture or

collect philosophical material in a non-systematic way. Others may disagree, but in my view he is primarily an exegete who uses philosophy as ‘the language of reason’ to expound the wisdom hidden in the sacred books of the Judaic tradition. In short we might call him a ‘philosophically orientated exegete’. ...It cannot be denied that when he is trying to explain the words of Mosaic scripture, Philo picks and chooses precisely those doctrines or insights from the fund of Greek philosophy which suit his exposition. He is not married to the doctrines of one particular school, even if he has his preferences. The primary stimulus is provided by the text. It is not his own body of thought that he is trying to build up. Without wishing to take this line of argument too far, one might even conclude that the shoe is on the other foot. It is the modern reader of Philo, emphatically including Dodds, who wishes to explore his thought on a particular issue and as a result takes on the role of the jackdaw. He or she picks and chooses his passages from Philo and builds them into ‘chapters of thought’, for example Philo on the ideas, Philo on the Logos, Philo on the role of language, and so on and so forth.

What is wrong with this is that it does not—and few if any do—take as seriously as Philo did the identity of content in a diversity of forms which he, and his successors in the ancient and medieval world, supposed existed between Plato (and/ or Aristotle & Pythagoras) and Moses (and or Abraham and Mohammed) (the first having learned from the second)—and which pagans also supposed existed, with the primal teacher and taught being reversed. The great trouble always, or almost always is, that scholars bring the model of apologetics to this relation as if the author knows conceptually what he wants to say in philosophical terms before thinking it philosophically—the work of R.D. Crouse is an exception to writing in this pattern. Thus, philosophy becomes a means to tell someone else or to justify to someone else by means of an external instrument what is already thought as doctrine. Once we discard the apologetical model, we come to understand that philosophy in late antiquity can have no other forms than the ones it has and that the mixing of nature and grace—to speak somewhat anachronistically—if not in every treatise, then at least in every philosophical life and in every system, is necessary.

A lecture by our colleague Dr Thomas Curran at King’s on Wednesday reminded me of the immense gulf fixed between medieval ways of thinking about philosophy and those current. Introducing the *Divine Comedy*, Dr Curran quoted Dante’s “Epistle to Cangrande della Scala” (1314-17 or 1319-20). The letter was written in Latin, here are two paragraphs (15 & 16):

*Finis totius et partis esse posset multiplex, scilicet propinquus et remotus. Sed omissa subtili investigatione, dicendum est breviter quod finis totius et partis est, remove vivere in hac vita de statu miseriae et perducere ad statum felicitatis. Genus vero philosophiae, sub quo hic in toto et parte proceditur, est morale negotium, sive ethica; quia non ad speculandum, sed ad opus inventum est totum et pars. Nam si in aliquo loco vel passu pertractatur ad modum speculativi negotii, hoc non est gratia speculativi negotii, sed gratia operis; quia, ut ait Philosophus in secundo Methaphysicorum, "ad aliquid et nunc speculantur practici aliquando."*

We may translate the most relevant passages as follows:

Briefly put, the purpose of this whole work [the *Divine Comedy*] as well as its parts is to remove those living in this present state of life from misery and to lead them all the way to happiness. The kind of philosophy under which we proceed here both in whole and in part is the business of morals or ethics, since both the part and the whole are composed for practice rather than theory. But if in some place or passage things are lengthened out in the manner of theory, this is not for the purpose of theory, but of practice; for, as the Philosopher says in the second book of *Metaphysics*: “practical men theorize now and again.”<sup>6</sup>

This kind of unification of the theoretical and the ethical to a practical end reminds us of a work of the greatest medieval metaphysician and physician, Ibn Sina, *The Healing* (*Al-Shifa*), although if we place the practical, and itinerarium of the soul, within the theoretical rather than the contrary, one may equally think of Thomas’ *Summa Theologiae*.<sup>7</sup> When looking at the *Summa* this way, I judge Aquinas to be operating within a Neoplatonic unification of mind, cosmos, and God established as the hidden but effective presupposition of Latin medieval spiritual life by Eriugena.

Eriugena had the highest conception of philosophy, ultimately a heavenly one. Augustine had spoken of Christianity as “true philosophy.”<sup>8</sup> Following him, when philosophy is identified with *intellectus* or wisdom, an identification Eriugena explicitly made on Augustine’s authority, and when *fides* gives us the same content but in a form inadequate to reason, we arrive Eriugena’s conviction that true philosophy, by which the highest and first principles are investigated is true religion. Conversely true religion is true philosophy.<sup>9</sup> So in his *Annotiones in Marcianum*, he wrote:

*Nemo intrat in celum nisi per philosophiam, semel splendoribus* (57, 15 Lutz, 64).

The context of this *dictum*, as well as the content of the *De Predestinatione*, make clear that he knew the *Consolation of Philosophy* intimately, and that the one who would open the door of heaven was none other than Lady Philosophy herself and that she could do so in virtue of her capacity to be earthy and heavenly, and to also pierce through the heavens. Despite his knowledge of Boethius—or perhaps better in conformity with such knowledge—Eriugena had his knowledge of philosophy so unconventionally that, by the best estimates he had read very few “philosophy” texts. For example, Eriugena had no direct knowledge of non-Christian Neoplatonism.<sup>10</sup> His relation to that world is through Christian theologians, primarily Augustine and Denys. Denys’ works, the *Ambigua* and *Scoliae* of Maximus the Confessor, and the *De hominis opificio* of Gregory of Nyssa, he translated from Greek.<sup>11</sup> In the Dionysian *corpus*, Eriugena found the logic of a Neoplatonic system originating in and

<sup>6</sup> I have adapted a translation of James Marchand.

<sup>7</sup> On which see my “Knowing As We are Known’ in *Confessions* 10 and Other Philosophical, Augustinian and Christian Obedience to the Delphic *Gnothi Seauton* from Socrates to Modernity,” *Augustinian Studies* 34:1 (2003): 23-48 at 47-48.5

<sup>8</sup> Augustine, *Contra Julianum* 4.14.72; see *De Vera Religione* 5.8.

<sup>9</sup> Eriugena, *De divina predestinatione* I, PL 357-358 [*Treatise on Divine Predestination*, trans. Mary Brennan, Notre Dame texts in Medieval Culture, vol. 5 (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1998) c. 1, § 1, pp. 7-8] and Anselm, *Proslogion* c. 1 [Schmitt, I, p. 100]. see Beierwaltes, “Eriugena’s Platonism,” 69-70.”

<sup>10</sup> Beierwaltes, “Eriugena’s Platonism,” 53-7.

<sup>11</sup> Édouard Jauneau, *Études Érigéniennes*, Études augustiniennes 18 (Paris, 1987), 89.

circling back upon the One and Good.<sup>12</sup> For Plato, there was the *Timaeus* which Latin medievals knew directly or through the commentary of Chalcidius and there was Aristotle's *Categories* by way of Porphyry. It is telling that his picture of Lady Philosophy opening heaven's gate should come from Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy*—which probably took the image from Augustine. First, because it is perhaps the most existentially engaged work of philosophy in history, written as it was in prison by a man preparing himself for execution by torture. Second, because Christianity here has become one with a non-sectarian Platonism so completely that this Christian's consolation has not a single explicit reference to Christian faith, even if we are increasingly able to identify the Scriptural echoes in the text.<sup>13</sup> Otherwise, the Latin and Greek church fathers, principally Augustine and Dionysius, teach him what philosophy is.

Thus, by way of three later authors and two earlier ones we come to the principal subject of this paper. Having leapt from 14<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup>, and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries to the 9<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> centuries, I want to conclude by some comparisons between our two subjects who lie at the two ends of the first millennium of the Christian era. Philo has had a huge influence on philosophy as well as much else, an influence, like that of Eriugena, largely underground.

I was reminded of the hidden but potent philosophical influence of Eriugena last Spring when reading the *De Li Non Aliud* of Cusanus with my seminar. We uncovered in the very conclusion of the *Tetralogus*, an assumption by Nicholas of the most daring of Eriugena's doctrines. The source is unacknowledged either by Cusanus or by his editors. The Abbot, in the last stage of leading his fellow travellers *ad visionis primi viam*, declares that:

I say “creates” inasmuch as [this spirit] makes the conceptual likenesses of things from no other thing—even as the Spirit which is God makes the quiddities of things not from another, but from itself, i.e., from Not-other. And so, just as [the Divine Spirit] is not other than any creatable thing, so neither is the mind other than anything understandable by it.<sup>14</sup>

In case we fail to recognise the one who Cusa calls “Johannes Scotigena” elsewhere,<sup>15</sup> —as Emily Parker, one of the participants, pointed out—, having thus drawn together here the human and the divine self-creating, the final words of the work speak of the more and less swift running of those whom the Abbot would lead along the way to the vision of the first. What runs swiftly through all things for Eriugena is the Word. That by which Eriugena's God moves from his own non-being to himself as created being, is the human.<sup>16</sup> The Uncreated and creating divine subjectivity returns to itself as Uncreated and Uncreating end

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 58. On Denys as conveying the pagan Neoplatonic circle see Andrew Louth, *Maximus the Confessor*, (London: Routledge, 1996), 75 and Jeauneau, “The Neoplatonic Themes of *Processio* and *Reditus* in Eriugena,” 8-29. Louth, “St. Denys the Areopagite and St. Maximus the Confessor: A Question of Influence,” *Studia Patristica*, XXVII, ed. E.A. Livingstone, (Leuven: Peeters, 1993), 171 places Denys' relation to philosophy within his theology.

<sup>13</sup> See R.D. Crouse, ‘St. Augustine, Semi-Pelagianism and the *Consolatio* of Boethius,’ *Dionysius* 22 (2004).

<sup>14</sup> Cusanus, *De Li Non Aliud*, (Hopkins), 9.109-13, p. 138: “creat, inquam, quoniam rerum similitudines notionales ex alio aliquo non facit, sicut nec spiritus, qui Deus, rerum quidditates facit ex alio, sed ex se aut ‘non alio’. Ideo sicut ab aliquo creabili non est aliud, ita nec mens est aliud ab aliquo per ipsam intelligibili.”

<sup>15</sup> For a list see Moran, *The Philosophy of John Scottus Eriugena*, 279-80.

<sup>16</sup> *De Divisione Naturae* III.17 PL 678C; see L. Michael Harrington, *Human Mediation in Eriugena's Periphyseon*, M.A Thesis, Department of Classics, Dalhousie University, 1997; idem, “Unusquisque in suo sensu abundet: Human Perspective in Eriugena's *Periphyseon*,” *Dionysius*, 16 (1998), 123-140.

through the human *mens* which is joined to it immediately in the divine-human Mediator.<sup>17</sup> Eriugena wants to show how ineffable non-being, before all definition, being and multiplicity, comes into definite, varied, perceptible, and predicable, being, “running through,” intellect, reason, imagination and sense, the powers of the human *anima*. The human mind, mediating between what is and of what is not, because it has both sides in it creates all as diverse forms of unity and division. What knows all makes all. So, “in homine ... universaliter creatae sunt.”<sup>18</sup>

With the references of Cardinal Nicholas, implicit or explicit, in several of his works, Eriugena begins to emerge above ground, no longer exerting his very considerable influence on the orthodox like Thomas Aquinas under such covers as the unidentified glosses on Dionysian *Corpus* as it existed in Paris<sup>19</sup> which were taken from Eriugena, although not identified as his—presumably, at least in part, because his writings had been condemned as heretical. There were other sources of Eriugena’s doctrine, above all the *Clavis physicae* of Honorius Augustodunensis (1080-1157) which subversively reproduces and disseminates Eriugena without identifying the suspect source. Meister Eckhart (d. 1328) and many others knew Eriugena’s teaching in this way. In contrast, Cardinal Nicholas had both the *Clavis* and Book One of the *Periphyseon* in his library and annotated them in his own hand—he also has Eriugena’s *Homily on John* but thinks it is by Origen. Having enjoyed this brief appearance along with Proclus and Dionysius in the light surrounding the Cardinal from Kues, ‘Scotigena’ returns to his undercover activity except for a brief seventeenth-century revival when his *De Predestinatione* attracts attention among those discussing freewill in Paris partly as a result of some of the spin off from the Spanish arguments over grace which Dr McCormack mentioned yesterday. It is only with the German Idealists, most notably Hegel, that he is established as a philosopher, and seems at present to be able to maintain his place above ground, although the fact that there is no English translation of his *Periphyseon* in print does not bode well for the future, at least in this corner of the republic of letters.<sup>20</sup>

A like chance uncovering of underground movement in respect to Philo occurred because, at about the same time, I was teaching al-Farabi’s *The Perfect State* and his *Attainment of Happiness* in succession to the *Mystical Theology* and the *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* of Dionysius in one class and Philo’s *De Vita Mosis* in another. Since for me Augustine needs to be seen both in relation to Plotinus and Porphyry as sources and in relation to Iamblichus as a nearer contemporary, the Iamblichian theurge and Pythagoras are always at least at the edge of my consciousness. Moreover, I have diligent and imaginative students like Timothy Riggs finding models for Dionysian mediators in the *Commentary on the Alcibiades* of Proclus, and so on.... In consequence, it was not hard to notice an underground connection between the head of al-Farabi’s *Perfect City* and Philo’s Moses. Al-farabi figure is at once “Philosopher, Supreme Ruler, Prince, Legislator, and *Imam*” (*The Attainment of Happiness* § 58) occupying a place at the top of the human hierarchy like that of the Dionysian hierarch who orders those

<sup>17</sup> See Donald F. Duclow, “Dialectic and Christology in Eriugena’s *Periphyseon*,” *Dionysius*, 4 (1980), especially 110.

<sup>18</sup> *De Divisione Naturae* IV. 8 (PL 774A), see *God in Himself*, 53-55. On the genesis of the idea within Eriugena’s writing Mark Zier, “The Growth of an Idea,” *From Athens to Chartres. Neoplatonism and Medieval Thought. Studies in Honour of Édouard Jeunean*, ed. Haijo Jan Westra, (Leiden: Brill, 1992), 80.

<sup>19</sup> See *A Thirteenth-Century Textbook of Mystical Theology at the University of Paris. The Mystical Theology of Dionysius the Areopagite in Eriugena’s Latin Translation with the Scholia translated by Anastasius the Librarian and Excerpts from Eriugena’s Periphyseon*. Edition, translation, and introduction by L. Michael Harrington, Dallas Medieval Texts and Translations 4 (Paris /Leuven/Dudley, MA: Peeters, 2004).

<sup>20</sup> I follow Moran for this history.

below in virtue of his contemplation of the final stage of the angelic hierarchy above him. The monarch of the *Perfect City* has the highest excellence of body, moral virtue and mind, and has a complete philosophical education,

through the emanation from the Active Intellect to his Passive Intellect, [he is] a wise man and a philosopher and an accomplished thinker who employs an intellect of divine quality, and through the emanation from the Active Intellect to his faculty of representation [he is] a visionary prophet: who warns of things to come and tells of particular things which exist at present.(4.15.10).

Philo's Moses unites the perfections of the philosopher, the king, the legislator, prophet, and priest. By way of Platonic reminiscence—probably drawn together with the Aristotelian doctrine of the potential intellect—his mystical union with the divine *logos* whereby he passes through the darkness into hidden knowledge of the forms so that he is illumined and becomes paradigmatic, a living law, is both the culmination and the foundation of his activity. I do not know how he got from Philo through such potential mediators as Plotinus, Iamblichus, Eusebius & the Greek Church Fathers, Proclus, etc. to Dionysius. There the *logos* mysticism of Philo was replaced by union with the One-non-being of Dionysius for Moses and contemplation of the bottom of the celestial hierarchy for the human hierarch. Nor do I know how from one or more of these the character which the Philosopher-King acquired in Philo passed to al-Farabi, where union with the Agent Intellect replaced Philo's divine *logos*. However, my confidence that the road can be traced has been intensified by the substantiation given very recently to Cristina D'Ancona-Costa's hypothesis of the existence of an Arabic translation of the Dionysian *corpus*. I also do not know exactly why it should be the case that when I read Moses Maimonides on how philosophy and prophesy come together in the founding philosophic, prophetic religious legislators of the Jewish people, I sensed that Philo had travelled underground by way of Islamic Arabic philosophers—any more than I know how resemblances of Christ in the *Pars Tertia* of the *Summa theologiae* to the Philonic Moses are to be explained. However, it is important that the connections together with the likenesses and the differences be brought above ground into the light.

You might agree, being willing to acknowledge that history of ideas is a good thing and perhaps even a discipline. You might, however, also ask at this stage what this has to do with the question with which this paper began, namely, what from Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages counts as philosophy?

Something like what happened to Eriugena when Cardinal Nicholas brought him at least a little into the light, and Hegel did the same more fully, has happened to Philo's Moses. Via the “Philosopher, Supreme Ruler, Prince, Legislator, and *Imam*” of al-Farabi, transfigured considerably by his two millennia long underground journey he has become actual Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran. However, *philosophically* we westerners generally, and Anglo-Americans above all—who wonderfully combine the greatest power over the world outside our own with the least capacity to engage in rational dialogue with it of any Western power—know nothing about him.<sup>21</sup> Philosophically we have no means of thinking about him or talking to him now that he is out in the open.

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<sup>21</sup> See my “9/11 and the *History of Philosophy*,” *Animus* 11 (2006): 1-26, <http://www.swgc.mun.ca/animus/current.htm>

Yesterday evening I suggested that we need a book on the deeply important ways Philo formed Augustine's wrestling with *Genesis*—it is shocking the Allan Fitzgerald's *Saint Augustine through the Ages: an Encyclopedia* (1999) does not even have an entry on Philo. This is not only because this would help us understand better how Augustine was engaged by scripture, but also, and even especially, because the *Genesis* text, in one form or another, is common to Jews, Christian, and Muslims and it is of the highest importance that the philosophical consideration of it was determined for all time for all three religious communities by the work of a Jew writing in Greek in Alexandria two millennia ago.

Anglo-Americans have treated the world we continue to dominate as we have in very great part because we regard its religious-political forms as irrational. Contributing to this prejudice in respect to the Islamic world, and perhaps even fundamental to it, is that we have excluded what they developed through their deep assimilation of Hellenic philosophical, religious, and theological from "philosophy" as we practice it. Perhaps it is too late to educate ourselves. Nonetheless, some of us try to do what we can: Philo's *De Vita Mosis* is the subject of my philosophy seminar this Term. It could be regarded as a piece of Hexameral literature and thus to be taught only in the Department of Theology, if at all. But then, as Robert Crouse reminded us at least twice, Eriugena's *Periphyseon* is literature in the same genre.<sup>22</sup>

Sunday, October 28, 2007

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<sup>22</sup> See "INTENTIO MOYSI: Bede, Augustine, Eriugena and Plato in the *Hexaemeron* of Honorius Augustodunensis," *Dionysius* 2 (1978): 137-157 and "Primordiales Causae in Eriugena's Interpretation of Genesis: Sources and Significance," *Iohannes Scottus Eriugena, The Bible and Hermeneutics*, ed. G. Van Riel, C. Steel, J. McEvoy, (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1995), 209-220.