

## Philo's Moses and His Christian, Pagan, and Islamic Successors

"Philosopher-King, Legislator, Mystic, Prophet, Cosmic Priest: the Moses of Philo Judaeus and his Islamic and Christian Successors," a paper for "Philosophy and the Abrahamic Religions: Scriptural Authority and Theories of Knowledge," Istanbul, 9-11 December, 2010, to be published in *Philosophy and the Abrahamic Religions: Scriptural Hermeneutics and Epistemology*, edited by Torrance Kirby, Rahim Acar and Bilal Bas (Cambridge Scholars Press, 2012), 1-18.

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Let me be straightforwardly frank at the beginning: my communication is not about what I know, but about what I think we should come to know, and it is an attempt to persuade and recruit you to this enterprise. Moreover, so far as I do understand enough to formulate this proposal, I am dependent on many others. First there is the research into Platonic political thought brought to a preliminary realization by Dominic J. O'Meara's *Platonopolis* and other writings.<sup>1</sup> Then I rely on the work of two of my several former students present here: Emily Parker's analysis of the figure of Moses in Philo,<sup>2</sup> and Timothy Riggs' treatment of how Dionysius picks up and refashions the Socrates of Proclus as a model for his ecclesiastical hierarch.<sup>3</sup> Besides the ongoing work of Emily and Tim, the

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<sup>1</sup> In France, at least, such research was initiated by Pierre Hadot and outlined by Philippe Hoffman. See P. Hoffmann, "Rapport sur l'exercice, Théologies et mystiques de la Grèce Hellénistique et de la fin de l'antiquité," *Annuaire: Résumé des conférences et travaux, École pratique des hautes études, Section des sciences religieuses* 103 (1994-95) (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1996), 267-270 at 263-64; idem, "Rapport sur l'exercice, Théologies et mystiques de la Grèce Hellénistique et de la fin de l'antiquité," in *Annuaire: Résumé des conférences et travaux, École pratique des hautes études, Section des sciences religieuses* 104 (1995-96) (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1997), 303-310 at 305-6; D. J. O'Meara, "Évêques et philosophes-rois: Philosophie politique néoplatonicienne chez le Pseudo-Denys," *Denys l'Aréopagite et sa postérité en Orient et en Occident*, ed. Ysabel de Andia, Collection des Études Augustiniennes, Série Antiquité 151 (Paris: Institut d'Études Augustiniennes, 1997), 75-88, idem, "Vie politique et divinisation dans la philosophie néoplatonicienne," *ΣΟΦΙΗΣ ΜΑΙΗΤΟΠΕΣ, «Chercheurs de sagesse». Hommage à Jean Pépin*, publié sous la direction de Marie-Odile Goulet-Cazé, Goulven Madec, Denis O'Brien, Collection des Études Augustiniennes, Série Antiquité 131 (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1992), 502-510, idem, "Aspects of Political Philosophy in Iamblichus," in H.J. Blumental and E.G. Clark (eds.), *The Divine Iamblichus, Philosopher and Man of Gods* (Bristol: Bristol Classical Press, 1993), 65-73, reprinted in idem, *The Structure of Being and the Search for the Good: Essays on Ancient and Early Medieval Platonism*. *Variorum Collected Studies* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998), XVIII, idem, *Platonopolis: Political Philosophy in Late Antiquity* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2003).

<sup>2</sup> Emily Parker, "Swiftly Runs the Word: Philo's Doctrine of Mediation in *De Vita Mosis*," M.A. thesis, Dalhousie University Department of Classics, 2010; idem, "Philo of Alexandria's *Logos* and *Life of Moses*," *Dionysius* 28 (2010), in press. I am grateful to her for help with this communication.

<sup>3</sup> Timothy Riggs, "Eros as Cosmic and Hierarchical Principle: Christ and the Socratic Hierarch in the Thought of Dionysius the Areopagite," M.A. thesis, Dalhousie University Department of Classics; idem, "Eros as Hierarchical Principle: A Re-Evaluation of Dionysius' Neoplatonism,"

researches of Elizabeth Digeser, on the interchanges between Platonist Hellenes and Christians, particularly the back and forth involving Ammonius Saccas, Origen, Eusebius of Caesarea, and Porphyry, of Heidi Marx-Wolf, on the construction of images of the ideal philosopher by Porphyry, Iamblichus and others, and of Hikmet Yaman, on the connection of prophesy and philosophy in Islam, only to point to scholars at this conference, are moving us towards discovering the connections I regard as important.

In relation to these, I think that we are now about where researches on the sources of Gothic architecture were 200 years ago. Those who had seen St Denis outside Paris and Muslim structures from Persia and the west, especially in the lands of the Crusades, Spain, and Sicily, sensed a connection between pointed arches and ogival rib vaulting in the one and in the other. However, the real transmissions and transformations had yet to be established by way of buildings precisely located in time and place. This has only happened in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the research is still in course—I think I have seen the “missing link”, but this is not my business today. In my abstract, I have sketched an outline of sensed connections; we have now to locate the transmissions and transformations. Rather than repeating the sketch now, let me start with what is established and go from there to what needs doing.

We owe a great deal to O’Meara’s *Platonopolis* and his articles on political philosophy in Late Antiquity. They have rescued the Neoplatonists, pagan and Christian, from the almost universal negative judgment that they had no political philosophy. *Platonopolis* shows that the acquisition of moral and civic virtue was an essential preliminary to the Neoplatonic *itinerarium* of the soul towards divinization, that the providential descent of the philosophers back to the political cave to lead its prisoners was founded in their participation in the transcendent Good,<sup>4</sup> and that, especially with Iamblichus and his successors, religion and philosophy cooperate, giving a new truth to Heraclitus’ formula that the way up and the way down are the same. Tim Riggs is surely right to modify O’Meara’s treatment of Dionysius by showing how:

Dionysius subordinates the Neoplatonic philosopher-king to the hierarch, for whom the law has already been established and, what is more, sublated by the Incarnation .... [so that] the hierarch as image and

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*Dionysius* 27 (2009): 71–96; idem, “*Erôs*, the Son, and the Gods as Metaphysical Principles in Proclus and Dionysius,” *Dionysius* 28 (2010), in press.

<sup>4</sup> O’Meara, *Platonopolis*, 200.

mediator of Christ and his activity completes the hierarchy founded by Moses.<sup>5</sup>

Nonetheless, O'Meara establishes essential districts of the philosophical *Platonopolis* by extending it not only to the activity of the Dionysian ecclesiastical hierarchy, but also to al-Farabi's Perfect State. However, when treating it, in a footnote he points us to a startling omission in his history.

Mystical silence trumpeted when this foundational source was not mentioned as O'Meara wrote about the role of Moses in Dionysius. Scholarship traces the treatment of Moses' ascent into the divine darkness as the model for the soul's step by step progress towards knowledge (or, better, assimilation to the *Logos*) of God back to him via Gregory of Nyssa, Origen, and Clement of Alexandria.<sup>6</sup> The emptiness was incomprehensible when O'Meara wrote of the background to the *Praise of Constantine* by Eusebius of Caesarea without mentioning him.<sup>7</sup> Emily Parker, commenting on Peter O'Brien's analysis of that *Oration*, has strongly affirmed that the Bishop is only a link to an earlier more fecund mind.<sup>8</sup> Later O'Meara depicts Farabi's perfect ruler, in whom "as receptive of...transcendent knowledge, the philosopher-king is also described as prophet, Imam, lawgiver", and he shows that, for Farabi, Muhammad must instantiate this rare being. At this point O'Meara notes: "With Muhammad as philosopher-king we compare the Jewish and Christian Moses as philosopher-king...and the Greek Neoplatonist's Minos as philosopher-king." That Philo Judaeus does not finally make his long awaited epiphany at this point seems absurd. It is for him we have been waiting all along, and with the unification of

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<sup>5</sup> Riggs, "Eros as Hierarchical Principle," 82.

<sup>6</sup> See Andrew Louth, *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition from Plato to Denys* (Oxford: Clarendon Press: 1981), 72–73, 83–84, 159; Salvatore Lilla, "Denys L'Aréopagite (Pseudo)", *Dictionnaire des philosophes antiques*, publié sous la direction de Richard Goulet, II (Paris, CNRS: 1994), 737, idem, *Dionigi l'Areopagita e il platonismo cristiano*, Lettura Cristiana antica (Brescia, Morcelliana, 2005), 127, 148–149; idem, "Le 'Forme' del negative nella Pseudo-Dionigi l'Areopagita," *Discussioni sul nulla tra medioevo ed età moderna*, a cura di M. Lenzi e A. Maieru, Lessico Intellettuale Europeo (Rome, Leo S. Olchki Editore, 2009), 172–175.

<sup>7</sup> O'Meara, *Platonopolis*, 145–151.

<sup>8</sup> See Peter O'Brien, "Origins: From Royal Priesthood to Hellenic Kingship to Roman Sacred Imperium", 49–69 at 62–69 and Emily Parker, "Reflecting the Divine: Philo's Moses and the Roman Ideal: Response to Peter O'Brien", 71–77, *Changing our Mind on Secularization. The Contemporary Debate about Secular and Sacred in Judaism, Christianity and Islam*. Proceedings of the 29<sup>th</sup> Annual Atlantic Theological Conference Charlottetown, June 23<sup>rd</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup> 2009, edited Wayne J. Hankey and Nicholas Hatt (Charlottetown: St Peter Publications, 2010). At 71 Parker writes: "Eusebius was the great promoter of Philo to the Christians, and it is through him that much of Philo's writing is preserved. As we illumine Philo's notion of divine kingship in Moses, let us keep in mind that this is the foundation from which Eusebius' Constantine arises."

offices in Muhammad as the Islamic perfect ruler, his millennium-long influence must be disclosed.

There can be no doubt that Philo provided cruxes of Eastern and Western Christian allegorical techniques and content for the interpretation of scripture, especially hexamaeral texts. We may indicate this by mentioning the works entitled *Hexamaeron* of bishops Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nyssa, and Ambrose of Milan, and the multiple interpretations of Genesis by Augustine; there are also the *De Vita Moysis* and *De Hominis Opificio* of Gregory, to mark the most obvious.<sup>9</sup> John Scottus Eriugena translated Gregory's *On the Creation of Humankind* and (probably) Basil's *Hexamaeron* into Latin. Their content passed into his covertly influential *Periphyseon*, itself a species of hexamaeral literature. In this context, we must note David Runia's assertion that Philo was "the first thinker" to take the all important step of associating "the goodness of Plato's demiurge with the Judaeo-Christian conception of God the creator."<sup>10</sup>

I have suggested Philo's role in the formation of Neoplatonic mysticism, and Salvatore Lilla has provided the textual evidence for this and for his many other contributions to, or agreements with, Neoplatonism.<sup>11</sup> Significantly for our work in this conference, Philo's influence was not primarily within his own religious community, where, after the Roman destruction of the Second Temple, although Hellenic Judaism persisted, there was a turn against the kind of identification with Greco-Roman culture of which his *corpus* was the acme.

<sup>12</sup>Nonetheless, Philo shares the common theology out of which the *Wisdom of Solomon*, and great parts of the New Testament—most notably the Epistle to the Hebrews, the Pauline corpus, and the Gospels of Luke and John emerge.<sup>13</sup> This will facilitate his gigantic influence among the Christian Fathers, underestimated because substantially unacknowledged by them.

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<sup>9</sup> D.T. Runia, "Philo and the Early Christian Fathers," A. Kamesar (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Philo* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 210–230; J. Pelikan, *Christianity and Classical Culture: The Metamorphosis of Natural Theology in the Christian Encounter with Hellenism*, Gifford Lectures at Aberdeen, 1992-1993 (New Haven / London: Yale University Press, 1995) and idem, *What has Athens to do with Jerusalem? Timaeus and Genesis in Counterpoint* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997).

<sup>10</sup> D.T. Runia, *Philo of Alexandria and the Timaeus of Plato* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1986) 135.

<sup>11</sup> See Salvatore Lilla, "Filone di Alessandria," in "La Teologia negativa dal pensiero Greco classico a quello Patristico Bizantino," Prima parte, *Helikon*, Anni XXII-XXVII (1982-1987), 211–279 at 229–242.

<sup>12</sup> See A. Schremer, *Brothers Estranged: Heresy, Christianity, and Jewish Identity in Late Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

<sup>13</sup> F. Siegert, "Philo and the New Testament," A. Kamesar (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Philo* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 175–207.

Clement of Alexandria, and the Catechetical School there, continued Philo's unification of philosophy and scriptural revelation in his home city, and Clement's works contain massive reiterations of both content and methods. In Alexandria, Origen came into the heritage and he made a hugely important contribution to its dissemination by carrying the Philonic *corpus* to Palestine when he moved.<sup>14</sup> It was there, where, among other uses, his *Life of Moses* came to underlie the ideology of the Byzantine Empire through Bishop Eusebius of Caesarea's modelling of Constantine on it. How, beyond the Christian Empire, for a philosopher like al-Farabi, Philo's unification of philosopher-king, legislator, prophet and religious leader came to be the model for the ruler of the Islamic perfect state remains unknown. Indeed, no one has traced what we owe to him outside the Christian Fathers with the barest adequacy; not only the Islamic but also the pagan philosophical reception are neglected. In my account of Philo today I shall emphasise how his writing crossed the physical - metaphysical, philosophical - theological, natural - revealed, rational - mystical divides, in ways that the pagan and Christian Neoplatonic, and the so-called Islamic "Peripatetic", philosophical theologians would later do. It is not until we look for him in everything which came out of his Alexandria that we shall find this Jewish philosophical exegete of Scripture everywhere.

When commenting on a text from Numbers which makes every day a feast, Philo writes that the Law "accommodates itself to the blameless life of righteous men who follow nature" (*Spec.* II.42).<sup>15</sup> After noting the practice of civil and moral virtue by these righteous Greeks and Barbarians in training for wisdom, he makes them "the best contemplators of nature and everything found in her." So, while their bodies are below, their souls take wing and they know the ethereal powers, "as befits true cosmopolitans" (*Spec.* II.42). The cosmos is the city of these acute physiologues; their associates are the wise in the universal commonwealth ruled by virtue. They themselves keep above passions and do not buckle under the blows of fate.

The ways this aspect of Philo was taken up illumine how physics, cosmogony, theology, metaphysics, "true gnosticism", and *epopteia* were united among the Alexandrians and their heirs. Thus, for example, Clement in his *Stromata*, when passing to "the *physiologia* truly gnostic", speaks of those initiated into the mysteries, moving from the lesser to the greater, as distinguished in the

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<sup>14</sup> Runia, "Philo and the Early Christian Fathers."

<sup>15</sup> Philo, *De Specialibus Legibus*, ed. and trans. F.H. Colson, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, Mass. / London: Harvard University Press / William Heinemann, 1937), abbreviated as *Spec.* Generally translations are my own, though those cited are carefully considered.

*Gorgias*.<sup>16</sup> For him, *physiologia* is a *gnosis* conformed to the canon of truth, or better, the contemplation belonging to highest degree of initiation into the mysteries (*epopteia*) which reposes on the discussion of cosmogony. From this we are elevated to theology. Appropriately, he tells us that, after philosophical *physiologia*, he will go on to consider the prophetic Genesis (*Stromata* IV.3.2-3).

Basil of Caesarea took up the anagogy in Plato's *Symposium* which both differentiated and linked the contemplation of physical and intelligible beauties. Above sensible *eros*, Diotima had spoken of the highest mysteries of revelation and contemplation (*Symposium* 210A). For Basil, someone who for a long time had been among the physiologues, but desired to follow the command to seek God's face, would go beyond this level of reality to place himself closer to God. The seeker would then be turned to the truly beautiful and desirable, reserved for the pure in heart, and, passing from *physiologia* to the greater beauty beyond nature (*meta physin*), would join those initiated into the supreme contemplation.<sup>17</sup> Determined pagans in this period also made metaphysical contemplation into spiritual exercise. Proclus organised the Academy as a kind of monastery. Its programme of study initiated its members step by step into contemplation within a context of prayer. The philosophy of Plato was "mystagogy", an "initiation into the holy mysteries themselves ... installed, for eternity, in the home of the gods on High."<sup>18</sup> His own *Elements of Theology* may be considered "metaphysics as spiritual exercise."<sup>19</sup> In this view of philosophy, Plato becomes a

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<sup>16</sup> Clement, *Stromata* IV.3.1 [Clement of Alexandria, *Stromate IV*, ed. and trans. A. van den Hoek, Sources chrétiennes 463 (Paris: Cerf, 2001)] cf. Plato, *Gorgias* 497C and Philo, *Sacrif.* 62 [*De Sacrificiis Abelis et Caini*, ed. and trans. F.H. Colson and G.H. Whitaker, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, Mass. / London: Harvard University Press / William Heinemann, 1929)]; see Philo, *Mos.* I.62: [*De Vita Mosis* and *De Abrahamo*, ed. and trans. F.H. Colson, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, Mass. / London: Harvard University Press / William Heinemann, 1935), abbreviated as *Mos.* and *Abr.*] I am grateful to Emily Parker for this reference.

<sup>17</sup> Basil *Commentaire sur Isaïe* V.162 quoted in L. Brisson, "Un si long Anonymat," *La métaphysique: son histoire, sa critique, ses enjeux*, ed. L. Langlois et J.-M. Narbonne, Collection Zêtêsis (Paris/Québec: Vrin/Presses de l'Université Laval, 1999), 37–60 at 38–40.

<sup>18</sup> H.-D. Saffrey, "Quelques aspects de la spiritualité des philosophes néoplatoniciens de Jamblique à Proclus et Damascius," *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 68,2 (1984): 169–182 at 182 quoting Proclus *Theo. Plat.* I.1; cf. idem, "Theology as science (3rd-6th centuries)," trans. W.J. Hankey, *Studia Patristica* 29, ed. E.A. Livingstone (Leuven: Peeters, 1997), 321–339.

<sup>19</sup> D.J. O'Meara, "La science métaphysique (ou théologie) de Proclus comme exercice spirituel," in A. Segonds and C. Steel eds., *Proclus et la Théologie Platonicienne. Actes du Colloque International de Louvain (13-16 mai 1998) en l'honneur de H.D. Saffrey et L.G. Westerink* (Leuven/Paris: Leuven University Press/Les Belles Lettres, 2000), 279–290 and W.J. Hankey, "'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 41–48.

theologian, his dialogues sacred scripture to be interpreted appropriately. This helps explain the greater antipathy towards the Platonists than the Peripatetics by the Christian authorities and why Platonism was increasingly passed on by the Neoplatonists through commentary on Aristotle's comparatively more secular writings. Thus, the Arabic Neoplatonists, as heirs of the Late Ancient and Byzantine commentators, came to wear the garb of Peripatetics.<sup>20</sup>

For Philo, physics does not only lead to Stoic *apatheia*, it opens the human to prophecy. Connection to the natural elements made the authors of the *Septuagint* susceptible to revelation; they became not translators but "hierophants and prophets." After prayer, to which God assented so that the human race might be led to a better life by using the "philosophical and truly beautiful ordinances" of the Jewish Law, secluded on the island of Pharos with "nothing except the elements of nature: earth, water, air, heaven, the genesis of which was to be the first theme of their sacred revelation—for the production of the cosmos is the principle of the laws—like men inspired, they prophesied...". In consequence, without conferring with one another "they found words corresponding to the things." In arriving at the very realities which had been revealed through Moses, and expressing them in Greek, their minds went along with the purest of spirits, his (*Mos.* II.36-40). The Mosaic Law, understood in union with nature, and as both philosophical and revealed, is now available to teach all humankind.

The account of the education and offices of Moses, the mediator between God and the cosmos, depends on differentiating between what is innate and belongs to philosophical labour, on the one hand, and what is from without and above, on the other. By the union of both, Moses acquires the capacities of the philosopher-king, legislator, high priest, and prophet who establishes the cosmic priesthood of Israel.<sup>21</sup> While he receives a complete education, including symbolic philosophy, from all kinds of masters employed from Egypt, the adjacent countries, and Greece, his innate genius meant that he was recollecting rather than learning and was improving upon what his teachers gave (*Mos.* I.18-24). This grounding of his human labours in the nature given to him indicates the principle at work in Philo's treatment of the unique bridge between the divine and the human, one with both sides.

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<sup>20</sup> See G. Endress, "The New and Improved Platonic Theology. Proclus Arabus and Arabic Islamic Philosophy," in in A. Segonds and C. Steel eds., *Proclus et la Théologie Platonicienne. Actes du Colloque International de Louvain (13-16 mai 1998) en l'honneur de H.D. Saffrey et L.G. Westerink* (Leuven/Paris: Leuven University Press/Les Belles Lettres, 2000), 553–570 and W.J. Hankey, "Thomas' Neoplatonic Histories: His following of Simplicius," *Dionysius* 20 (2002): 153–178 at 153–161.

<sup>21</sup> My understanding of Moses in Philo owes much to Emily Parker's 2010 thesis.

While Philo is careful to differentiate the offices Moses holds, and to enumerate the diverse capacities by which he exercises each, the foundation of them all is both a moment in his history and activities and is also its underlying source, namely, his union with God in the mystical darkness where his mind is assimilated to “the paradigmatic substance of all beings”. There is a reciprocity by which, in return for his labours, virtues, and giving up of all personal possessions, he receives from God. The gift, however, is out of all proportion to the human work and power. Moses, as the friend of God and his heir, is given, as recompense, the wealth of the whole earth, sea, and rivers, and of all the other elements and their combinations “therefore, every one of the elements obeyed him as its master, changing the power which it had by nature and submitting to his command” (*Mos.* I.155-156). Moses is, of course, a citizen of the cosmos but, far more, he has the names of God:

Has he not also enjoyed an even greater communion with the Father and Creator of the universe, being thought worthy of being called by the same appellation? For he also was called the god and king (θεός και βασιλευς) of the whole nation, and he is said to have entered into the darkness where God was; that is to say, into the invisible, and shapeless, and incorporeal world, the paradigmatic substance of all beings, where he beheld things unseen by mortal nature; for, having brought himself and his own life into the middle [between the divine and the human], as an excellently wrought picture, he established himself and his own life as a most beautiful and Godlike work, to be a paradigm for all those who were willing to imitate it. (*Mos.* I.158-159).

When he is about to die, the Father changes Moses from “a double being, composed of soul and body, so that his whole nature is that of a monad [μονάδος] without elements, thus transforming him wholly and entirely into a most sun-like mind” (*Mos.* II.288).

This reciprocity is extended to all. Grace and nature are two sides of the same—a principle which will be common also to pagans and Christians in the Patristic period. Philo tells us that the creature should be conscious of his own “nothingness” when approaching his Maker—language echoed by Iamblichus.<sup>22</sup> Nonetheless, God is “one who loves to give”, his gifts are boundless and without

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<sup>22</sup> Language echoed by Iamblichus, *De Mysteriis* I.15, 47, 17 [see Iamblichus of Chalcis, *Les mystères d'Égypte*, ed. and trans. É. des Places (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1966)]; cf. H. Feichtinger, “*Oudeneia* and *humilitas*: Nature and Function of Humility in Iamblichus and Augustine,” *Dionysius* 21 (2003): 123–160 at 136.

end (*Her.* 31).<sup>23</sup> He is the “saviour” of those who cry to him. Philosophy has never been anything else except the desire to see truly, according to our diverse capacities, the Existent, his image the *Logos*, and, after these, his perfect work, the cosmos, and Moses is given to lead the way (*Confus.* 92-97). Although many forces push us down, none are powerful against the soul suspended from God who with a greater strength draws it to himself (*Abr.* 59).

Through its activity of contemplation, the human is the image of God, and the human mind stands to our being in the way that God stands to the cosmos as a whole. God, the human, and the cosmos are connected through the priesthood. Having presented the dress of the High Priest as a visible representation of the cosmos, Philo explains that this is, first, so that by constantly contemplating “the image of the all”, the life of the High Priest will be worthy of the nature of the whole. Second, the cosmos will become his co-ministrant in his sacred rites: “It is very right and fit that he who is consecrated to the service of the Father of the cosmos should bring the Father’s son, the all, to the service of the creator and begetter” (*Spec.* I.95-96). Finally, in contrast to the priests of other nations, the High Priest of the Jews offers his prayers and sacrifices “not only on behalf of the whole human race, but also for the parts of nature: earth, water, air, fire; for he looks upon the cosmos (as indeed it really is) as his country” (*Spec.* I.97).

All the titles and offices Philo discerned in Moses, Aquinas ascribed to Christ twelve hundred years later. Jesus Christ, the god man, is a prophet (*ST* 3.7.8),<sup>24</sup> a priest (*ST* 3.22.1), and a king (*ST* 3.36.8 & 3.58.3). He is the first and chief teacher (*ST* 3.7.7)<sup>25</sup> and is compared to the philosophers as the most perfect of them—having in common with the “most excellent Gentile teachers, Pythagoras and Socrates” that he wrote nothing (*ST* 3.42.4). He is the mediator between God and man (*ST* 3.26.2). Crucially, this and all the other offices I have listed, belong to him as human. Aquinas’ teaching on these matters is not owed to Philo in any direct way; Thomas knew nothing of him or of any of his writings. However, with the exception of Clement and Ammonius Saccas, he knew of Philo’s heirs whom I have mentioned, and often understood much of their doctrines and ways of doing philosophical theology. Certainly he stands

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<sup>23</sup> Philo, *Quis Rerum Divinarum Heres* and *De Confusione Linguarum*, ed. and trans. F.H. Colson and G.H. Whitaker, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, Mass. / London: Harvard University Press / William Heinemann, 1932), abbreviated as *Her.* and *Confus.*

<sup>24</sup> I use the Aquinas texts at <http://www.corpusthomicum.org/iopera.html>; I abbreviate *Summa theologiae* as *ST*.

<sup>25</sup> Aquinas, *ST* 3.7.7: *Spiritualis autem doctrinae et fidei primus et principalis doctor est Christus.*

within the Philonic tradition when he interprets Scripture, giving priority to the spiritual sense.<sup>26</sup>

Because for Aquinas, Christ is the incarnate divine *Logos*, and unites the divine and human natures in a single individual person, much must differ from Philo's depiction of Moses. Nonetheless, Philo and Aquinas are seeking to deal with the same problems: mediation between God and man and between God and the cosmos, and their solution is the same: a human who unites the two sides. Although Philo's Moses and Aquinas' Christ unite divinity with the human and the cosmos differently, the 1<sup>st</sup>-century Jew and the 13<sup>th</sup>-century Christian are closer together than they either could be to a faithful Muslim. This is owed to the greater Hellenism of both Philo and Aquinas, and the fact that Islam developed its forms in part against the Christianity occupied with and divided by the Christological formulae. What strikes me as most importantly common comes out in Aquinas' teaching about how Christ knows. This appears in the question treating the grace of Christ as a human individual, which includes the article affirming that Christ is a prophet.<sup>27</sup>

When Thomas wants to show that Christ has virtues, he uses a schema developed by Porphyry which he derived from Macrobius and attributed to Plotinus.<sup>28</sup> In another place dealing with the same kind of question, he unites Simplicius with Maximus the Confessor, Dionysius and the *Liber de causis*.<sup>29</sup> The logic which bridges all these divides helps demonstrate that "a heroic or divine *habitus* does not differ from virtue as it is commonly spoken of except that it is possessed in a more perfect mode."<sup>30</sup> The doctrine which Aquinas derived from these Hellenic, Latin and Greek Christian, and Arabic Islamic Neoplatonists enabled the moral virtues of prudence, temperance, courage, and justice to be attributed in different modes to God, angels, and humans, to different states and stages of human life, and to different powers of action. The net result is that

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<sup>26</sup> See W.J. Hankey, "Aquinas, Pseudo-Denys, Proclus and Isaiah VI.6," *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du Moyen Âge*, 64 (1997): 59–93.

<sup>27</sup> On which see my Political, Psychic, Intellectual, Daimonic, Hierarchical, Cosmic, and Divine: Justice in Aquinas, Al-Fârâbî, Dionysius, and Porphyry," *Dionysius* 21 (2003): 197–218 at 206–210.

<sup>28</sup> See Aquinas, *ST* 1-2.61.5 *sed contra*.

<sup>29</sup> Aquinas, *ST* 1-2.50.6; see Simplicius, *Commentaire sur les Catégories d'Aristote*, Traduction de Guillaume de Moerbeke, ed. A. Pattin, 2 vols., Corpus Latinorum commentariorum in Aristotelem Graecorum 1-2 (vol. 1, Louvain/Paris, 1971, vol. 2 Leiden, 1975), De Qualitate, ii, pp. 330–331, lines 81-94. This *Commentary* is also employed elsewhere for understanding dispositions, see Vivian Boland, "Aquinas and Simplicius on Dispositions - A Question in Fundamental Moral Theory," *New Blackfriars* 82: 968 (October 2001): 467–478; for Thomas' use of Simplicius more generally, see Hankey, "Thomas' Neoplatonic Histories: His following of Simplicius."

<sup>30</sup> Aquinas, *ST* 3.7.2 *ad* 2: *habitus ille heroicus vel divinus non differt a virtute communiter dicta nisi secundum perfectiorem modum*.

Christ can possess higher powers or modes of knowledge without what is below being reduced to what is above. Indeed, we may say that Thomas' dominant concern when treating Christ is to preserve what belongs to his humanity while not denying its union with divinity. This comes out in the article on whether Christ is a prophet. Thomas' response gives the crucial principle of his understanding of how Christ's humanity operates:

Christ before His passion touched our state, inasmuch as He was not merely a "comprehender," but a "wayfarer." Hence it was prophetic in Him to know and announce what was beyond the knowledge of other "wayfarers". And for this reason He is called a prophet.<sup>31</sup>

Christ is simultaneously at both ends of the process of learning and also in the midst of it. Although he can be taught nothing by other humans (*ST* 3.12.3)<sup>32</sup>, or by angels (*ST* 3.12.4), he must advance step by step, like all the rest of us, forming concepts from sensible things. Thus he learns, by experience and reason, what, in another mode of knowing, is innate or implicit in him (*ST* 3.9.3).<sup>33</sup> In contrast to Philo, who operates primarily with a Platonic doctrine of reminiscence, Aquinas employs all the Aristotelian epistemological apparatus—e.g. *tabula rasa*, agent and possible intellects (*ST* 3.9.4)—and asserts without any ambiguity that Christ's agent intellect must cause an acquired or experimental knowledge in him.<sup>34</sup> Nonetheless, Thomas is only working out in respect to Christ, by means of

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<sup>31</sup>Aquinas, *ST* 3.7.8: *Christus autem ante passionem nostrum statum attingebat, in quantum non solum erat comprehensor, sed etiam viator. Et ideo propheticum erat quod ea quae erant procul ab aliorum viatorum notitia, et cognoscebat et annuntiabat. Et hac ratione dicitur in eo fuisse prophetia.*

<sup>32</sup>Two of the replies to objections are notable in Aquinas, *ST* 3.12.3: Ad 1, because Aquinas quotes Origen; Ad 2, because he argues that to be taught by God through understanding sensible creatures is better than to be taught by other humans through signs. Thus ad 2: *dignius est doceri a Deo quam ab homine, ita dignius est accipere scientiam per sensibiles creaturas quam per hominis doctrinam.*

<sup>33</sup>Aquinas, *ST* 3.9.3: *natura humana assumpta a verbo Dei, imperfecta non esset.... Et ideo oportet in Christo scientiam ponere inditam, in quantum per verbum Dei animae Christi, sibi personaliter unitae, impressae sunt species intelligibiles ad omnia ad quae est intellectus possibilis in potentia... Et ideo, sicut in Angelis... ponitur duplex cognitio,... ita, praeter scientiam divinam increatam, est in Christo, secundum eius animam, scientia beata, qua cognoscit verbum et res in verbo; et scientia indita sive infusa, per quam cognoscit res in propria natura per species intelligibiles humanae menti proportionatas.*

<sup>34</sup>Aquinas, *ST* 3.9.4: *... nihil eorum quae Deus in nostra natura plantavit, defuit humanae naturae assumptae a verbo Dei. Manifestum est autem quod in humana natura Deus plantavit non solum intellectum possibilem, sed etiam intellectum agentem. Unde necesse est dicere quod in anima Christi non solum intellectus possibilis, sed etiam intellectus agens fuerit... Sic igitur necesse est dicere quod in Christo fuerunt aliquae species intelligibiles per actionem intellectus agentis in intellectu possibili eius receptae. Quod est esse in ipso scientiam acquisitam, quam quidam experimentalem nominant.... dicendum est in*

the new scientific language, what Philo laboured at in respect to Moses, that is, how he could possess according his exalted nature what he must also learn by experience.

Thus, to return to my analogy from the history of architecture, we have the beginning of the unification of offices and modes of knowledge, sacred and secular, mystical, prophetic, and philosophical in the Moses of Philo, and non identical iterations in the Constantine of Eusebius, the ecclesiastical hierarch of Dionysius, Farabi's "single idea of the Philosopher, Supreme Ruler, Prince, Legislator, and *Imam*"<sup>35</sup>, and in the Christ of Aquinas. It is now for us to establish the connections. Doing so would draw the three Abrahamic religions together with one another and with the Hellenism through which they became what they are both as a group and individually. Enabling this to be seen is an urgent task in every sense.

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*Christo scientiam acquisitam fuisse. Quae proprie est scientia secundum modum humanum, non solum ex parte recipientis subiecti, sed etiam ex parte causae agentis, nam talis scientia ponitur in Christo secundum lumen intellectus agentis, quod est humanae naturae connaturale.*

<sup>35</sup> Al-Farabi, *The Attainment of Happiness*, trans. M Mahdi, *Medieval Political Philosophy: A Sourcebook*, ed. R Lerner and M. Mahdi (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1972), §58, p. 79.