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1 Introduction

Ludovica De Luca's *Il Dio architetto di Filone di Alessandria (De opificio mundi 17–20)* is the published version of a doctoral thesis supervised by Prof. Dr. Angela Longo (Università degli Studi dell'Aquila) as part of the grant-funded project "Accounts of Creation: Loci of Dynamic Interculturality," which was dedicated to Philo's *De opificio mundi* and the philosophical commentary tradition of late antiquity.[1]

In the wake of studies by David T. Runia, Maren R. Niehoff, Francesca Calabi, Roberto Radice, and Gregory E. Sterling, the goal of the work is "to develop a unitary study of *Opif.* 17–20 with the object of analyzing, in an organic manner, Philo's principal philosophical concepts while seeking to pay close attention to his innovative use of the Greek language," and also "to concentrate on the image of the Divine Architect at the center of Philo's cosmology and on the relation that *Opif.* 17–20 maintains with the rest of the work" (pp. 26–27). The heuristic key of this analysis is the image of the Divine Architect—applied in *De opificio* to the biblical God for the first time in Jewish literature—which operates on three levels for Philo: it allows him to engage Greco-Roman cultural and philosophical traditions, Jewish traditions, and his own contemporary urban and political reality.

As to the structure of the work, the *Introduction* is followed by an initial chapter that addresses preliminary questions, such as the author and the place of *De opificio* within the Philonic corpus. Chapters 2–4 treat the topic of architecture in various regards, such as the metaphor as it is applied to the God of Israel in *De opificio*, and architecture, both physical and metaphorical, in Jewish Hellenism and ancient Greco-Roman philosophical traditions. Chapters 5–6 treat Philo's cosmology, specifically the noetic cosmos and the sense-perceptible cosmos.

[1] "Racconti di creazione: luoghi di interculturalità dinamica" (https://prinaq.it/), awarded funding in the 2017 contest of the "Progetti di rilevante interesse nazionale" (PRIN), directed by the Italian Ministry of Universities and Research.

2 Philo's Method

A key merit of the work is De Luca's demonstration of Philo's philosophical method, particularly by detecting the biblical and philosophical antecedents of *De opificio* and showing how Philo adopts them and adapts them to suit his own purposes (p. 209). Indeed, the treatise purports to be a cosmogony *kata Mōusēn*, but it is rather a cosmogony *kata Filōna* (p. 23) with Moses serving as Philo's "alter-ego" (pp. 54–57). Donning the mask of this "Moses," insofar as he was "*the* theologian" (pp. 52–53) and thus a 'corrective' for Greek philosophy, enables Philo to interpret Platonic, Stoic, and occasionally also Peripatetic concepts in a creationistic fashion (cf. p. 17). Further, this creative appropriation of philosophical antecedents frees Philo from assuming a doctrinaire posture vis-à-vis this or that philosophical school: for instance, De Luca demonstrates how Philo blends Platonism and Stoicism by referring to the cosmos as a city, as the Stoics had done, but also by applying this to the *noetic* cosmos, thus retaining Platonism's transcendent trait (pp. 152–53; on blending Platonism and Stoicism, cf. also pp. 210, 213, 220–21, 223).

And yet, Philo's method entails a reciprocal, albeit asymmetrical, influence of Jewish and non-Jewish traditions upon each other. De Luca shows us how Philo interprets the cosmogony of Genesis "in a philosophical key" (p. 17), ultimately achieving a "synthesis of Jewish and Greek thought by reinterpreting the Septuagint through the *Timaeus* and the *Timaeus* through the Septuagint" (p. 117). One avenue through which Philo executes this is his innovative use of Greek; De Luca demonstrates this well and thus achieves one of the stated objectives of the study. Under the necessary proviso that uncertain transmission history plays a role in estimations of originality, De Luca discusses how Philo's original use of *agalmatophoreō* shows how the intelligible world resides in God (p. 90), and also how Philo might well have coined the terms *megalopolis* and *kosmopolitēs* (pp. 180–89). Yet even when Philo does not coin a term, we are shown how his usage goes beyond that of his Greco-Roman predecessors, as in the case of *sphragis* and *kēros* (pp. 246–61) or in that of *kosmopoiia*, which in Philo and 4 Macc implies a creator, thus differing significantly from the use of the term in the Pre-Socratics (pp. 241–43).

In short, De Luca's triangulation of Greco-Roman philosophical traditions with the LXX—understood as the Greek translation of Moses—locates the "Moses" of *De opificio* with the result of demonstrating how Philo introduces a new way of doing philosophy insofar as he makes it the "handmaid" (It. *ancella*) of the Jewish tradition (p. 27), which, one might say, could make Philo the methodological forerunner of the medieval tradition of philosophy as the *ancilla theologiae*.

3 Philo's Divine Architect

De Luca's study clearly exhibits how the image of the Divine Architect is a prime example of Philo's method. As one might guess, a recurring topic in the monograph is the relation of the Platonic Demiurge to the Philonic Architect. And De Luca skillfully shows where the similarities and differences lie.

This begins with the demonstration of lexical parallels between the description of a human architect (*Opif.* 17–18) and the description of God (*Opif.* 19–20), which implicitly signal the analogy (pp. 92–93). One of the chief impacts of the metaphor of the Divine Architect is that it enables Philo to delineate the relationship between the Creator and the intelligible cosmos: an architect—strictly speaking, the chief of the craftsmen (< *archi* – *tektōn*)—can perform both the theoretical and the practical tasks of founding a city. In other words, the Divine Architect is not merely a practical craftsman (*tektōn*) who accepts directions from a superior and subsequently accomplishes his task with previously available material (pp. 86, 93, 172–73). Accordingly, one of the key differences between the Demiurge and the Architect is the creative cognition of the latter: in contrast to the Platonic *topos noētos*, the Philonic *kosmos noētos* is directly created by God (p. 79, cf. 217). De Luca also provides a lexical substantiation of this: whereas Plato's use of *apoblepō* suggests that the Demiurge "regards" the (already extant) model, Philo's use of *theaomai* implies the divine cognition underlying the *creation* of the model (pp. 86–87). Further, and significant for Philo's conception of the Logos, the image of the Divine Architect enables Philo to locate the *kosmos noētos* directly in God (pp. 71–72, 80). Lastly, while discussing Philo's two "creationistic paradigms" in ch. 2, De Luca explains how Philo's understanding of God as *poiētēs kai patēr* differs from the use of the phrase in Plato's *Timaeus*.

De Luca's study, indeed, goes beyond a treatment of Plato's *Timaeus* and Philo's *De opificio*, such as when she situates her topic in the Philonic *œuvre* (cf. the section on the semantics of architecture in Philo, pp. 94–98) or when widening the aperture to capture a more comprehensive image of philosophical antecedents. For example, through her examination of the Divine Architect, De Luca can also show us the difference between Philo on the one hand and Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoics on the other regarding the eternity of the world and the dependence of the material world upon a divine agent. Apropos of the *material* world, when De Luca treats the "thorny question" of the Philonic understanding of *hylē* (pp. 269–93), she demonstrates intellectual courage by challenging a trend in Philonic scholarship, namely the tendency to equate *hylē* with *ousia*. This, in turn, plays a significant role in her claim that Philo's active and passive "causes" (*ta aitia*) in *Opif.* 8–9 are not simply identical with the two Stoic *archai* (cf. pp. 282–83); namely, that Philo's adoption of the Aristotelian distinction between *hylē* and *ousia* excludes the Stoic identification of them with one another and thus enables him to uphold his creationistic paradigm. A further example of De Luca's ability to detect and explain subtle differences concerns the comparison of the conception of God in Ps.-Aristotle, *De mundo*, with that of Philo's *De opificio*. There, we read how the relation of the metaphors of God as "architect" on the one hand and "king/commander" on the other in *De mundo* is the inverse of what we find in *De opificio*, and De Luca spells out what this means for Philo's conception of God as creator (p. 167).

Finally, De Luca points out the socio-political relevance of the image of the Divine Architect. The Architect, who is simultaneously the God of the Law, constructs an orderly city of peace and harmony, something that stands in contrast with the socio-

political reality in the Alexandria of Philo's day. Despite the contrast, the understanding of God as Divine Architect furnishes Philo's cosmology with a note of hope (cf. p. 297).

4 An Open Question

One of the aims of the final section of the book (chs. 5–6) is the elucidation of the relation of the *kosmos noētos* to the *kosmos aisthētos* (p. 237). Nevertheless, one question remains open for me: how exactly ought we to understand the relation of the *kosmos noētos* to humanity within the *kosmos aisthētos*?

To begin with, it is clear that in some sense, the *logos*, *kosmos noētos*, and *paradeigma* are understood to be identical (cf. p. 226). De Luca states multiple times that the intelligible model is a divine instrument for the purpose of creating the sense-perceptible world (p. 179, 213). The relation of this noetic model to the sense-perceptible copy is explained by Philo's metaphor of a "seal" (*sphragis*; cf. pp. 260–61). Correctly, De Luca points out that the divine Logos is the *archetypos sphragis* (p. 248), and accordingly, that while the Logos as archetypal seal is a divine *production*, the sense-perceptible world as its copy is a *re-production*. Thus, Philo can allow for differences in ontological status while nevertheless maintaining a reciprocal, rather than antagonistic, relation between the two worlds: the noetic cosmos and sense-perceptible cosmos form a "unitary system" (p. 266). In fact, De Luca even states that the noetic cosmos is "responsible" for the entities of the sense-perceptible cosmos in the sense that it "guarantees their existence" (p. 267; one is reminded of the generative power of the idea of the Good in Book 6 of Plato's *Republic*). In addition, the metaphor can explain how something of the model is detectable in the copy: the Jewish Law is the imprint of the divine *sphragis* upon creation (p. 261; cf. p. 253).

On the other hand, De Luca also states more than once that the noetic cosmos *per se* is not ethically relevant for humanity. For example, Philo's *kosmos noētos* is not "intelligible" in the sense that it were an object for human contemplation, but rather because it is a product of God's own cognition (p. 213). Accordingly, the *paradeigma* is not an ideal for humans to emulate, for the *paradeigma* and the ideas contained within it function as God's blueprint for the sense-perceptible cosmos (p. 175). This is reiterated through a comparison of Philo's *kosmos noētos* with the *kallipolis* of Plato's *Republic*. De Luca claims that the latter is ethical—it is a *kallē polis* because it is an *agathē polis*—whereas Philo's *noētē polis* is a divine creational instrument "without ethical hues" (p. 179). Elsewhere, she states that the noetic model is created by God not for humanity, but rather solely in view of the use God will make of it in the act of creation (p. 265).

The result, in my reading, is that it is unclear whether and how the noetic model is ethically relevant for humanity, even though it is said to "guarantee" the existence of the sense-perceptible cosmos and that it is the "archetypal seal" impressed upon the sense-perceptible cosmos and that this imprint is found in the Jewish Law.

The following factors might help to explain how the issue arises. First, De Luca avoids speaking of the noetic cosmos as an "ideal" because it is a "pre-political" and "pre-ideal" entity (p. 180), for the "adherence of the real to the model" (It. *progetto*) is given in and

with God's creation of it and its maintenance is a divine rather than a human prerogative (p. 180). Humans cannot truly bear the responsibility of making the sensible cosmos commensurate with the intelligible one, but they can make a minor contribution to this insofar as they follow the Mosaic Law (*loc. cit.*). Secondly, the apparent lack of ethical and contemplative relevance of the divine Logos appears to be grounded in De Luca's understanding of the location of the Logos "in God."[2] If the Logos as the place of the ideas is "in" God, then the human soul cannot access it, for any attempt to behold God blinds the human soul (pp. 265–66). Lastly, competing interpretations of the function of cosmology in *De opificio* lie in the background of De Luca's argument: in 1979, Clara Kraus Reggiani had argued that cosmology was incidental to *De opificio* and Philo used it only in order to explicate his *anthropology*;[3] the subsequent scholarship of David T. Runia in the 1980s and onwards regarding the significance of Plato's *Timaeus* for *De opificio*,[4] however, led to a new appreciation of the importance of *cosmology* in the treatise, and De Luca clearly follows Runia's lead (p. 239).

Considering that De Luca interprets *De opificio* as Philo's attempt to offer a 'political' vision of the world in which order and harmony is maintained so long as everyone adheres to the Law and, further, an order designed by God that might serve as a standard for emulation by and critique of earthly rulers, such as Caligula (p. 297), the various statements regarding the ethical insignificance of the intelligible world are somewhat puzzling. In following Runia as an antipode to Kraus Reggiani, does De Luca perhaps overstate her case? And what are we to make of passages in Philo—albeit often found in the earlier *commentarium allegoricum* rather than the *expositio legis*—that make the Logos somehow responsible for the ethical and spiritual formation of humankind, here and there with reference to the Logos as the *eikōn theou* according to which humankind is formed, a trope which occurs in the *De opificio* itself?[5] One could perhaps say that De Luca skillfully works out the *theological* difference between the *paradeigma* in the *Timaeus* and that of the *De opificio*, but could have offered more in the way of working out the *anthropological significance* of the differences, especially if Philo's cosmology is taken to be a "cosmology suited for ethics" (p. 294).

5 Conclusion

With *Il Dio architetto di Filone di Alessandria*, De Luca has offered a superbly researched monograph that demonstrates her ability to detect subtle differences in theological

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[2] Following Radice, *Platonismo e creazionismo in Filone*, 203–9, she delineates three chief Philonic ways of conceptualizing the Logos: the Logos "in God," "in itself," and "in the world." In *Opif.* 20, we are dealing with a case of the Logos "in God" (p. 227). Despite De Luca's treatment of the third mode in regard to *Opif.* 43 (cf. pp. 233–34), this understanding of the Logos "in the world" could have been subject to further inquiry.

[3] Kraus Reggiani, *Filone Alessandrino.*

[4] Runia, *Philo of Alexandria and the* Timaeus *of Plato*.

[5] *Opif.* 24–25; cf. *Her.* 230–231; *Conf.* 145–148, where Philo states that one may become a "child of the Logos" if one is not yet worthy of becoming a "child of God"; *Leg. all.* 3.96.

and cosmological conceptions across various authors. Her demonstration of Philo's philosophical method is convincing and could function as part of an informed response to anyone who would doubt Philo's rightful place in a history of *philosophy* rather than solely that of religion, or to anyone who might doubt Philo's stature as a creative thinker. Finally, the image of Philo that emerges here can serve to undergird the conception of Jewish Hellenism as a cultural phenomenon in which Jewish authors appropriated and reshaped Hellenistic culture while simultaneously adhering to Jewish values.[6]

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[6] On the concept of "Jewish Hellenism," see René Bloch, "Introduction."