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Mosaic *Paideia*: The Law of Moses within Philo of Alexandria's Model of Jewish Education

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Abstract

Paideia is one of Philo's most consistent preoccupations. It was so thoroughly foundational for the Alexandrian that he built it into nearly every aspect of his philosophy and worldview. *Paideia* was the tool needed to acquire virtue and wisdom, eradicate the passions, become an ideal citizen of the world, and secure the immortal life of the soul. The following explores the role of the Mosaic law within Philo's overall theory of education, looking at what made the law such a unique pedagogical resource, how it functioned at various levels of education, what its relationship was to the other forms of education Philo deemed necessary—the curriculum of encyclical *paideia* and the study of philosophy—and, ultimately, what Philo's idealized vision of Jewish education can tell us about his deeper concerns for his fellow Alexandrian Jews and his understanding of Jewish identity in the Mediterranean diaspora.

Keywords

Philo of Alexandria – *paideia* – education – Jewish law – Alexandria – Hellenism

1 Introduction

The value of a proper education was, for Philo of Alexandria, unparalleled. Education provided the means to eradicate the passions and desires which

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plagued the soul, to acquire virtue and wisdom, to live a life of meaning and balance, and, ultimately, to secure the future, immortal existence of the soul. While the benefits of education are clear, the content of that education is complex and multi-faceted. Philo took a maximalist approach to *paideia*. His ideal model of Jewish education would include training in the preliminary, encyclical curriculum, the study of philosophy, and instruction through the laws of Moses.

Despite this complexity, most of the studies on education in Philo have focused on one particular aspect, his view of “Greek” *paideia*, that is, the encyclical studies—what will later be known as the *artes liberales*.¹ More comprehensive approaches are rare,² and discussions on the role of the Jewish law in education are often based on anachronistic or teleological assumptions rather than firm Philonic support. It is assumed that the law holds a hierarchically superior place above all other forms of education, that these other forms of education were nothing but preliminary steps to the “ultimate” *paideia* in the law, and that only education through the law could provide the gifts of virtue or wisdom.³ Such assumptions stem from the still prevalent habit of looking

- 1 Paul Wendland, *Die hellenistisch-römische Kultur in ihren Beziehungen zu Judentum und Christentum* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1907), 114-20; F. H. Colson, “Philo on Education,” *JTS* 18 (1917): 151-62; M. Alexandre, *De congressu eruditionis gratia*, Les oeuvres de Philon d’Alexandrie 16 (Paris: Cerf, 1967); Thomas Conley, “‘General Education’ in Philo of Alexandria,” in *Protocol of the Fifteenth Colloquy: 9 March 1975* (Berkeley: The Center for the Hermeneutical Studies in Hellenistic and Modern Culture, 1975), 1-11; Alan Mendelson, *Secular Education in Philo of Alexandria*, HUCM 7 (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1982); Edgar Früchtel, “Philon und die Vorbereitung der christlichen Paideia und Seelenleitung,” in *Frühchristentum und Kultur*, ed. Ferdinand R. Prostmeier, Kommentar zu frühchristlichen Apologeten, Ergänzungsband 2 (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 2007), 19-33.
- 2 One of the best studies to date is a short, twelve-page article from 1971 by Walter H. Wagner, “Philo and Paideia,” *Cithara* 10 (1971): 53-64, principally because Wagner is one of the only scholars to hint at the complexity of Philo’s thought on *paideia*. Unfortunately, while Wagner intimated the necessity of a broader perspective, the scope of the article did not allow him to systematically elucidate Philo’s different views of *paideia*, and neither he nor any other scholar since has pursued such an approach.
- 3 See, e.g., Mendelson, *Secular Education*, 107 n. 2; Tae Won Kang, “Wisdom Mythology and Hellenistic Paideia in Philo: A Case Study of *De Congressu Quaerendae Eruditionis Gratia*” (PhD diss., Claremont Graduate University, 1999), 252, 266; Maren Niehoff, *Philo on Jewish Identity and Culture*, TSAJ 86 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), 182-83; and Karl Olav Sandnes, *Challenge of Homer: School, Pagan Poets and Early Christianity*, LNTS 400 (London: T&T Clark, 2009), 73, whose section 5.4 is entitled “Real Paideia: The Law of Moses,” though with no hint as to why the law is any more “real” than other forms of education. It is not uncommon for scholars to use Philo’s comment in *Congr.* 79, “Therefore, just as encyclical scholarship

for a “Jew vs. Greek,” “Judaism vs. Hellenism,” or, here, “Jewish education vs. Greek education” dichotomy in the writings of Second Temple Jews. In the case of education in Philo, this is partially understandable, for what is the Mosaic law if not Jewish or the encyclical studies if not Greek? The problem, however, is that Philo himself does not make this distinction. He goes out of his way to avoid such a simplistic dichotomy, because his idealized model of Jewish education would include the (Greek) encyclical studies, (Greek) philosophy, and the (Jewish) laws of Moses. For this reason, I prefer to distinguish between Jewish *paideia*, which should include all of the aforementioned, and Mosaic *paideia*, which is restricted to education via the law alone.

Assumptions regarding the educational value of the Jewish law have overshadowed the nuances of Philo’s understanding of education via the law and how this Mosaic *paideia* works in conjunction with other forms. Within Philo’s overall system, the Mosaic law was a unique pedagogical resource, an ideal textbook and teacher, because of the singular intellectual gifts of the lawgiver and because of the close connection between the written law and the unwritten, universal law of nature. Philo envisioned the law serving in a variety of ways within his overall theory of education, from the most elementary training to highly advanced philosophical study. This lifelong education through the law should work in consort with other forms of education, not against them. There is no antagonism or counter-curriculum here. The benefits that come from education via the law of Moses are exactly those that come from other types of learning. The uniqueness of the Jewish law lies in its superiority as means to those ends.

Given these facts, that all *paideia* can provide the same end results and that Mosaic *paideia* is best suited to provide those results, Philo could have logically concluded that the law was the only educational resource the Jews required. Instead, Philo’s model of Jewish education included, what were from

is the handmaid of philosophy, so philosophy is the handmaid of wisdom,” as proof that Philo subordinates Greek philosophy to Jewish law, an idea based on the deeply problematic notion that the identification between Jewish law and wisdom was ubiquitous at this time. See, e.g., Harry A. Wolfson, *Philo: Foundations of Religions Philosophy in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1947), 1:149–50 or M. Pohlenz, *Kleine Schriften*, 2 vols. (Hildesheim: Olms, 1965), 1:324–30. David Winston, though unfortunately maintaining the assumed identity between wisdom and law, nuances the argument and arrives at a concept perhaps more in line with Philo’s thought. Seeing that Philo’s subordination of philosophy to wisdom is completely in accord with Stoic thought, Winston argues, “Far from subordinating philosophy to Scripture, Philo is rather identifying the summit of philosophical achievement with the Mosaic Law” (“Response” to Thomas Conley’s “‘General Education’ in Philo,” 19).

our perspective, Jewish and Greek forms. There are three primary reasons for the inclusivity of Jewish *paideia*. First, this view of education, no matter how idealized in Philo's philosophy, was likely based on personal experience. The education of wealthy, elite Alexandrian Jews like Philo—or Aristobulus or the author of the Wisdom of Solomon, et al.—seems to have included elementary to advanced Greek learning, including rhetoric and philosophy, and instruction in the Jewish law, including sophisticated exegetical methods. Second, with his vision of proper Jewish education Philo encourages his audience to take advantage of all the opportunities for Greek learning and philosophy available in Alexandria but to not allow the joys of a Greek education to lead to a neglect of the Jewish law and ancestral traditions. Greek and Jewish curricula should work together in the overall education of the individual, not against one another. Finally, this model of education is reflective of Philo's unique understanding of Jewish identity in Roman Alexandria. His discussions of education reveal a discourse more profound than that of simple curricular or pedagogical details. We find Philo utilizing his educational theory as a way of contemplating on the most salient features of Jewish ethics, culture, and identity within the wider Mediterranean world. Education, then, becomes a lens through which we are able to view the continual reimagining, reshaping, and deployment of self- and communal identity in process.

2 Philo's Model of Jewish Education

Philo finds the opportunity to discuss various aspects of education frequently throughout his many works.⁴ As with most facets of Philo's philosophy, the discussions on education are often contextually embedded, and he has neither the occasion nor the desire to lay out a systematic educational theory. This does not mean, however, that he did not have a more comprehensive scheme in mind, an overarching view of *paideia*, aspects of which we find spread throughout the pages of his corpus. The consistency he applies when

4 The statistics for Philo's usage of παιδεία and cognates are impressive. The terminology set includes the terms παιδεία, παιδεύω, ἀπαιδευσία, παιδεύμα, προπαιδεύμα, παιδευσις, παιδαγωγός, ἀπαιδαγωγός, παιδευτικός, ἀπαιδευτός, ἐμπαιδευτός, παιδεγωγέω, προπαιδεύω, and παιδευτής, and occurs in around 3.5% of all paragraphs in Philo's corpus, compared to 3% for σοφία, 5.87% for νόμος, and 10% for ἀρετή. The most common of the set is παιδεία, 152 instances, followed by the verb παιδεύω with 75 instances, ἀπαιδευσία at 33 instances, and the rest of the terms following. The treatises with the highest percentage of usage are *De congressu eruditionis gratia* (13.9% of paragraphs), *De ebrietate* (12.5%), and *De fuga et inventione* (8.9%).

dealing with the difference pieces—whether the means or the aims—supports this view.

The primary forms of *paideia* Philo regularly addresses—his curricula if you will—are: (1) the encyclical or preliminary studies, (2) the study of philosophy, and (3) the laws of Moses. Education begins from the preliminary studies, the encyclical *paideia* which had become, by this time, a nearly solidified curriculum which included the subjects of grammar, geometry, arithmetic, astronomy, music, dialectic, and, unique to Philo, rhetoric.⁵ Like his contemporaries, Philo understood the encyclical as decidedly propaedeutic, the steps necessary to prepare oneself before moving on to loftier forms of knowledge like philosophy.⁶ To remain focused on the study of the encyclical without moving on is deeply problematic.⁷ Philo uses a number of different metaphors to explain the nature of the encyclical as preliminary to philosophy, wisdom, and/or virtue: the gate before a house (*Fug.* 183), the road leading to a city (*Congr.* 10), a baby's milk prior to the solid food of philosophy.⁸ But, the most common image Philo used for vividly describing the relationship between encyclical *paideia* and wisdom or philosophy was the story of Abraham, Hagar, and Sarah.⁹

5 *Congr.* 11, 15-18, 74-76; *Mos.* 1:23; *Cher.* 105; *Agr.* 18; *Somn.* 1.205; *QG* 3.21. For details on the various disciplines in Philo, see Mendelson, *Secular Education*, 4-24. For the Greek, Hellenistic, and Roman curricula, see Henri Irénée Marrou, *Histoire de l'éducation dans l'antiquité* (Paris: Seuil, 1948), translated into English as *A History of Education in Antiquity* (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1956), 150-216, 274-91; Frederick A. G. Beck, *Greek Education 450-350 B.C.* (London: Methuen, 1964), 111-44, 201-27; Stanley F. Bonner, *Education in Ancient Rome: From the Elder Cato to the Younger Pliny* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), 163-276; Teresa Morgan, *Literate Education in the Hellenistic and Roman Worlds* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 81-89; Raffaella Cribiore, *Gymnastics of the Mind: Greek Education in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 160-244; and W. Martin Bloomer, *The School of Rome: Latin Studies and the Origins of Liberal Education* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 111-38.

6 The nature of the encyclical as preliminary to the study of philosophy was common. See, e.g., Seneca, *Ep.* 88; Pseudo-Plutarch, *Lib. Educ.* 7c-d. Philo is unique in including rhetoric within the encyclical, as many saw it, like philosophy, as subsequent to the preliminary studies. See Quintilian, *Inst.* 1.10.1; Cicero, *Orat.* 1.73-77.

7 *Sacr.* 44; *Cher.* 9-10; *Mut.* 260; *Det.* 64-66.

8 *Agr.* 9; *Congr.* 19; *Prob.* 160. This seems to have been a common metaphor for the encyclical. See Epictetus, *Diss.* 2.16.39, 3.24.9, and the related usage in 1 Cor 3:2, Heb 5:12-13, and 1 Pet 2:2. Another popular metaphor used by Philo is the encyclical as seedlings implanted in immature souls. See *Agr.* 18; Pseudo-Plutarch, *Lib. Educ.* 2b-c; 5c-e; Lucian, *Anach.* 20-21.

9 See *Cher.* 3-10; *Leg.* 3.244-245; *Sacr.* 43; *Post.* 130-132, 137; *Agr.* 9-19; *Her.* 274; *Mut.* 255; *Somn.* 1.240; *QG* 3.18-20; and most of *Congr.* On the allegory, see Jason M. Zurawski, "Mosaic Torah as Encyclical *Paideia*: Reading Paul's Allegory of Hagar and Sarah in Light of Philo

Like the popular adage concerning Penelope, her maid servants, and her suitors,¹⁰ Philo's allegorical reading of the Genesis narrative describes the proper path one must take from preliminary instruction to loftier philosophy, wisdom, and virtue. In the allegory, Abraham serves as the model student, fitting as he is elsewhere Philo's symbol for the soul which gains wisdom through learning.¹¹ In order to prepare himself for his wife Sarah—the symbol of wisdom—Abraham first required the intimate relationship with Sarah's handmaid Hagar—the symbol for the preliminary studies. Once he reached his goal of Sarah/virtue, however, he had to abandon Hagar/encyclia, even though he was still very fond of her. The banishment of Hagar in the story is key, as the lure of the beautiful maidservant was as dangerous as the desire for the preliminary studies. The true wife and the maidservant cannot coexist.¹² Despite the dangers, however, Philo saw the study of the encyclia as absolutely essential for the vast majority of people in the goal of attaining virtue and wisdom and moving on to more advanced studies in philosophy. Encyclical *paideia* was necessary and necessarily temporary.

of Alexandria's," in *Musar to Paideia: Pedagogy in Early Judaism and Christianity*, ed. K. M. Hogan, M. J. Goff, and E. Wasserman (Atlanta: SBL, forthcoming).

- 10 The Stoic Ariston of Chios argued that "those who labor with the preliminary studies but neglect philosophy are like the suitors of Penelope, who, when they failed to win her over, took up with her maid servants instead" (*SVF* 1:350). Stobaeus preserves the fragment. Elsewhere the comment is credited to Gorgias (Gnomol. Vatic. 166). According to Pseudo-Plutarch, the statement is the philosopher Bion's (*Lib. Educ.* 7d). See Albert Henrichs, "Philosophy, the Handmaiden of Theology," *GRBS* 9 (1968): 437-50, esp. 444; K. Freeman, *Ancilla to the Pre-Socratic Philosophers* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957), 139; Yehoshua Amir, "The Transference of Greek Allegories to Biblical Motifs in Philo," in *Nourished with Peace: Studies in Hellenistic Judaism in Memory of Samuel Sandmel*, ed. E. Hilgert and B. L. Mack (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1984), 15-25.
- 11 See *Migr.* 88; *Praem.* 24-51; *Ios.* 1. Abraham is the exemplar of one who acquires virtue through instruction (διδασκτική), Jacob through practice (ἀσκητική), while Isaac is a rare member of the self-taught race (αὐτομαθές γένος). This threefold typology of learners—through instruction, nature, or practice—is common and goes back at least to Aristotle, though Billings has shown that Philo's depictions of the triad are also deeply influenced by Plato. See Thomas H. Billings, *The Platonism of Philo Judaeus* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1919), 82-85. Pseudo-Plutarch, *Lib. Educ.* 2a-c, understands the triad as nature, reason/learning, and custom/training (φύσιν, λόγον/μάθησιν, ἔθος/ἄσκησιν), perfection coming from a combination of all three. His models are Pythagoras, Socrates, and Plato. See also Aristotle, *Eth. Nic.* 1.9.1099b; 10.9.1179b.
- 12 While the connection between the soul and wisdom is noetic, that to encyclical *paideia* is somatic and aesthetic (*Congr.* 20). The desires for the handmaid can lead to neglect of the true mistress (*Congr.* 77).

The encyclica are prerequisites to the study of philosophy,¹³ as they prepare the student to properly speculate on nature,¹⁴ and philosophy is, at its core, *paideia* in the workings of the universe and the true *orthos logos* of nature.¹⁵ Unlike the preliminary studies, philosophy is not temporary and should never be abandoned. It is a lifelong education. Yet it is still preparatory. Education in philosophy leads to the acquisition of virtue and wisdom (*Congr.* 79), the ascent of the mind (*Spec.* 2.230), and the immortality of the soul (*Opif.* 77). As we shall see below, ancestral philosophy (*patria philosophia*) is also devoted to the contemplation of nature, yet it is unique from all other forms of philosophy in that the Jews utilize the laws of Moses in support of their philosophical education.

The third major component of Jewish *paideia* in Philo's system is education via the laws of Moses, which will be the focus below. The Mosaic law is the ideal educational resource for three reasons: 1) the close connection to the universal law of nature; 2) the unique intellectual gifts of the lawgiver, who transferred the natural law stamped upon his mind to his written law code; and 3) the ability of the law to educate at all levels of instruction or intelligence, from the most basic to extremely sophisticated. The benefits that come from education via the law are those that come from *paideia* generally: eradication of the passions, a life of balance, and the immortality of the soul.

Philo utilizes several symbols for *paideia* to express these great gifts in memorable, powerful ways. As the tool which eradicates passion and desire from within the soul, Philo depicts *paideia* as the ῥάβδος, the quintessential rod or cane used by parents or pedagogues to beat misbehaving children.¹⁶ But, instead of a stick used to punish children for not doing their homework, Philo's

13 *Congr.* 145; *Ebr.* 49, 51.

14 *Her.* 274; *Spec.* 3.187-189; *Congr.* 146. In *Opif.* 53-54, Philo, following Plato's *Timaeus*, describes the ascent of philosophy, which begins from the speculation of nature. Runia describes the passage as a "loose paraphrase" of *Tim.* 47a7-b2, arguing that he likely cited the passage from memory. See David Runia, *On the Creation of the Cosmos according to Moses: Introduction, Translation and Commentary*, PACS 1 (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 203. See also V. Nikiprowetzky, *Le commentaire de l'Écriture chez Philon d'Alexandrie: son caractère et sa portée; observations philologiques*, ALGHJ 11 (Leiden: Brill, 1977), 98-99.

15 *Congr.* 144; *Prob.* 160.

16 On corporal punishment in Greek, Hellenistic, and Roman education, see Marrou, *History of Education*, 158-59; Beck, *Greek Education*, 104-9, 215-18; Bonner, *Education in Ancient Rome*, 115-45; Criboire, *Gymnastics of the Mind*, 65-73. By undermining this symbol of punishment, Philo is participating in a contemporary philosophical debate concerning the value of corporal punishment in the education of children. See Marrou, *History of Education*, 272-73; Morgan, *Literate Education*, 132.

rod of *paideia* beats back the passions and keeps desire at bay.¹⁷ The rod becomes the symbol for mental discipline not corporal punishment.

One of Philo's more fascinating discussions of *paideia* is found in his treatise *De ebrietate*, or *On Drunkenness*, which describes what I like to call his "academic family." *Orthos logos* and encyclical *paideia* are the father and mother of learning souls. While dad teaches the kids to follow nature and pursue truth, mom teaches the children to attend to just particular customs and laws of the state (*Ebr.* 34, 64, 68). Mom's lessons apply to the created world, dad's to the divine (*Ebr.* 77). The best child is not the one who attends to dad's lessons alone—this would be the priesthood (*Ebr.* 65)—but the one who adheres to the lessons of both parents (*Ebr.* 35, 80-92). Philo's academic family, then, stresses his concern for a properly balanced life and the role of education in providing said balance.¹⁸

The ultimate goal for the individual and the greatest gift of *paideia* is the earned immortality of the soul after corporeal death.¹⁹ To illustrate the value of *paideia* in this respect, Philo depicts the grave consequences of the opposite: the soul drunk on the unmixed wine of ἀπαιδευσία, ignorance (*Ebr.* 11-12, 15, 27). Rejection of *paideia* leads to a multitude of sins and the destruction of virtue from the soul, the result of which is the suffocation of the soul and its death, trapped forever in the tomb of the body and the earth, never able to escape and return home.²⁰ The most horrific fate imaginable awaits those who do not heed their *paideia*.

17 *Leg.* 2.88-92; *Mut.* 135; *Congr.* 94; *Sacr.* 63. The rod of *paideia* is often linked to Jacob, the symbol of the mind which improves to virtue through training and the model athlete which serves as a paradigm for chastening the irrationality of the soul. See *Det.* 3; *Agr.* 41-43. In addition, humankind has internal helpers in the fight against the passions, most notably *orthos logos* and conscience, both of which work in concert with *paideia* to control irrationality. On *orthos logos* here, see *Post.* 68; *Leg.* 3.80, 118, 128, 222-223; *Sacr.* 51. On conscience (συνειδός), see *Deus* 100, 126, 128.

18 On Philo's concern for balance, see also *Migr.* 93; *Dec.* 99-101.

19 Cf. *Opif.* 77, where the study of philosophy is "that by which man, though mortal, is made immortal" (ὅφ' οὐ καίτοι θνητὸς ὢν ἄνθρωπος ἀπαθανατίζεται), or *Ebr.* 140: "ignorance brings death, while *paideia* brings immortality" (ἀπαιδευσίας μὲν θάνατον ἐπιφερούσης, παιδείας δὲ ἀφθαρσίαν). On the loss of immortality and the need of *paideia* to regain it, see the section below on the law of nature.

20 On psychic death, see *Fug.* 53-64, 80-81, 198-201; *Det.* 47-49, 70; *Leg.* 1.105-107; 3.72; *Post.* 39, 69; *Abr.* 33; *Congr.* 57; *QG* 1.16, 50-51, 70, 73, 76. For a full discussion of the phenomenon of psychic death in both Philo and the Wisdom of Solomon, see Jason M. Zurawski, "Hell on Earth: Corporeal Existence as the Ultimate Punishment of the Wicked in Philo of Alexandria and the Wisdom of Solomon," in *Heaven, Hell, and the Afterlife: Eternity*

All of the various means of education play a fundamental role in the acquisition of these gifts. And, in this, all forms of *paideia* are preparatory, as they are designed to lead the student to greater things like virtue and immortality. *Paideia* is always the means, not an end in itself. The value of the Mosaic law as *paideia* lies exactly in its superiority as means, and the unique nature of this educational tool begins from the unique intellectual gifts of the lawgiver.

3 Moses, Ideal Student and Teacher

Philo regularly portrays Moses as a teacher of the people. However, to contemplate Moses the teacher, we must first understand Moses the student. In his biography of the lawgiver, Philo describes in some detail the education of the young Moses, growing up in the royal palace with all the attendant advantages. Naturally, Philo's description of Moses's education is based on the practices of Roman Egypt rather than pharaonic, with Moses having the educational opportunities of the most elite members of society.

Even within the realm of the elite, Moses was special. Philo foreshadows his future intellectual prowess in describing the baby Moses being weaned off milk at an unusually early age (*Mos.* 1.18), a subtle reference to the typical depiction of the encyclia as milk suitable for infants prior to the solid food of philosophy.²¹ Moses was a serious student, diligent in all those lessons which would benefit the soul (*Mos.* 1.20). He had a truly international education, with private teachers from all over Egypt and Greece, and, because of his intellectual gifts, he quickly surpassed their lessons and was able to comprehend difficult subjects on his own. His genius was due to his ability to access memories of an innate, primordial knowledge (*Mos.* 1.21-22). Therefore, Moses sped through his studies in all the encyclical subjects and in Egyptian philosophy (*Mos.* 1.23), and became an expert in philosophical rhetoric and dialectic (*Mos.* 1.24).

As he grew older, Moses continued his education, now focused on the taming of the passions, impulses, and violent affections of the soul (*Mos.* 1.25-26). His asceticism was renowned, and, through his actions every day, he exhibited the doctrines of philosophy, living for the soul alone and not for the body

in *Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*, ed. J. Harold Ellens, 3 vols. (New York: Praeger, 2013), 1:193-226.

21 See note 8 above.

(*Mos.* 1.27-29).²² Philo sets up Moses as the ultimate exemplar of the learning soul, displaying a mastery of all three models of attaining virtue: through instruction, the self, and training.²³ Yet, despite the amazing opportunities he had as Pharaoh's grandson and his vast intellectual talents, Moses longed for the *paideia* of his kin and ancestors (τὴν συγγενικὴν καὶ προγονικὴν ἐζήλωσε παιδείαν; *Mos.* 1.32).

Moses found a new *paideia* and a new teacher, with God himself educating the pupil Moses (*Mos.* 1.80), first through signs (*Mos.* 1.77-80),²⁴ and later through the laws, on the mountain when Moses was initiated in the divine will (*Mos.* 2.71). This education and initiation led to his becoming a teacher of divine things (*Gig.* 54; *Virt.* 178). Moses would continue teaching future generations through the education passed on in his laws, particularly in their proper interpretation. This would be education not in the particularities of an individual culture but in the cosmos itself.

4 Education in the Law of Nature

Though we find earlier Alexandrian Jews who implicitly drew a connection between the Jewish law and the order of nature,²⁵ Philo is the first known author who consistently and systematically binds the two together and makes the relationship a foundational aspect of his broader worldview. Scholars have long explored the connection Philo makes between the written law of Moses and the unwritten law of nature, discussing Philo's originality—or lack thereof—

22 Cf. *Leg.* 3.128, where Philo distinguishes Aaron, as the model of one moving towards perfection, who restrains, guides, and subdues the passions, from Moses, the model of the already perfected soul, who prefers, instead, to completely and permanently eradicate the passions.

23 See note 11 above.

24 Cf. *Mos.* 1.95, where God attempts to instruct the Egyptians through signs and wonders, though to no avail, leading to further afflictions and admonitions. This is an idea that will be fully taken up by the author of the Wisdom of Solomon, though it is important to note that Philo is careful to not refer to the plagues as *paideia*. See Jason M. Zurawski, "Paideia: A Multifarious and Unifying Concept in the Wisdom of Solomon," in Hogan et al., *Musar to Paideia*.

25 See *Let. Aris.* 161: "For our laws have not been drawn up at random or in accordance with the first casual thought that occurred to the mind, but with a view to truth and the indication of *orthos logos*." In the small number of fragments we have of Aristobulus, there are hints that he too connected the Mosaic law with the *orthos logos* of nature. See frags. 2.2-3; 5.9-10, 12.

in the development of the concept,²⁶ the connections to Stoic philosophy,²⁷ and the bold and problematic move of equating a written law code with the unwritten order of the universe.²⁸ However, it has gone largely unnoticed that this connection between the Mosaic and natural laws is directly linked to Philo's insistence on the educational value of the law.²⁹

Like many of his contemporary philosophers, Philo understood the sense-perceptible world as governed by a perfect, universal law: "For this cosmos is a great city (μεγαλόπολις), and it has one *politeia* and one law; and this λόγος of nature enjoins what one ought to do and forbids what one ought not to do" (*Ios.* 29). He contrasts this universal law with the multiplicity of law codes found in individual cities, which are nothing but additions to the perfect universal law (*Ios.* 29-31). Instead, "the unerring law is *orthos logos*, not some perishable, mortal law, not some soulless law written on soulless papyrus or stelae, but the imperishable law stamped by an immortal nature on an immortal mind" (*Prob.* 46).³⁰ The goal of humanity is to live in harmony with the *politeia* of the

26 See Helmut Koester, "Nomos Phuseos: The Concept of Natural Law in Greek Thought," in *Religions in Antiquity: Essays in Memory of Erwin Ramsdell Goodenough*, ed. Jacob Neusner, SHR 14 (Leiden: Brill, 1968), 521-41.

27 See especially Richard Horsley, "The Law of Nature in Philo and Cicero," *HTR* 71 (1978): 35-59, followed by Markus Bockmuehl, "Natural Law in Second Temple Judaism," *VT* 45 (1995): 17-44; and John W. Martens, *One God, One Law: Philo of Alexandria on the Mosaic and Greco-Roman Law*, SPHAMA 2 (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 75-76. On Greek and Roman concepts of higher, unwritten, and/or natural law, see Rudolf Hirzel, *Agrophos Nomos*, ASAW 20 (Leipzig: Teubner, 1900), 65-68; J. L. Adams, "The Law of Nature in Greco-Roman Thought," *JR* 25 (1945): 97-118; R. M. Grant, *Miracle and Natural Law in Graeco-Roman and Early Christian Thought* (Amsterdam: North Holland, 1952), 19-28; Paul A. Vander Waerdt, "Zeno's Republic and the Origins of Natural Law," in *The Socratic Movement*, ed. Vander Waerdt (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 272-308; Matt A. Jackson-McCabe, *Logos and Law in the Letter of James: The Law of Nature, the Law of Moses, and the Law of Freedom*, NovTSup 100 (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 29-86; and Tony Burns, *Aristotle and Natural Law*, Continuum Studies in Ancient Philosophy (London: Continuum, 2011), especially for his discussion on Aristotle's influence on the Stoic conception of natural law and for his extensive bibliography on the subject.

28 See, e.g., Hindy Najman, "A Written Copy of the Law of Nature: An Unthinkable Paradox?" *SPhiloA* 15 (2003): 54-63.

29 Though see Erwin R. Goodenough, *By Light, Light: The Mystic Gospel of Hellenistic Judaism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1935), 80; and Hindy Najman, "Text and Figure in Ancient Jewish *Paideia*," in *Authoritative Scriptures in Ancient Judaism*, ed. M. Popović, JSJSup 141 (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 253-65, esp. 262.

30 While the technical term "law of nature" may be lacking in earlier philosophical literature, the idea is clearly present in early Stoicism, often connected to or equated with *orthos*

universe, to be world citizens by living according to the law of nature, because *orthos logos* is the “never-ending fountain of virtues” (*Plant.* 121) and the source of freedom (*Prob.* 45).³¹ Obedience to particular law codes of the state is insufficient to ensure the life of freedom (*Prob.* 47).³²

Certain extraordinary individuals have been able to live according to the law of nature without any external guidance by following the universal order implanted within their souls or minds (*Abr.* 16). Adam was the first human to adopt the *politeia* of the world, “the *orthos logos* of nature,” which had existed prior to his creation (*Opif.* 143). By following this law, Adam lived in as close to a divine state as was possible for a mortal creature, at least until the arrival of woman, the allegorical representation of sense perception, which would give rise to desire, bodily pleasures, a breaking of the law of nature, and forfeiture of immortality (*Opif.* 151-152).

The arrival of sense perception into the universe did not prevent all of humankind after Adam from living according to this same natural law, but it did become far more difficult to do so. Certain extraordinary individuals throughout history have been able to follow the original, unchanged law of nature, imprinted upon their minds, without the help of written instructions or guidance and, in so doing, have become models for others to follow, living laws to emulate. It is for precisely this reason that Moses decided to follow his account of creation with the lives of such extraordinary individuals, “the more general laws, which are archetypes, as it were, of the particular laws, which are

logos. See, e.g., Diogenes Laertius 7.1.87-88: “Again, living virtuously is equivalent to living in accordance with experience of the actual course of nature, as Chrysippus says in the first book of his *De finibus*; for our individual natures are parts of the nature of the whole universe. And this is why the end may be defined as life in accordance with nature, or, in other words, in accordance with our own human nature as well as that of the universe, a life in which we refrain from every action forbidden by the common law, that is to say, the *orthos logos* (ὁ νόμος ὁ κοινός, ὅσπερ ἐστὶν ὁ ὀρθὸς λόγος) which pervades all things, and is identical with this Zeus, lord and ruler of all that is.”

On the Stoics and *orthos logos*, see A. A. Long, “The Harmonics of Stoic Virtue,” in *Stoic Studies* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 202-23; and Brian E. Johnson, *The Role Ethics of Epictetus: Stoicism in Ordinary Life* (Plymouth: Lexington, 2014), 72-76. See also note 40 below.

31 On the connect between *orthos logos* and virtue, see also *Leg.* 3.150; *Gig.* 17, 48; *Migr.* 128; *Spec.* 2.29; *Virt.* 127; and *Prob.* 62.

32 This is not to suggest that the law codes of individual cities were inherently bad. They are simply insufficient. Philo actually has kind things to say about other laws and encourages obedience to the laws of the state. *Pace* Martens, *One God, One Law*, 99-100, who argues that Philo only accepts other law codes where they drew on the law of Moses.

copies" (*Abr.* 3). Moses permanently enshrined the lives of these individuals in his writings not only to praise their actions, but also to encourage others to emulate their conduct (*Abr.* 4), to show that the particular laws which would follow—i.e., the legislative injunctions—were in accord with the universal law of nature, and, finally, to demonstrate that it is not difficult to adhere to the particular laws, as these people were able to obey the law of nature without any outside, written help (*Abr.* 5).

Philo understands the role of those wise individuals who could live in perfect harmony with the law of nature as paradigmatic, whether the lives of ancient patriarchs like Abraham (*Abr.* 275-276) or Moses himself (*Dec.* 1), set down as permanent models in the law of Moses, or the actions of contemporary individuals, both Jewish and Gentile, who serve as imminent sparks of virtue and wisdom wherever they go: "In the past, there were some people who surpassed their contemporaries in virtue, taking God alone as their guide and living according to the law, that is the *orthos logos* of nature, who were not only free themselves, but also filled all who came near them with the spirit of freedom. And now too, in our own time, there are some who are, as it were, images of the *kalokagathia* of wise men, modeled from the archetypal representation" (*Prob.* 62). Elsewhere, Philo makes clear that these contemporary models can be found among all nations (*Spec.* 2.43-46). Though few in number, they serve as "a smoldering coal of wisdom in their various cities, on account of which virtue may not become entirely extinguished and thus destroyed from our race" (*Spec.* 2.47). Philo laments the fact that this number is so small and argues that if all men lived in accordance with nature's designs, the world would be free of pain and fear and, instead, be filled with eternal joy and happiness (*Spec.* 2.48). It is in this, the difficulty of innately following the law of nature and the very few able to do so, where we see the purpose and role of the law of Moses and the special place it holds in the education of the Jewish people.

Moses intended his citizens to live according to the laws of nature (*Mos.* 2.211), and his inclusion of both a creation narrative and historical accounts at the start of his law code was meant to demonstrate the possibility of achieving this goal through adherence to the particular laws he would then set forth. The particular injunctions of the law would educate the normal person who followed them to achieve what only a small handful of extraordinary individuals had been able to accomplish on their own. The laws had this power because: one, they were modeled on the living laws as archetypes, those who innately followed the law of nature; and, two, they were set down by the most perfect intellect the world has seen. Moses was such an exceptional student, who was able to quickly master and then surpass the lessons of his teachers, because he had complete access to and total recall of the knowledge latent within him.

This knowledge was nothing but the *orthos logos* of nature, imprinted upon his soul (*Mos.* 1.48). And it is this which Moses would set down as written copies, as only he could:

Therefore, it is a great thing if it has fallen to the lot of one person to arrive at any one of the qualities before mentioned, and it is an amazing thing, as it seems, for one to have been able to grasp them all, which Moses alone appears to have done, having given a very clear description of the aforesaid virtues in the commandments which he established. And those who are well versed in the sacred books know this, for if he had not had these principles innate within him, he would never have compiled those scriptures at the promptings of God. And he gave to those who were worthy to use them the most admirable of all possessions, likenesses and copies of the paradigms which were impressed upon his soul, which became the laws which most clearly and plainly revealed the aforementioned virtues. (*Mos.* 2.10-11; cf. *Opif.* 3)

With fewer and fewer people in the world able to live by the innate law of nature, God, through Moses, gave the Jewish people some assistance, a written guide which would teach those who followed its ordinances and studied its deeper meanings to live as humanity was initially intended, to overcome the passions and appetites within the soul and elevate the noetic over the sense-perceptible. The written laws of Moses were “the most closely resembling image of the *politeia* of the cosmos” (*Mos.* 2:51), and each of the particular, individual laws “aim at the harmony of the universe and are in agreement with the *logos* of eternal nature (τῷ λόγῳ τῆς αἰδίου φύσεως)” (*Mos.* 2.52).³³ The law of Moses was given so that “the one who followed the laws and welcomed the

33 Many scholars have argued that Philo, in drawing this connection, equates the law of Moses with the law of nature. See Koester, “*Nomos Phuseos*,” 533; John W. Martens, “Philo and the ‘Higher’ Law,” *Society of Biblical Literature 1991 Seminar Papers*, ed. E. H. Lovering, SBLSP 30 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1991), 309-22, esp. 317; and Hindy Najman, “The Law of Nature and the Authority of Mosaic Law,” *SPhiloA* 11 (1999): 55-73, esp. 60, 64. However, Philo’s argument that the laws of Moses are the best possible representations of the laws of nature is not an argument for identical similitude, with the limiter, “best possible,” being crucial here. This is further confirmed by Philo’s standard view of copies as necessarily imperfect and degenerative (*Opif.* 140-141). There is a definite hierarchy, the law of nature being superior to the law of Moses, but one that makes little difference, as the law of Moses remains the best possible representation on earth. A hierarchy, however, does not equate to a disparagement or subversion of the Jewish law or Judaism itself, an assumption often found in such discussions.

concomitant conformity to nature would live in accordance with the arrangement of the universe with perfect harmony and concord between his deeds and his actions" (*Mos.* 2.48). The law would be a textbook for learning to live according to nature.

5 Mosaic *Paideia*

The ability of the law of Moses to teach the universal order of the cosmos was powerful justification for the necessity of education via the law. But, the uniqueness of the law as an educational tool was also due to the fact that it taught at all levels, depending on the intellectual capacity of the student, from elementary to advanced.

Philo often refers to the text of the Pentateuch explicitly as Moses's education of the people, with such phrases as "as Moses often teaches (*διδάσκει*), saying . . ." (*Migr.* 8; cf. *Mut.* 220, 236) or "Moses speaks here very instructively (*παιδευτικῶς*)" (*Virt.* 165) or "Moses is here philosophizing and teaching us" (*Her.* 291). This type of language is commonly utilized to designate the educational value of the Mosaic law, most often when referring to the deeper, allegorical meaning of the text.

5.1 *The Literal and the Allegorical in Moses's Teaching*

Allegory is both the primary literary device Moses used in crafting his law code, and the exegetical tool necessary to delve below the surface meaning of the text and to understand the true lessons Moses intended.³⁴ Philo can refer to this underlying view of the text explicitly as *paideia* for the people, but even when he does not, this is always the assumption: the allegory of the Mosaic law uncovers the lawgiver's originally intended *paideia*. The historical narratives of particular individuals and peoples contained in the law are, in reality, *paideumata* about more universal truths concerning the nature of the cosmos and the soul's path to virtue (*Her.* 267-268; *Agr.* 68, 122). This dichotomy between the literal text and the underlying allegorical *paideia* led the philosophically-minded Therapeutae to envision the Jewish law itself in terms of the Mosaic allegory, viewing the plain words to be the body and the invisible meaning beneath these words the soul (*Contempl.* 78). Philo, it seems, would agree. However, this view of the law does not mean that the literal commandments—i.e., the

34 Philo uses the Greek verb *ἀλληγορέω* in both ways: Moses "speaks allegorically" in the law (e.g., *Leg.* 2.5), and it is the exegete's responsibility to "interpret allegorically" Moses's words (e.g., *Leg.* 3.60). This allegorical exegesis was just as Moses intended (*Leg.* 3.238).

body—can be or must be thrown off in favor of the allegorical reading—the soul—alone. Both have necessary educational functions.

It has long been pointed out that Philo considered both the literal and allegorical meanings of the Pentateuch necessary for the Jewish people.³⁵ The clearest support of this is found in Philo's *De migratione Abrahami*, where he derides those Jews who disregard the literal meaning of the text upon discovering the allegorical. We see here too Philo's rationale for education via both literal practice and symbolic exegesis of the law:

For there are some who, looking upon the literal laws (τοὺς ῥητοὺς νόμους) as symbols of noetic things, have studied some things with great accuracy, and have disregarded with indifference other things. These men I should blame for their recklessness, for they should attend to both classes of things, a precise inquiry into hidden things and a blameless stewardship of the obvious things. But now, living alone by themselves, as in a desert, or as if being souls without bodies and without knowing any city or village or house or, in short, the company of other people, they overlook what is apparent to many people and instead seek for the plain truth by itself. The sacred scripture teaches them to reflect carefully on noble conceptions and to abandon none of the customs which men greater and more divine than any in our time had enacted . . . But, it is necessary to think that one class of things resembles the body, and the other the soul; therefore, just as one must care for the body because it houses the soul, so too must one care for the written, literal laws. For, when these laws are kept, the other things will be more clearly understood, of which these laws are symbols, and, in so doing, one will escape blame and censure from the majority (*Migr.* 89-93).

Philo argues that one must continue to follow the literal observances of the law even after coming to understand the true allegorical meanings behind the individual enactments, as the praxis is meant to remind and further instill the deeper teaching of the text. The importance of balance is key here. Philo mirrors the view of the Therapeutae that the deeper significance is to the soul as the praxis is to the body. As the soul cannot live in the world without a

35 See Goodenough, *By Light, Light*, 82-83; Wolfson, *Philo*, 1:115-17; Samuel Sandmel, "Philo's Environment and Philo's Exegesis," *JBR* 22 (1954): 248-53; and David Dawson, *Allegorical Readers and Cultural Revision in Ancient Alexandria* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 72-74.

healthy body, so education in the allegorical understanding of the law requires the support of daily praxis.³⁶

The importance of the practice of the literal legislation together with understanding the allegorical meaning behind the commands reflects the multi-layered value of the Mosaic law as an educational tool. Moses's teaching may become explicit through proper exegesis, but daily praxis proves educational as well, even for those who do not or cannot comprehend the deeper lessons behind the laws.

5.2 *Praxis as Paideia*

Philo's entire exegetical project to reveal the underlying, intended lessons hidden beneath the surface of the literal text clearly highlights the educational quality of those aspects of the Mosaic law which are not legislative at all, that is the creation narrative and histories. Understanding the history of Abraham as a symbol of the soul migrating away from the passions and moving up through the ranks of necessary *paideia* to loftier virtue and wisdom turns a particular, individual drama into a universally applicable lesson. And yet, while some thought it eminently reasonable to assume that observance of the literal legislative aspects of the law was irrelevant after determining and following the universal lessons gained through allegorical interpretation, Philo insists that the literal, particular commandments remain in effect for all, regardless of their own intellectual advancement. This is due to the educational force Moses intended, not only with the narrative, but also with the praxis itself, which would forcefully instill elements of the broader allegorical program and its lessons.

The Jewish dietary restrictions become, for Philo, literal, daily expressions of their deeper, symbolic significance, that is the soul's need to excise the passions and devote itself to education. Certain types of animals are forbidden, not because they are inherently unclean, but because of what they represent and what they teach those following the food laws. In fact, Philo openly admits that there is no logic to the literal meaning of some of the food laws, and only through allegorical interpretation (δι' ὑπονοιῶν) does the logic become evident (*Agr.* 131). For example, clean animals must have cloven hooves, the

36 This is not to say that Philo put the literal and allegorical interpretations of the Pentateuch on an equal level, especially in understanding the intended lessons of the text, and Philo often condemns those who ignore the true allegorical meaning in favor of the plain, surface reading. Cf. *Somn.* 1.102. Philo calls these men "micro-citizens" in comparison with the citizens of the cosmos who interpret allegorically (*Somn.* 1.39). On Philo's denigration of these "pure literalists," see Montgomery J. Shroyer, "Alexandrian Jewish Literalists," *JBL* 55 (1936): 261-84.

hoof parted as life itself is parted, one road leading to wickedness, the other to virtue. The cloven hoof represents the necessity of distinguishing between the two, choosing and remembering what is right, and avoiding and forgetting the opposite (*Spec.* 4.108; *Agr.* 133-134). Food laws even teach about education. Animals must chew the cud, because this is meant to remind one of the necessity of the soul to ruminate over and again on its *paideia*, contemplating the lessons received until they are firmly implanted within the soul (*Spec.* 4.107; *Agr.* 132). Reptiles which jump and leap off the ground are clean, as they represent the rational soul which, through its devotion to *orthē paideia*, is able to resist the weight of the body and the passions and spring up from the earth to the heavens (*Spec.* 4.113-115). In all these dietary restrictions and the distinctions made between clean and unclean animals, Moses “causes the extinction of appetite” (*Spec.* 4.118).

Like the dietary laws, circumcision was seen as a mark of Jewish particularism and separateness, though the Jews, of course, were not the only ones to practice it. Nevertheless, circumcision became a source of continual fodder in Greek and Roman anti-Jewish polemics,³⁷ as Philo himself makes clear at the opening of his multi-volume *De specialibus legibus*: “We will begin from that law which is an object of ridicule by the majority of people” (*Spec.* 1.1). Philo then goes on to give multiple reasons for the continuation of a painful and mutilating (*Spec.* 1.3) ancestral custom, beginning from those of exegetes before him, explanations both medical—prevention of disease, cleanliness, prolificness—and anatomical—the resemblance of the circumcised portion to the heart, making what is invisible visible (*Spec.* 1.4-7). Philo proceeds to give his own interpretation of the practice, seeing it as symbolic of two more universal lessons: one, the excision of the pleasures which delude the mind and the soul, and two, self-knowledge and the destruction of vain opinion from the soul (*Spec.* 1.8-10; *Migr.* 92).

The allegorical teaching behind Moses’s literal proscriptions concerning Sabbath practice was bound up together with the creation account itself. The idea that God required a certain number of days to create the world and then needed a period of rest is, to Philo, nonsense (*Dec.* 99). This division, then, must have an intended educational purpose, a lesson for those who keep the Sabbath day holy, a commandment through which Moses tells the people to “always imitate God” (*Dec.* 100). With God as the paradigm, the six days of creation represent to humanity mortal needs, the “unavoidable necessities of life,” while the seventh day is devoted to the contemplation of nature, the period

37 Cf. Josephus, *C. Ap.* 2.137. See Erich Gruen, *Diaspora: Jews amidst Greeks and Romans* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), 45, 51.

serving as the model for all human actions and for the perfect way of life: the balance between the active and the contemplative (*Dec.* 99-101). God's immortal, uncreated, wholly perfect nature did not require such a division of time, but humanity, composed of both body and soul, requires those things beneficial to both: the active life in service to the body and the contemplative life devoted to the perfection of the intellect (*Spec.* 2.64).

All of the individual commandments proscribed by Moses are to Philo customs which must be followed and, through their practice, lessons designed to educate the Jews about the life and educational journey of the soul. The pedagogical value of the praxis could vary, based on the individual's knowledge of the allegorical justification of the laws. But, the nature of the praxis meant that even those with no understanding of the deeper meaning would be educated through its daily performance.

5.3 *Elementary Education through Anthropomorphism*

Apart from the legislative portions of the law, the value of a symbolic or figurative reading is particularly highlighted when the plain meaning of the written text is problematic and seemingly contrary to Philo's understanding of an ultimately transcendent, uncreated, incorporeal deity.³⁸ The ancient Hebrew scriptures and their Greek translations are rife with anthropomorphic and angelomorphic language describing the God of Israel communicating and interacting directly with humans in human or angelic form, an image preposterous and even blasphemous for Philo. However, knowing that Moses would never have added anything unnecessary or blatantly false in his text (*Fug.* 54), Philo must explain such problematic passages.

On the passage "the Lord went down to see the city and the tower," from the Tower of Babel narrative in the book of Genesis (Gen 11:5), Philo comments that the statement "must be heard in a wholly figurative sense (τροπικώτερον). For to imagine that the divinity can go towards, or go from, or go down, or go to meet, or, in short, that it has the same qualities and movements as particular animals, or to move at all, is, as they say, a monstrous and other-worldly impiety" (*Ling.* 134). Moses, of course, could never be charged with such an impiety; therefore, "these things are spoken of anthropomorphically (ἀνθρωπολογείται) by the lawgiver of God, who is not in the form of a man, for the benefit of our education (διὰ τὰς τῶν παιδευομένων ἡμῶν), as I have often said before in reference to other passages" (*Ling.* 135).

38 See Wolfson, *Philo*, 1:116; Dawson, *Allegorical Readers*, 91.

This type of base anthropomorphic language Philo argues was intended to be beneficial for the education of the foolish, who are incapable of conceiving of a deity without form or speech or emotion. Moses can describe God as a man:

in order to educate the life of the foolish . . . attributing to God a face, hands, feet, a mouth, voice, anger, passions . . . he offers these expressions not with an eye towards truth, but for the benefit of those who might learn from them, for some are very dull in their natures, so as to be completely unable to imagine God without a body . . . For we must be content if such people are able to be corrected through the fear hanging over them through such descriptions. And these are the only two paths in the entirety of the law, the one leading towards the truth, by which we have assertions such as “God is not like a man” [Num 23:19], the other, that which has an eye towards the opinions of the stupid, to whom it is said, “The Lord God shall educate you as a man educates his son” [Deut 8:5]. (*Somn.* 1.234-237)³⁹

Elsewhere, Philo argues that Moses used this type of language “as a sort of introduction, for the sake of correcting those people who could not be corrected otherwise” (*Deus* 52). These are people more attached to the body and sense perception than those attached to the soul and incorporeal things, those who are able to have a proper comprehension of an incorporeal deity in need of nothing (*Deus* 55-56). Anthropomorphism as literary device, then, serves a very elementary educational purpose, necessary for children or the child-like who have not advanced to a higher intellectual or philosophical level.

5.4 *Advanced Allegorical Education and Patria Philosophia*

The educative value of a proper reading of the Pentateuch went well beyond understanding the intended lessons of the commandments or the very elementary instruction through anthropomorphism. The entirety of the Pentateuch was crafted with layers of meaning, which meant that appropriate exegetical

39 In *Deus* 51-54 Philo makes the very same argument and comparison between Num 23:19 and Deut 8:5 when exegeting Gen 6:7. Cf. *QG* 1.55, 2.54. Philo also understands Moses using such anthropomorphisms as “I am your God” (Gen 17:1) as a form of catachresis (*Mut.* 27). On the preceding passage, *Somn.* 1.238-239, and the educational value of anthropomorphisms, see Tzvi Novick, “Perspective, Paideia, and Accommodation in Philo,” *SPhiloA* 21 (2009): 49-62, esp. 58; and Adam Kamesar, “Philo, the Presence of ‘Paideutic’ Myth in the Pentateuch, and the ‘Principles’ or *Kephalaia* of Mosaic Discourse,” *SPhiloA* 10 (1998): 34-65.

methods were necessary to delve below the surface and reach the true teachings of Moses. This is Philo's primary occupation throughout his body of work, and it is the essence of what Philo refers to as the Jews' *patria philosophia*.

In looking at Philo's overall model of Jewish education, I mentioned briefly his views on the study of philosophy, which would follow the prerequisite education in the encyclia and be a lifelong *paideia* in the true nature of things and the workings of the universe, with the ultimate goal "to live in conformity to nature (τὸ ἀκολούθως τῇ φύσει ζῆν)" (*Prob.* 160).⁴⁰ Philosophy was the "hand-maid of wisdom" (*Cong.* 79) and the "royal road" which leads to virtue (*Post.* 101-102), and education in philosophy is "that by which man, though mortal, is made immortal" (*Opif.* 77).

In most of Philo's discussions on philosophy and the benefits its study brings, there is nothing to suggest its provenance. Philo does not tell us whether this is Greek or barbarian or Jewish philosophy. Philosophy, typically, appears universal, transnational. And, this should not be surprising, as Philo never highlights the fact that encyclical *paideia* was, in fact, Greek, and both philosophy and the encyclia were required components of Jewish education. However, at several points Philo does refer to the Jews' *patria philosophia*, their ancestral philosophy. According to Philo, the emperor Tiberius was well aware that the Jewish people practiced their ancestral philosophy in the synagogues on the Sabbath (*Legat.* 156), and that the legate Petronius himself, because of his zeal for *paideia*, had learned something of "Jewish philosophy (Ἰουδαϊκῆς φιλοσοφίας)" (*Legat.* 245). But, what exactly is this ancestral or Jewish philosophy and what distinguishes it from any other sort?

In book two of the *Life of Moses*, Philo claims that the lawgiver intended the seventh day to be devoted to meeting together and public training in philosophy, through which the populace would advance in *kalokagathia* and improve their moral characters and lives (*Mos.* 2.215), a custom which continues to Philo's own day:

According to this custom, even to this day the Jews pursue philosophy on the seventh day, dedicating this time to their ancestral philosophy (τὴν πατρίον φιλοσοφίαν) and to the knowledge and contemplation of nature. For what are the prayer houses (προσευκτήρια) in each city but schools

40 Philo attributes the adage to Zeno, as did Cicero (*Fin.* 4.14) and Diogenes Laertius (7.1.87; *SVF* 1:179), though Stobaeus claims that it was Cleanthes who added τῇ φύσει (*Eclog.* 2.76.3; *SVF* 3:12). See Alfred Chilton Pearson, *The Fragments of Zeno and Cleanthes* (London: C. J. Clay, 1891), 163; Max Pohlenz, *Die Stoa*, 2 vols. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1959), 2:67-68.

(διδασκαλεία) of prudence, courage, temperance, and justice, and of piety, holiness, and every virtue, by which things human and divine are understood and set right? (*Mos.* 2.216)

Though Philo's intended audience and purpose here may have influenced his depiction of the προσευκτήρια as Greek philosophical schools, it is clear thus far that Jewish philosophy, as it is devoted to nature and the attainment of virtue, cannot be distinguished from any other sort. However, when Philo describes the philosophical education of the Essenes and the Therapeutae and its connection to Jewish law, we can begin to see the distinctive character of this *patria philosophia*.

Essene education is devoted entirely to the moral aspect of philosophy, as the logical part is unnecessary for the acquisition of virtue and the natural part is only beneficial for the contemplation of the existence of God and the creation of the universe (*Prob.* 80).⁴¹ In their education in moral philosophy, "they utilize their ancestral laws (τοῖς πατρίοις νόμοις) as instructors" (*Prob.* 80). They are taught by these laws throughout the week, but especially on the Sabbath, when they gather together in the synagogues. There, one member reads the books and another, one of the most experienced elders, teaches, explaining the philosophical, symbolic meaning of the text (*Prob.* 81-82). In this way, the members of the community "are educated in piety, holiness, justice, economy, politics, and the knowledge of those things which are truly good, bad, or indifferent, and to choose what is beneficial and to avoid the opposite, making use of three established criteria, the love of God, the love of virtue, and the love of man" (*Prob.* 83).

Philo's description of the education of the Therapeutae is similar. During the week, they study their ancestral philosophy in complete solitude: "for they take up and philosophize on their holy scriptures, allegorically investigating their ancestral philosophy, since they look upon the literal interpretations as symbols of the secret meaning of nature to be made clear through deeper, allegorical interpretations (ἐν ὑπονοίαις)" (*Contempl.* 28). They also study ancient allegorical treatises and attempt to imitate their systems and explanations in the creation of new written works (*Contempl.* 29). Then, like the Essenes, they meet together on the Sabbath, and one of the elder members instructs the others,

41 For Philo's distinction, seemingly Stoic in origin, between the natural, logical, and moral principles of philosophy, see *Agr.* 14-16; *Mut.* 75; *Spec.* 1.336. On the Stoic division, see Catherine Atherton, *The Stoics on Ambiguity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 40-43. Abraham's transition from Abram is allegorically understood as the transition from natural to moral philosophy. See *Cher.* 4-7; *Mut.* 76; *Leg.* 3.244.

allegorically exegeting the precise meaning of the laws (*Contempl.* 30-31).⁴² As with the Essenes, the Jewish law is instrumental in the education and philosophy of the Therapeutae. In fact, Philo knows of a tradition that claims that they are called “Therapeutae” or “Therapeutrides” because “they are educated by nature and the sacred laws to serve God / ἐκ φύσεως καὶ τῶν ἱερῶν νόμων ἐπαιδεύθησαν θεραπεύειν τὸ ὄν” (*Contempl.* 2).

Nikiprowetzky argued that Philo’s *patria philosophia* was, above all, the study and practice of the Jewish law.⁴³ Philo describes the Jewish laws themselves as “philosophical” (*Mos.* 2.36), and argues that “whatever benefits are derived from the most esteemed philosophy for its students are derived for the Jews through their laws and customs” (*Virt.* 65). We have seen that the philosophical study of the laws requires proper interpretation through allegorical exegesis so that the literal text might reveal its true teaching and lead, ultimately, to the acquisition of virtue. This goal of the study of Jewish philosophy is no different than that of Greek philosophy. Yet, the Jewish laws serve as the best possible instructors, as they were set down by the greatest student, teacher, and philosopher in history, Moses (*Mos.* 2.2), who understood that the study of philosophy must begin with the contemplation of nature and be in line with order of the universe (*Mos.* 2.211).

If all philosophy is meant to guide the student to virtue and *patria philosophia* was best equipped to do this, why should Greek philosophy have a place in Jewish education? Why wouldn’t only that philosophy associated with the Mosaic law be required? Philo, unfortunately, does not give us his reasons outright, but the inclusion of both reflects well his own personal education and his profound interest in Greek philosophy. Virtually every aspect of Philo’s worldview is informed by that amalgam of Platonism and Stoicism so prevalent in Alexandria at that time. Greek philosophy sits behind his entire allegorical project and his exegesis of the Pentateuch. It is used in service to and is thus inseparable from his *patria philosophia*. To remain willfully ignorant of such an invaluable source of education would have been illogical and entirely unacceptable.

42 For more on the study of philosophy on the Sabbath, cf. *Mos.* 2.211-212; *Dec.* 98-101; *Spec.* 2.62-64; *Hypoth.* 7.10-14; and *Opif.* 128.

43 Nikiprowetzky, *Le commentaire de l'Écriture chez Philon d'Alexandrie*, 97-116. See also, Mendelson, *Secular Education*, 107 n. 2; P. Borgen, “Greek Encyclical Education, Philosophy and the Synagogue: Observations from Philo of Alexandria’s Writings,” in *Libens Merit: Festschrift til Stig Strømholm på sjuttioårsdagen 16 sept. 2001*, ed. O. Matsson, Acta Academiae Regiae Scientiarum Upsaliensis 21 (Uppsala: Kungl. Vetenskapssamhället, 2001), 61-71, esp. 67.

6 Conclusions

The arrival of sense perception into the world gave rise to desire and passions and a loss of the originally inherent immortality of the soul. Immortality now had to be earned through living as nature intended and an eradication of the irrational aspects of the soul. Some unique individuals throughout history had been able to do this by following perfectly the universal *logos* imprinted upon the mind. But over time, as irrationality increased, it became ever more difficult to follow the natural law without external guidance. *Paideia* was the necessary tool to combat irrationality, to live according to the natural order, and to earn back the true immortal life of the soul. And the law of Moses was given as the ideal form of *paideia*, a textbook crafted according to the law of nature stamped upon the mind of the lawgiver and a teacher capable of instructing at every level, from the most basic to highly advanced, depending on the capacity of the individual student.

Moses could use figurative, anthropomorphic language to instruct the most elementary student to come to a proper conception about God. Practice of the literal ordinances would educate at various levels, from the beginning student who is not yet able to conceive of the deeper allegorical meaning of the laws to those more fully cognizant of the intended lessons underlying Jewish praxis. Literal observance as a whole, with its intended target of the earthly mind (γγίνω νῶ), is at an intermediate level of instruction (*Leg.* 1.93-95). Finally, deep allegorical study of the law, in service to ancestral philosophy, is the loftiest form of *paideia* for the most advanced students, highly educated thinkers like Philo himself. Philo's entire allegorical project is the product of this advanced level of education.⁴⁴

44 Several scholars have discussed Philo's works within the context of a school setting, perhaps Philo's own. Foremost has been the work of Greg Sterling. See his "The School of Sacred Laws: the Social Setting of Philo's Treatises," *VC* 53 (1999): 148-64; "Was there a Common Ethic in Second Temple Judaism?" in *Sapiential Perspectives: Wisdom Literature in Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls: Proceedings of the Sixth International Symposium of the Orion Center, 20-22 May 2001*, ed. J. J. Collins, G. E. Sterling, and R. A. Clements, *STDJ* 51 (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 171-94; and, most recently, "The School of Moses in Alexandria: An Attempt to Reconstruct the School of Philo" (paper presented at the Fifth Nangeroni Meeting, "Second Temple Jewish *Paideia* in Its Ancient Near Eastern and Hellenistic Contexts," Naples, Italy, June 30-July 4, 2015). An edited version of the paper will be published in the proceedings, *Second Temple Jewish Paideia in Context*, ed. Jason M. Zurawski and Gabriele Boccaccini, *BZNW* 228 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2017). See also Borgen, "Greek Encyclical Education, Philosophy and the Synagogue. Observations from Philo of Alexandria's Writings" and the contribution of Sean Adams to the Fifth Nangeroni Meeting, "Philo's *Questions* and the Adaptation of Greek Philosophical Curriculum." In

While all *paideia* aims at the same goals, Mosaic *paideia* was ideally positioned to guide the students to those goals. Yet, Philo does not conclude from this that the Jews should only be educated in and by the law. Instead, his model of Jewish education clearly includes curricula besides the law, and Philo never posits a hierarchy where Greek forms are solely propaedeutic to the study of the law. Mosaic *paideia* was a lifelong education, taking place continually at every stage of an individual's intellectual development. Less advanced forms of Mosaic education, such as that through *praxis*, would have taken place alongside elementary to intermediate Greek education. The encyclical studies were indeed preliminary to Jewish *patria philosophia*, but so were they to the study of Greek philosophy. The propaedeutic function of the encyclical studies was a common topic among Philo's non-Jewish contemporaries, but Philo probably goes further than most in warning his readers of the dangers of becoming ensnared by the lure of the preliminary studies, the maidservant, and not moving beyond them to virtue, wisdom, and more advanced education. This education would have been quite enticing to many of his Jewish colleagues in Alexandria, and Philo testifies to his own past problems of neglecting the true mistress in favor of the handmaiden (*Congr.* 6). Philo, therefore, is adamant that the curriculum of encyclical studies is necessary for most Jews, but it is also necessarily temporary and to be abandoned in order to move on to the study of philosophy. As we saw, Greek philosophy and Jewish *patria philosophia* were inseparable and enduring sources of education in Philo's thought.

This inclusive, even maximalist, view of Jewish education would have seemed familiar to the most elite, well-educated members of Philo's audience, those whose status and wealth gave them access to the entire range of Greek and Jewish educational opportunities in major cities like Alexandria. Opportunity, however, did not necessarily translate into acceptance and reality. While some of the Alexandrian Jewish community may have avoided Greek education as foreign and incompatible with Jewish customs and values, others would have become enthralled with the intellectual culture of the city and saw no need for the parochial education received at home or the *προσευκτήρια*. Philo takes a strong position within this contemporary debate. First, he encourages his fellow Jews to take advantage of all that Greek *paideia* had to offer, just as he himself had done. Greek education and culture was not something to be shunned or rejected. It was something to be embraced, as it would, if

Maren Niehoff's recent work, she posits the intriguing question as to whether Philo's *Questions and Answers* was used by the Therapeutae or perhaps even made for them specifically. See Niehoff, *Jewish Exegesis and Homeric Scholarship in Alexandria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), esp. 162-67 in chapter 5, "Philo's *Questions and Answers* as a manual of instruction."

properly attended, enhance education through the law. At the same time, by depicting the law of Moses as the ideal educational resource which offered the same benefits that came from Greek learning, Philo makes a bold case for the continued practice and study of the law. Just as Greek *paideia* should not be supplanted by the Mosaic, Mosaic *paideia* must not be subverted by the Greek.

The way in which Philo conceived of this synthesis between Jewish and Greek education speaks to his understanding of Jewish identity in the Mediterranean diaspora, what it meant to be a Jew in Roman Alexandria. In his influential 2001 monograph, Tim Whitmarsh explores the role *paideia* played in defining the cultural category of “Greekness” during the Second Sophistic.⁴⁵ According to Whitmarsh:

Paideia, then, was not simply a form of social practice (though, of course, it was that too): at a more abstract level, it was also a means of constructing and reifying idealized identities for Greek and Roman, a privileged space of complex cultural interaction (or ‘contact zone’) between Roman ideology and Greek identity, a foundation upon which both peoples constructed their own sense of their place in the world.⁴⁶

We find a similar phenomenon among Second Temple Jewish authors. Philo’s concern, of course, is not with Greek identity or “Greekness,” but with “Jewishness” and the place of the Jewish people within society and the world. Philo takes *paideia*, that defining marker of Greek culture and identity since at least Isocrates, and applies it to the Jewish people. To be Jewish was to share in a common *paideia*. This education was just that of their elite Greek neighbors, but it was more. It included the education they received throughout their lives from their laws. This was not some particularistic education about parochial, divisive practices and beliefs. It was education in universal cosmic law, the best possible curriculum for learning to live as nature intended. This did not mean that their Greek neighbors also had to be educated by Moses to attain virtue, wisdom, and immortality. It meant that the Jews must be exemplars for the rest of humankind, sparks of wisdom wherever they go (*Prob.* 71), the priests of the world (*Spec.* 2.163). Philo’s view of Jewish *paideia* is a hopeful vision for the Jewish people, which was neither assimilationist nor inimical. There was room for Greek culture and the unique customs and traditions of the Jewish people. There was room for Plato and Moses.

45 Tim Whitmarsh, *Greek Literature and the Roman Empire: The Politics of Imitation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 7.

46 Whitmarsh, *Greek Literature and the Roman Empire*, 16.