

## KOLOKVIA K ANTICKÉ FILOSOFII

### „Work in progress“

Lucia Lombardi

Istituto Italiano per gli Studi Filosofici

*Philo of Alexandria and (Some of) His Sources*

*Philo of Alexandria on Chaldean Cosmology*

**T1:** Philo, *Opif.* 7–12

(7) Τινὲς γὰρ τὸν κόσμον μᾶλλον ἢ τὸν κοσμοποιὸν θαυμάσαντες τὸν μὲν ἀγένητόν τε καὶ αἰδιὸν ἀπεφήναντο, τοῦ δὲ θεοῦ πολλὴν ἀπραξίαν ἀνάγνωσ κατεψεύσαντο, δέον ἔμπαλιν τοῦ μὲν τὰς δυνάμεις ὡς ποιητοῦ καὶ πατρὸς καταπλαγῆναι, τὸν δὲ μὴ πλέον ἀποσεμνῶναι τοῦ μετρίου. (8) Μωσῆς δὲ καὶ φιλοσοφίας ἐπ’ αὐτὴν φθάσας ἀκρότητα καὶ χρησιμοῖς τὰ πολλὰ καὶ συνεκτικώτατα τῶν τῆς φύσεως ἀναδιδαχθεὶς ἔγνω δὴ, ὅτι ἀναγκαιότατόν ἐστιν ἐν τοῖς οὖσι τὸ μὲν εἶναι δραστήριον αἴτιον, τὸ δὲ παθητόν, καὶ ὅτι τὸ μὲν δραστήριον ὁ τῶν ὅλων νοῦς ἐστὶν εἰλικρινέστατος καὶ ἀκραιφνέστατος, κρείττων ἢ ἀρετῆ καὶ κρείττων ἢ ἐπιστήμη καὶ κρείττων ἢ αὐτὸ τὸ ἀγαθὸν καὶ αὐτὸ τὸ καλόν, (9) τὸ δὲ παθητὸν ἄψυχον καὶ ἀκίνητον ἐξ ἑαυτοῦ, κινήθην δὲ καὶ σχηματισθὲν καὶ ψυχωθὲν ὑπὸ τοῦ νοῦ μετέβαλεν εἰς τὸ τελειότατον ἔργον, τόνδε τὸν κόσμον· ὃν οἱ φάσκοντες ὡς ἔστιν ἀγένητος λελήθασιν τὸ ὠφελιμώτατον καὶ ἀναγκαιότατον τῶν εἰς εὐσέβειαν ὑποτεμνόμενοι τὴν πρόνοιαν. (10) τοῦ μὲν γὰρ γεγονότος ἐπιμελεῖσθαι τὸν πατέρα καὶ ποιητὴν αἰρεῖ λόγος· καὶ γὰρ πατὴρ ἐκγόνων καὶ δημιουργὸς τῶν δημιουργηθέντων στοχάζεται τῆς διαμονῆς καὶ ὅσα μὲν ἐπιζήμια καὶ βλαβερὰ μηχανῆ πάσῃ διωθεῖται, τὰ δὲ ὅσα ὠφέλιμα καὶ λυσιτελεῖ κατὰ πάντα τρόπον ἐκπορίζει ἐπιποθεῖ· πρὸς δὲ τὸ μὴ γεγονὸς οἰκείωσις οὐδεμία τῶ μὴ πεποιηκότι. (11) ἀπεριμάχῃον δὲ δόγμα καὶ ἀνωφελὲς ἀναρχίαν ὡς ἐν πόλει κατασκευάζον τῶδε τῶ κόσμῳ τὸν ἔφορον ἢ βραβευτὴν ἢ δικαστὴν οὐκ ἔχοντι, ὑφ’ οὗ πάντ’ οἰκονομεῖσθαι καὶ πρυτανεῦεσθαι θέμις. (12) ἀλλ’ ὅ γε μέγας Μωσῆς ἀλλοτριώτατον τοῦ ὁρατοῦ νομίσας εἶναι τὸ ἀγένητον – πᾶν γὰρ τὸ αἰσθητὸν ἐν γενέσει καὶ μεταβολαῖς οὐδέποτε κατὰ ταῦτα ὄν – τῶ μὲν ἀοράτῳ καὶ νοητῶ προσένειμεν ὡς ἀδελφὸν καὶ συγγενὲς αἰδιότητα, τῶ δ’ αἰσθητῶ γενέσειν οἰκεῖον ὄνομα ἐπεφήμισεν. ἐπεὶ οὖν ὁρατός τε καὶ αἰσθητός ὅδε ὁ κόσμος, ἀναγκαιῶς ἂν εἴη καὶ γενητός· ὅθεν οὐκ ἀπὸ σκοποῦ καὶ τὴν γενέσειν ἀνέγραψεν αὐτοῦ μάλα σεμνῶς θεολογήσας.

(7) There are some people who, having more admiration for the cosmos than for its maker, declared the former both ungenerated and eternal, while falsely and impurely attributing to God much idleness. What they should have done was the opposite, namely be astounded at God’s powers as Maker and Father, and not show more reverence for the cosmos than is its due. (8) Moses, however, had not only reached the very summit of philosophy, but had also been instructed in the many and most essential doctrines of nature by means of oracles. He recognized that it is absolutely necessary that among

existing things there is an activating cause on the one hand and a passive object on the other, and that the activating cause is the absolutely pure and unadulterated intellect of the universe, superior to excellence and superior to knowledge and even superior to the good and the beautiful itself. (9) But the passive object, which of itself was without soul and unmoved, when set in motion and shaped and ensouled by the intellect, changed into the most perfect piece of work, this cosmos. Those who declare that it is ungenerated are unaware that they are eliminating the most useful and indispensable of the contributions to piety, the (doctrine of) providence. (10) Reason demands that the Father and Maker exercise care for that which has come into being. (...) But there is no affinity between that which did not come into being and the one who did not make it. (11) It is a worthless and unhelpful doctrine, bringing about a power-vacuum in this cosmos, just like (what happens) in a city, because it does not then have a ruler or magistrate or judge, by whom everything is lawfully administered and regulated. (12) But the great Moses considered that what is ungenerated was of a totally different order from that which was visible, for the entire sense-perceptible realm is in a process of becoming and change and never remains in the same state. So to what is invisible and intelligible he assigned eternity as being akin and related to it, whereas on what is sense-perceptible he ascribed the appropriate name becoming (genesis). Since, therefore, this cosmos is both visible and sense-perceptible, it must necessarily also be generated. Hence he was not off the mark in also giving a description of its becoming, thereby speaking about God in a truly reverent manner.<sup>1</sup>

## T2: Philo, *Aet.* 13–16

(13) γενητὸν δὲ καὶ ἄφθαρτὸν φασιν ὑπὸ Πλάτωνος ἐν Τιμαίῳ δηλοῦσθαι διὰ τῆς θεοπροποῦς ἐκκλησίας, ἐν ἣ λέγεται πρὸς τοὺς νεωτέρους θεοὺς ὑπὸ τοῦ πρεσβυτάτου καὶ ἡγεμόνος· “θεοὶ θεῶν, <ῶν> ἐγὼ δημιουργὸς πατὴρ τε ἔργων, ἅλτα ἐμοῦ γε μὴ θέλοντος. τὸ μὲν οὖν δὴ δεθὲν πᾶν λυτὸν, τὸ γε μὴν καλῶς ἄρμοσθὲν καὶ ἔχον εὖ λύειν ἐθέλειν κακοῦ. δι’ ἃ καὶ ἐπέπερ γεγένησθε, ἀθάνατοι μὲν οὐκ ἔστε οὐδ’ ἄλλοι τὸ πάμπαν, οὐτὶ γε μὴν λυθήσεσθε γε, οὐδὲ τεύξεσθε θανάτου μοίρας, τῆς ἐμῆς βουλήσεως μείζονος ἔτι δεσμοῦ καὶ κυριωτέρου λαχόντες ἐκείνων, οἷς ὅτε ἐγίγνεσθε συνεδεῖσθε.” (14) τινὲς δὲ οἴονται σοφίζόμενοι κατὰ Πλάτωνα γενητὸν λέγεσθαι τὸν κόσμον οὐ τῷ λαβεῖν γενέσεως ἀρχήν, ἀλλὰ τῷ, εἴπερ ἐγίγνετο, μὴ ἂν ἑτέρως ἢ τὸν εἰρημένον συστήναι τρόπον, ἢ διὰ τὸ ἐν γενέσει καὶ μεταβολῇ τὰ μέρη θεωρεῖσθαι. (15) βέλτιον δὲ καὶ ἀληθέστερον ὑπονοεῖν τὸ πρότερον, οὐ μόνον ὅτι διὰ παντὸς τοῦ συγγράμματος πατέρα μὲν καὶ ποιητὴν καὶ δημιουργὸν τὸν θεοπλάστην ἐκείνον καλεῖ, ἔργον δὲ καὶ ἔγγονον τουτονὶ τὸν κόσμον, ἀπ’ ἀρχετύπου <καὶ> νοητοῦ παραδείγματος μίμημα αἰσθητὸν, πάνθ’ ὅσα ἐν ἐκείνῳ νοητὰ περιέχοντα αἰσθητὰ ἐν αὐτῷ, τελειοτάτου πρὸς νοῦν τελειότατον ἐκμαγεῖον πρὸς αἴσθησιν, (16) ἀλλ’ ὅτι καὶ Ἀριστοτέλης ταῦτα μαρτυρεῖ περὶ Πλάτωνος, διὰ τὴν τῆς φιλοσοφίας αἰδῶ μηδὲν ἂν ψευδάμενος, καὶ διότι πιστότερος οὐδεὶς ὑφηγητῆ γνωρίμου μαρτυρεῖν καὶ μάλιστα τοιοῦτου, ὃς οὐ πάρεργον ἔθετο παιδείαν ἀπικόρῳ ῥαθυμῖα, προσυπερβαλεῖν δὲ σπουδάσας τὰς τῶν παλαιῶν εὐρέσεις ἔνια τῶν ἀναγκαιοτάτων εἰς ἕκαστον φιλοσοφίας μέρος καινοτομήσας προσεξεῦρετο.

(13) <Some> say that <the cosmos> is declared by Plato in the *Timaeus* to be generated and indestructible by the divine assembly, in which the youngest gods are told by the eldest and leader: “Gods of gods, whose works I am demiurge and father, are indissoluble unless I will <other>. So everything that is aggregated is disintegrable, but to want to disintegrate that which is harmonised in

<sup>1</sup> Transl. Runia, *Philo of Alexandria. On the Creation of the Cosmos According to Moses*, Leiden 2001, pp. 48–49.

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a beautiful and good state is proper to that which is evil. For this reason and because you are born, you are not completely immortal or indissoluble, yet you will certainly not be disintegrated, nor will you have a destiny of death, because you have obtained My Will, a bond even greater and more powerful than those by which you were bound when you were born. (14) Some hold with false wisdom that according to Plato the cosmos is said to be generated not because it has assumed an origin of generation, but because, if it had been begotten, it would be constituted not otherwise than in the manner described, or because the parts <of it> are observed in generation and change. (15) But it is better and more in accordance with the truth to hold the first thing, not only because throughout the treatise he calls that factor of the divine “father” and “creator” and “craftsman”, and “work” and “son” this cosmos here, a sensible imitation of an archetypal <and> intelligible model, which embraces in itself as many sensible realities as are intelligible in that, the most perfect cast according to sensation of the most perfect according to intellect, (16) but because Aristotle also testifies to these things with regard to Plato, lying in nothing because of his respect for philosophy, and because no one is more reliable to testify for a master than a disciple, and especially such a one, who did not regard education as a secondary matter with indolent carelessness but, intent on surpassing the discoveries of the ancients, found in addition some of the most necessary things for each branch of philosophy by introducing innovations.<sup>2</sup>

**T3:** Philo, *Prov.* 1. 6–7

(6) For often also he who wanders in superficial observation thinks that this cosmos exists and is constituted from an eternity without beginning, as if it in no way had a beginning (ἀρχή) of genesis but always existed and is not at all to be destroyed by anyone. When, however, these clear observations of mine are adduced, then at the same time that universal sophistic argument which deceives with artificial words is disproved and rejected, (namely) that God did not begin the cosmos before the creation of the cosmos, but was always engaged in making this most beautiful cosmos. For it is unfitting, they said, for the Deity ever to be inactive – since this is indicative of laziness and inactivity – but they said that without beginning God made all things, not having previously realized the absurdity of such an hypothesis; for in wishing to clear God of a trivial accusation, they direct a very serious accusation against him. (7) The contrary view comes, since there is no alternative, (namely) to say that matter, lacking adornment, form or shape, was given form and shape by him, receiving forms that were not in it. For according to them he did not begin to create. But if the intelligible creation (which is) from him made the beautiful form of the cosmos and matter received its lovely form, how then did God begin to create the cosmos? Matter being in a state of disorganized, unordered and erratic motion and the cosmos then receiving beauty together with adornment, he was taking matter as ἀρχή; but the creator adorned it by always thinking. For God did not first begin to think and then to create; nor was there ever a time when he did not create, the forms being with him from the beginning. The will of God does not happen later, but is always with him, for natural movements never cease. And so it will happen that he creates by always thinking and gives beginning (ἀρχή) of being to sense-perceptible things, so that both of them exist together, (namely) the always acting with divine counsel and the giving the beginning (ἀρχή) of being to sense-perceptible things.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> My translation.

<sup>3</sup> Weitenberg and Runia *apud* Runia, *Philo of Alexandria and the Timaeus of Plato*, Leiden 1986, p. 150.

**T4:** Philo, *Abr.* 69

Χαλδαῖοι γὰρ ἐν τοῖς μάλιστα διαπονήσαντες ἀστρονομίαν καὶ πάντα ταῖς κινήσεσι τῶν ἀστέρων ἀναθέντες ὑπέλαβον οἰκονομεῖσθαι τὰ ἐν κόσμῳ δυνάμεσιν, ἃς περιέχουσιν ἀριθμοὶ καὶ ἀριθμῶν ἀναλογίαι, <καὶ> τὴν ὄρατὴν οὐσίαν ἐσέμνυνον τῆς ἀοράτου καὶ νοητῆς οὐ λαβόντες ἔννοιαν, ἀλλὰ τὴν ἐν ἐκείνοις τάξιν διερευνώμενοι κατὰ τε τὰς ἡλίου καὶ σελήνης καὶ τῶν ἄλλων πλανήτων καὶ ἀπλανῶν περιόδους καὶ κατὰ τὰς τῶν ἐτησίων ὥρων μεταβολὰς καὶ κατὰ τὴν τῶν οὐρανίων πρὸς τὰ ἐπίγεια συμπάθειαν τὸν κόσμον αὐτὸν ὑπέλαβον εἶναι θεόν, οὐκ εὐαγῶς τὸ γενόμενον ἐξομοιάσαντες τῷ πεποιηκότι.

For the Chaldeans, who devoted themselves above all to the study of astrology and attributed all things to the movements of the stars, held that everything in the cosmos was regulated by powers which are comprehended by numbers and proportions between numbers, and they paid homage to visible substance, taking no account of the invisible and intelligible, but investigating the order manifested in the former things [i.e., of visible substance] in relation to the circuits of the sun and moon and the other planets and fixed stars, and in relation to the changes of the annual seasons and the sympathetic influence of the heavenly bodies upon terrestrial things, and held that the cosmos itself was God, impiously likening the created to its Creator.<sup>4</sup>

**T5:** Philo, *Congr.* 49

τῆς γὰρ Χαλδαϊκῆς οὐ μετανίσταται χώρας, τουτέστι τῆς περὶ ἀστρονομίαν θεωρίας οὐ διαζεύγνυται, τὸ γενόμενον πρὸ τοῦ πεποιηκότος καὶ κόσμον πρὸ θεοῦ τετιμηκώς, μᾶλλον δὲ τὸν κόσμον αὐτὸν θεὸν αὐτοκράτορα νομίζων, οὐκ αὐτοκράτορος ἔργον θεοῦ.

For he does not migrate from the Chaldean land, that is, he does not detach himself from astronomical speculation, having honored what has been generated before the Maker, and the cosmos before God – indeed, rather regarding the cosmos itself as the sovereign God, and not as the work of the sovereign God.<sup>5</sup>

**T6:** Philo, *QG* 3. 1 (Armenian)

(Gen. xv. 7) What is the meaning of the words, “I am the Lord God who led thee out of the land of the Chaldaeans to give thee this land to inherit”?

The literal meaning is clear. That which must be rendered as the deeper meaning is as follows. The “land of the Chaldaeans” is symbolically mathematical theory, of which astronomy is part. And in this (field) the Chaldaeans labour not unsuccessfully or slothfully. Thus He honours the wise man with two gifts. For one thing He takes him away from Chaldaean doctrine, which in addition to being difficult to seize and grasp, is the cause of great evils and impiety in attributing to that which is created the powers of the Creator, and persuades men to honour and worship the works of the world instead

<sup>4</sup> Birnbaum-Dillon, *Philo of Alexandria On the Life of Abraham*, Leiden 2021, p. 104.

<sup>5</sup> My translation.

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of the Creator of the world. And again, He grants him fruitful wisdom which He symbolically calls “land.” And the Father shows that wisdom and virtue are immutable and without change or turning, for it is not proper for God to reveal that which is able to admit turning or change, because that which is revealed should be and remain unchangeable and constant. But that which is subject to change and is wont to be always fluid does not admit of true and proper revelation.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Marcus, *Philo Supplement I*, London-Cambridge 1951, pp. 175–176.