

Commentary as Pedagogical Guide: Scripture and Commentary in the Thoughts of Philo Judaeus

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Abstract

Scripture and education, far from natural allies, are in paradoxical tension with each other. Scripture projects its authority by its self-transcendence, but the same element also threatens to make it into a composition foreign to the living community. Education, for its part, is designed to cultivate the community's ideals—what the Greeks called *paideia*—among its members. The role of scripture or classics in education is subsequently far from simple. Without the eternally-present vision embodied in the canon, education loses its mooring and could no longer be counted on to propagate the values held dear by the community. The classical status of the canon, however, always threatens to consign it to the past and render it irrelevant to the central task of education. Each new generation must therefore reevaluate the status of its authoritative canon in relation to its educational ideals. This paper examines one particular solution to the paradoxical relationship: the use of commentary as a pedagogical instrument to bridge the gap between scripture and educational ideals. It begins with an examination of the critique of Homer the educational canon by Plato who accused the poet of attenuating civic values. Plato proposed to replace the Homeric poems with his own writings, but his followers opted for the use of allegorical commentaries to bridge the gap between their master and Homer. The first-century philosopher Philo Judaeus, on the other hand, when faced with the challenge of fitting the Jewish scripture into the educational ideals of Greek-speaking Jews living in the diaspora, devised three series of allegorical commentaries—the *Expositions of the Law*, *Questions and Answers*, and the *Allegorical Commentary* for this purpose. These commentaries were designed to lead students on a gradually ascent towards their education goal, which ultimately should lead to a vision of God. The *Expositions* explicate the nature of the Jewish scripture; the *Questions and Answers* provide readers with a storehouse of basic

information on the Torah; and the *Allegorical Commentary* take the students to the final stage of understanding the deeper meaning of the Jewish scripture. Commentary therefore functions as a pedagogical guide to the seekers. Commentary and scripture always live in a hermeneutical symbiosis: without commentary, scripture would be incomprehensible or “misinterpreted” when judged by those who hold the text as authoritative scripture.

Key words: Philo, Plato, Homer, Law, *paideia*, education, Torah, Bible, scripture, classic, canon, commentary, allegorical interpretation, *Expositions of the Law*, *Questions and Answers*, *Allegorical Commentary*

Contrary to expectation, classics or scriptures¹ and education are at best uneasy allies. In attaining the status of “classic” or “scripture,” a corpus of literature is understood to have some kind of authoritative weight conferred to it by the receiving community or civilization or cultural tradition.² It is thought to have, in the words of David Tracy, an “excess of meaning”:³ that is to say, it is deemed to embody the founding principles, the organizational identity, the deep structure of the community, and as such it has inexhaustible layers of meaning which continue to unfold in successive generations and which render it a timeless guide to life and existence in that community. As Wilfred Cantwell Smith concludes, after surveying the formation of classical scriptural writings in various religious traditions:

The scriptural phenomena begin with people’s awareness of involvement in transcendence; and persist so also. That awareness has then been somehow reduced to speech or writing, has been brought down to earth and given accessible form in words. It is impossible...to understand the world’s scriptures without such a perception.⁴

To give something classical or scriptural status, in other words, is to make an *a priori* acknowledgment that the classical or scriptural texts have contemporary significance for the community that confers status to them.

At the same time, to call something a “classic” or “scripture” immediately gives it an aura of pastness, otherness, distance, and foreignness. It automatically suggests that the text belongs to the community’s distant past which, while continuous with the present, represents a categorical break from the day-to-day concerns and experiences of those who imbue it with authority. What gives a classic or scripture authority is the element of self-transcendence, but it is this same element that threatens to make the text a foreign composition to the living community. Implied in the designation “classic” or “scripture,” therefore, is an epistemological gap between the immediate concerns of the community and the formative issues, causes, lived experience, historical context standing behind the classical or scriptural text in the historical past. This gap can be bridged only through conscious interpretive efforts. Inherent to classics or scriptures is a

hermeneutical *Problematik*, a breach of intersubjectivity, one which must be overcome before there is understanding and significance.⁵

Education, for its part, is characterized by the same tension that besets the classical or scriptural text. As an integral part of any community or society, education is the direct expression of its inner structure and organization which could come in the form of law, classics, or scriptures. Education is the process by which the community or society imparts to its members or citizens a stable standard to which all adhere. By the same token, “education [must keep] pace with the life and growth of the community, and is altered both by changes imposed on it from without and by transformations in its internal structure and intellectual development.”⁶ However one defines the task of education, therefore, it is limited to and conditioned by how the educated situate themselves and perform their roles in the community or society in which they live. Whether one sees the role of education as preservation, maintenance, or transformation, the starting point of education is the participation in the contemporary society or community which is informed, shaped, molded, and defined by the classical or scriptural text to which it belongs. As such, the goal of education is to cultivate the community’s or society’s ideals among its members or citizens—that is the Greek notion of *paideia*—with a view of equipping the educated not only to maintain the common standards in a time of stability, but also to critique and transform those same standards when they become stagnant and stale.

The role of scriptures or classics in education is subsequently far from simple. Without the ideal vision embodied in the classical canon, without some authoritative text serving as an eternally-present founding document of the community or society, education loses its mooring and could no longer be counted on to propagate the values of the community or society. The presence of the classical canon by itself, however, is no solution; its classical status always threatens to consign it to the past, rendering it irrelevant and peripheral to the central task of education. Classics and education, far from natural allies, are in contestation with each other. As a result, each new generation must reevaluate the canonical status of its received authoritative text in relation to its educational ideals and aspirations. It is not uncommon for any given community in any particular

historical moment to question its scriptures, to reject them, and to replace them with new texts. Nor, on the other hand, is it uncommon for a society or community, in light of its educational goals, to reaffirm its commitment to its scriptures or classics once they have been properly reinterpreted.

This paper examines one particular solution to this paradoxical relationship between scripture and education: namely, the use of commentary as a pedagogical instrument to bridge the gap between the Jewish scripture and the educational ideals in first-century Alexandrian Judaism. I will use as a test case the biblical commentaries by Philo Judaeus, otherwise known as Philo of Alexandria (ca. 20 BCE-50 CE). His commentaries functioned simultaneously as secondary texts to the Torah and as a primary, educational text for Jewish students who wanted to delve deeper into their own traditions in the sea of Greek culture. In so doing, Philo's commentaries served as a bridge between a classical text that was becoming increasingly distant from its readers and a contemporary culture that was hostile to it. The Jewish Scripture would have remained incomprehensible and irrelevant if it had not been for the daring hermeneutics attempted in the commentaries. Philo's fellow-Alexandrian Jews who had been steeped in the Roman-Alexandrian society would have capitulated to the temptation of Greek culture with nary a glance at their own traditions if his commentaries had not succeeded at bringing classical Jewish concepts into the contemporary Greek discourse. Commentary was what enabled Scripture to remain a living authority among first-century diaspora Jews. Scripture and commentary therefore lived in a hermeneutical symbiosis.⁷ All this took place in the context of first-century Jewish education.

My illustration is one solution drawn from the Jewish tradition and Scriptures. Judaism in the first century was, of course, not a monolithic entity. Before the emergence of Rabbinic Judaism as normative, there were multiple forms of Judaism: apocalyptic Judaism, Hellenistic Judaism, mystical Judaism, Pharisaic or Tannaitic Judaism, to name but a few. Indeed, even the early Christians emerged as a Jewish sect. It is historically more accurate to speak of *Judaisms* (plural) in the first century. Nevertheless, I will concentrate only on Philo, because he was a watershed figure: he was to exert great influence on early and medieval Christian exegesis through his commentaries. But he was also a pivotal figure in trying to resolve the tension between classics and education first articulated by Plato.

I. Plato's Critique of the Homeric Poems

Plato was the first to mount a systematic critique of the classics of his days, Homer's epic poems, the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. In Pre-Socratic times, the Homeric poems were read and memorized by heart, because they were seen as the source of all encyclopedic knowledge.⁸ By the fourth century, however, the Athenian academy began to chip away at the invincibility of the poets. Plato's Socrates complains about the "myths" (*mythoi*) in the epic poems, their illogicality and immorality. These myths, accordingly, would only detract children from the educational goal of making them responsible citizens. Plato records a dialogue in the *Republic* in which Socrates questions how appropriate it is to tell stories about the war of the gods (as recounted in *Il.* 20.1-74 and 21.385-513) to children being raised in an ideal city (*Rep.* 2.378 B-E). To the unsuspecting young readers, Socrates objects, the myth of Ouranos and Kronos could lead them to revolt against their fathers, and stories of gods' fighting one another might promote internal strife within a city. Socrates returns to a final evaluation of the epic poems in Socrates book 10 of the *Republic*, in which he finally rejects Homer because he thinks he appeals only to the readers' emotion, not their reason. The poet once stripped of his poetic art, could offer no usable content for the betterment of citizens. Homer, therefore, must be totally banished from the academy and from the educational curriculum of the ideal city.⁹

In the first-century work *Homeric Problems* by Heraclitus, we also catch a glimpse of another type of objection: namely, the theomachic stories in Homer denigrate the divine nature of the gods and thereby promote impiety. In a passage that deals with the story of Zeus hurling the lame Hephaistos from heaven (*Il.* 1.586-94), Heraclitus presents the standard objections to the story and then cites the offending Homeric lines (26.1-2):

Some charge Homer regarding the fall of Hephaistos from heaven, first of all, because he presents him as lame, thus mutilating his divine nature; and then also because he comes close to death.

"All," he says, "day long I dropped helpless, and about sunset

I landed in Lamnos, and there was not much life left in me"
(*Il.* 1.592-93; tr. Lattimore modified).

It is entirely possible that criticisms of this sort had already been recognized as problematic by the time of Socrates, who says that these fantastic tales "must not be admitted into the city—whether *they are composed in allegory or without allegory*" (*Rep.* 2.378 D). This latter statement would indicate that allegorists had already deployed the art of allegorization in the service of defending Homer against critics during this time, and Plato explicitly rejects this as an option.

Instead, according to Plato, education is the cultivation (*paideia*) of the civic ideal of every citizen. It is a public affair whose main goal is to bring the educated in harmony with the public good of the city. Since the custom or law (*nomos*) of the city embodies this notion of the public good—not the Homeric classics—education means conformity to the *law*. The law should make up the content of education: "Education is the drawing and guiding of children towards the right principle pronounced by the custom of law" (*Laws* 2.659D).¹⁰ As Werner Jaeger notes succinctly, "Legislation is education. Law is its instrument."¹¹

In spite of his emphasis on the law, however, Plato was no legalist. What gave him the warrant to absolutize the law to the degree that he did was his firm conviction that God is in control of everything. In an extensive discussion in book 4 of the *Laws*, Plato expresses dismay over tyranny (*Laws* 4.711A-716B): His disappointing experience in Syracuse had prompted him to reevaluate his positions in the *Republic*, since a tyrant could affect a great deal of people, and he could obey the true law only when he is inspired by the passion of God. Protagoras had formulated an anthropocentric principle as the principle of cultivation: "Each man is for himself the measure of things, of those that are, that they are, and of those that are not, that they are not."¹² Plato pointedly contradicts him by saying, "God is the measure of all things to the highest degree, much higher than any man they speak of" (*Laws* 4.716C). To obey the law is in fact to obey God, and to obey God means developing one's virtues and fulfilling one's true nature. As summarized by Jaeger:

The idea of God becomes the centre and source of all legislation, while legislation

became its direct expression and its realization on this earth. God is made manifest, and acts, in the cosmos of the state as he does in that of nature. For Plato, the two are related: for the universe too is ruled by the supreme standard and its harmony. Law becomes an instrument by which men are educated to that harmony. When they are so educated, they have attained *arête* ["virtue"], and in their *arête* they achieve their true nature.¹³

In this regard, Plato's vision for the individual in the *Laws* is quite similar to that in the *Republic*. In the *Republic*, the turning point to one's self-realization is the moment of conversion (*metanoia*, literally "turning around of the mind"). In Jaeger's felicitous description: "The essence of philosophical education is 'conversion,' which literally means 'turning around.' 'Conversion' is a specific term of Platonic *paideia*, and indeed an epoch-making one. It means more specifically the wheeling round of the 'whole soul' towards the light of the Idea of Good, the divine origin of the universe."¹⁴ Through discipline, the soul strains towards The Good (*to kalon*), because it is the source of all beings and thoughts.¹⁵

This, then, was the first canonical crisis of the West, and it was precipitated by a proposal to jettison the classics from general education. Plato objected to the dependence on classical poetry as the basis of all knowledge, and expended great efforts at redefining the classics. But at the end, it was his concern for the law—erected on a foundation of theology¹⁶ and instrumental in guiding children and citizens alike into the harmonious life of the city and onto the path of discovering their true selves—that led Plato to abandon the classics of yesteryears.

Two solutions were offered to replace the ousted classics: one offered by Plato himself and the other by his Neoplatonic followers. First of all, if the Homeric poems are in fact objectionable for the numerous reasons stated above, the logical solution is to construct a better one for the educators and guardians of the ideal city. This is precisely what Plato does in book 7 of the *Laws*. In a momentary change of literary mode from the dialogical to the self-referential, Plato refers to himself as an inspired poet and the whole discourse as a poem:

In the fact that I am not wholly at a loss for a pattern. For in looking back now at the discussions which we have been pursuing from dawn up to this present hour—and that.

as I fancy, *not without some guidance from Heaven*—it appeared to me that they were framed exactly like a poem. And it was not surprising, perhaps, that there came over me a *feeling of intense delight* when I gazed thus on our discourses all marshalled, as it were, in close array; for of all the many discourse which have listened to or learnt about, whether in poems or in a loose flood of speech like ours, *they struck me as being not only the most adequate, but also the most suitable for the ears of the young*. Nowhere, I think, could I find a better pattern than this to put before the Law-warden who is educator that he may charge the teachers to teach the children these discourses of ours, and such as resemble and accord with these; and if it should be that in his search he should light on poems of composers, or prose-writings, or merely verbal and unwritten discourses, akin to these of ours, he must in no wise let them go, but get them written down. In the first place, he must compel the teachers themselves to learn these discourses, and to praise them, and if any of the teachers fail to approve of them, he must not employ them as colleagues; only those who agree with his praise of the discourses should be employed, and entrust to them the teaching and training of the youth. Here and herewith let me end my homily concerning writing-masters and writings (*Laws* 7.811C-E tr. Bury; emphasis added).

Plato's strategy to deal with his loss of confidence in the Homer, then, is to elevate his own writings to the status of inspired poetry, thus replacing Homer with his own composition—which he considers inspired (“not without some guidance from Heaven”)—as the standard pattern in an educational curriculum (“they struck me as being not only the most adequate, but also the most suitable for the ears of the young”).¹⁷

It is, of course, an irony that his Neoplatonic followers did not replace Homeric poems with the Platonic dialogues but placed both alongside each other, honoring both as classics. Herein lies the second solution to the canonical crisis initiated by Plato: to reinterpret Homer along the line of the Platonic worldview. This meant answering all of Plato's objections to Homer, including especially the moral objections and the aesthetic objections.¹⁸ True, the moral objections to Homer obviously take center stage in the *Republic*, and the aesthetic objections (for instance, that Homer gives the readers a poor imitation of reality) are raised only insofar as they impinge on the moral.¹⁹ But it was in fact at the aesthetic level

where the Neoplatonists found their answer, and the form which their answer took was allegorical commentaries on Homer.

Allegorical interpretation was popularized by the Stoics, according to whom it is “the art of saying one thing but meaning something else other than what it says” (Heraclitus, *Homeric Problems* 5.2).²⁰ That is, the author really intended to say “something else” other than what he literally said.²¹ Developed first as an apologetic strategy, this hermeneutics handled such problems as illogicality, impossibility, and immorality,²² which were supposed to be intended signs pointing the interpreter to the deeper meanings hidden in a text. Applying this to Homer, apologists thought that only by allegorical interpretation could they recover Homer’s “intended” message. The method was a reverse of the author’s supposed procedure of speaking one thing and meaning another.²³

In the hands of such Neoplatonic commentators as Numenius, Porphyry, and Proclus, the allegorical method gave them a tool to construct a reality based on the Homeric text that at the same time conformed to the Platonic pattern of reality as formulated in the *Republic*, that is, with the transcendent world of forms rising above and beyond the mundane and the material.²⁴ The same method also allowed them to interpret away morally objectionable passages in Homer. Wittingly or unwittingly, then, Homer was saved by allegorical interpretation, and the pedagogical vehicle, indeed the very lifeline, by which the Homeric poems became palatable to the young readers was the Neoplatonic allegorical commentaries.

II. Torah in Hellenistic-Jewish Education

Among Greek-speaking Jews living in the diaspora, the platonic tension between classics and education also asserted itself—except that the “classic” in question was the Torah, the Jewish Scripture that continued to define life in the Jewish community and structures of their faith and practices. At first glance, Plato’s focus on the law in education could have fitted right into the Jewish educational emphasis on the Torah—now translated into Greek as *nomos* (“Law”). But this formal similarity belied deep-seated problems. Unlike the Athenian

constitution and ordinances, which were written forms of city customs (*nomoi*), the Jewish Torah or Law was a collection of creation stories, lives of patriarchs, gathering of the Hebrews, conquest narratives, discourses. Even if the Prophets and Writings were taken into consideration, only small portions of the Jewish Scripture could be called “legislative” in the sense that an Athenian understood the word. In terms of genre and content, the Torah is in fact much closer to the Homeric poems than to the Athenian constitution. All this translated into pressure of finding a way to bring the Torah up to date and of recommending a way to make the Torah relevant to the concerns and aspirations of diaspora Jews. In this regard, allegorical interpretation, which was to serve the later Neoplatonists well, provided a ready tool for Greek-speaking Jews to appropriate and adapt the Torah for their contemporaries. But the Jewish interpreters needed allegorical interpretation much more than their Greek counterparts.

What complicated matters enormously was that a Torah-centered educational schema was in direct competition with the Greek encyclical, liberal education in arts and sciences. On the one hand, Jews in the diaspora were expected to study grammar, rhetoric, dialectic, geometry, arithmetic, music, and astronomy—that is to say, academic studies that could put Jews so educated in a good position to participate and advance in the civic life of Greek cities.²⁵ On the other hand, there were demands for diaspora Jews to study the Torah, their only classic from ancient times, in order to cultivate the Jewish ideal and to instill a strong sense of solidarity with the ancient Jewish past. Both of these goals were urgently vital to the continual survival of a minority community in a dominant culture. Responses to this tension varied. Some abandoned the Torah for secular encyclical studies. Some resorted to self-isolation, turning their backs to the secular world. And some, like Philo of Alexandria, sought to combine Greek encyclical studies with a high respect for the Torah.

While generally positive about encyclical studies, Philo was also at pains to point out dangers inherent in a one-sided dependence on them. There were, first of all, the dangers to those studying grammar and music of being seduced by the sound of the word and the melodies, to those studying rhetoric of being lured into sophistry, and to those studying astronomy of being led to a heretical view of God.²⁶

All these specific perils, however, were indicative of a more general, more sinister threat against Jewish education: These same disciplines could easily seduce the students away from uniting with wisdom, which was the goal of Jewish education.²⁷ One could be so enamored with the development of the human mind that one might not realize that the mind and human senses are only agents to the discovery of truth and that only God is the guarantor of truth.²⁸ Comparing the encyclical studies to handmaids to philosophy, Philo describes this danger:

For some have been ensnared by the love lures of the handmaids and spurned the mistress, and have grown old, some doting on poetry, some on geometrical figures, some on the blending of musical “colour,” and a host of other things, and have never been able to soar to the winning of the lawful wife [that is, philosophy]. For each art has its charms, its powers of attraction, and some beguiled by these stay with them and forget their pledges to Philosophy (*Preliminary Studies* 77-78 tr. Colson).²⁹

Moreover, according to Philo, there were also those who willfully ignored the plea to join with wisdom for the mercenary motive of using encyclical studies for self-aggrandizement or social advancement. Those who exchanged the light of their souls for night and darkness

have acquired the lights in the soul for night and darkness, not for day and light; all elementary lessons for example, and what is called school-learning and philosophy itself when pursued with *no motive higher than parading their superiority, or from desire of an office under our rulers* (*Allegorical Interpretation* 3.167).³⁰

Nevertheless, Philo does deem that the encyclical studies have some positive, albeit limited, values—provided one is clear that they are “lower” studies, serving the higher purpose of perfect virtue. Using the biblical figures of Sarah and Hagar in his treatise *On the Preliminary Studies*, Philo makes a distinction between average school disciplines and perfect virtue,³¹ with the result that encyclical studies are now subordinate to perfect virtues. In spite of their subordinate position, encyclical studies could also pave the way for an upward ascent to perfection, which to Philo means a vision of God. This happens along a self-abnegating path. If a student studies the individual disciplines deeply enough, he or she might

eventually enter into a stage of skepticism or speechlessness. This is all a result of doubt and a temporary loss of confidence in the external world. Despair then drives the student into the interior world where an intense self-examination ensues, leading him or her to a further loss of confidence even in human reason and self-worth. It is in this nadir of self-confidence, according to Philo, that the student will experience the beginning of self-knowledge and realization.³² At the next stage of this path of self-discovery, the student can achieve an ascent to the highest goal of all, which is the vision of God. At this point Philo prescribes one of two possibilities. Sometimes, an awareness of personal nothingness leads one directly to its opposite: namely, God is all in all and we are dependent on him.³³ At other times, Philo appears to think that it is divine inspiration that lifts the soul to the presence of divine Powers and beyond.³⁴

The so-called positive values of lower studies thus turn out to be a negative one: they inculcate in the student a temporary loss of confidence in the self, in one's mind, in one's senses, and ultimately in the inherent ability of lower studies to assist in the ascent to God. But how does one turn from despair to ascent? How does one make the conversion (*metanoia*) of the mind? This is where Philo's allegorical commentaries come into play: they serve as pedagogical guide to aid the student in gradual ascent of discovery which leads to the end of union with wisdom. In so doing, Philo was able to hold simultaneously onto his Jewish goal of communal solidarity as well as his philosophical ideal.

His view of the Torah is set forth in the following passage in which he describes the biblical interpretation of an ascetic Jewish group, the Therapeutae:

The exposition of the sacred scriptures treats the inner meaning conveyed in allegory. For to these people the whole law book seems to resemble a living creature with the literal ordinances for its body and, for its soul, the invisible mind laid up in its wording. It is in the latter especially that the rational soul begins to contemplate the things akin to itself and beholding as through a mirror the marvelous beauties of the concepts of the words, unfolds and removes the symbolic coverings and brings forth the thoughts and sets them bare to the light of day for those who need but a little reminding to enable them to discern the inward and hidden through the outward and visible (*The*

Contemplative Life 78 tr. Colson modified).

Each text, accordingly, contains both literal and allegorical meanings, both relating to each other as body and soul. While the literal meanings could be understood through the ordinary senses and the bodily mind, the allegorical meaning, the inner depth of the biblical text, could be comprehended only through contemplation by the true mind. Those who are well-trained will “need but *a little reminding* to enable them to discern the inward and hidden through the outward and visible.” Philo’s commentaries are in fact these reminders to help the aspirant on his or her way; they are pedagogical guides in the Jewish *paideia*.

III. Commentary as Pedagogical Guide

The results of Philo’s wholesale reinterpretation of the Torah fill three massive series of commentaries: the *Expositions of the Law*, *Questions and Answers in Genesis and in Exodus*, and the *Allegorical Commentary*. These three commentaries were composed as different from and independent of each other, and most likely for three different set of audiences. The *Expositions of the Law* consist of a series of treatises that are arranged topically, each treatise taking such issues as creation and Moses as Legislator *par excellence*, and drawing on biblical materials as needed. They were written for non-Jews interested in knowing more about Judaism, or perhaps for backsliding Jews who might be in need of an introduction to reacquaint themselves with Jewish practices, symbols, and doctrines.

The second commentary, the *Questions and Answers*, follow a simple question-and-answer form. Unlike the *Exposition*, this commentary follows the biblical text systematically, covering essentially the same grounds as the *Allegorical Commentary*. But unlike the latter, *Questions and Answers* are arranged, as the name implies, in well-defined units of questions and answers. Each biblical phrase is prefaced with a simple question, “What is?” or “Why is?” The answer is an exegetical discussion of the phrase, usually short and often comprised of several possible meanings enumerated alongside each other. In this fashion the whole Torah could be covered systematically, if somewhat unimaginatively. Philo’s

extant works indicate that he might not have written much beyond Genesis and Exodus, but there is nothing in the genre of the work that would prevent him from pursuing the whole Torah. Judged by their content and the level of sophistication, the *Questions and Answers* were most likely intended for intermediate students who had made a beginning at studying the Torah but have yet to attain the more subtle allegorical interpretation contained in the third commentary, the *Allegorical Commentary*.

The *Allegorical Commentary*, like the *Expositions*, also includes a number of independent treatises. Each treatise is structured in a complicated arrangement: While it follows the biblical text systematically, it also frequently deviates from the main text for pages on end, in order to discuss a single word or phrase or concept. In the process Philo could spin off a dizzying array of etymological and symbolic meanings. Sometimes a treatise would even take up a biblical verse or text altogether different from the one at hand, though it eventually does return to the original text, even if it takes the rest of the treatise to do so. Given its sophistication, Philo most likely intended the work to be read by advanced readers already familiar with the elementary and would much rather feast on more substantial fares.³⁵

Expositions of the Law: Nature of the Torah Clarified

Before a student takes his or her first step towards union with wisdom, the student must first be clear about the nature of Scripture. What sort of guidance does the Torah provide for the guidance of the soul? This is the question which Philo's *Expositions of the Law* are primarily designed to answer. Individual treatises in this series define the nature of Scripture for the seeker and in so doing set the agenda for the student's quest. One of the most representative passages in this regard is *On Abraham* 5-6, in which Philo tries to resolve the question why the Mosaic Law, the Torah, in fact contains not legislation but biographical lives of patriarchs:

These are such men as lived good and blameless lives, whose virtues stand permanently recorded in the most holy scriptures, not merely to sound their praises but

for the instruction of the reader as an inducement to him to aspire to the same. These men have become *laws endowed with life and reason*, and Moses extolled them for two reasons. First, he wished to show that *the enacted ordinances are not inconsistent with nature*. Second, *those who wish to live in accordance with the laws as they stand have no difficult task*, seeing that the first generations before any at all of the particular statutes was set in writing followed the unwritten law with perfect ease, so that one might properly say that the enacted laws are nothing else than the memorials of the life of the ancients, preserving to a later generation their actual words and deeds (tr. Colson modified).

As mentioned earlier, one of the major problems of translating the Torah into Greek as “Law” (*nomos*) was that it contains nothing legislative in the normal sense. If the law of a city or community was indeed to form the backbone of its education, as stipulated in the *Republic*, it would behoove a Greek-speaking Jew like Philo to resolve the inherent difficulty that the bulk of the Torah happens to be stories of patriarchs. In what way could the Torah still inform the Jewish *paideia*? To answer this question, Philo first resorts to a well-known topic during Hellenistic times: namely, the contrast between the law of nature, which is uniform and constant, and the variegated laws and customs of the various cities. If the laws of different states happened to be different from, even contradict, each other, the only logical recourse appears to be the unchanging and immutable law of nature. The unwritten law of nature thus provides the ground for all written laws and ordinances (see especially further down in § 6.)³⁶

Seizing on this distinction, Philo argues that the commandments in the Torah, which are written and enacted, correspond with the unwritten law of nature perfectly—because the Torah contains the lives of the patriarchs, and the patriarchs themselves exhibit perfect harmony with nature before the ordinances and commandments were written. The patriarchs, by way of perfecting their own lives, “have become laws endowed with life and reason” or literally “en-souled and reasonable laws” (*hoi empsychoi kai logikoi nomoi*). The commandments associated with the patriarch are therefore nothing other than their “memorials” or “commentaries” (*hypomnēmata*).³⁷

Such an identification of patriarchs as “en-souled and reasonable laws” unto themselves has two momentous consequences for anyone who is to follow the teachings of the Torah. First of all, the Torah could now be trusted and read at the literal level. If the enacted commandments, that is, what are stipulated in the written Mosaic Law, turn out to be consistent with nature, they must be the best possible commandments, superior even to the civic codes one encounters in cities and states. One could therefore follow the Mosaic Law with confidence. Secondly, however, one should be aware at the same time that standing behind the written text are lives of patriarchs who, in one way or another, have perfected themselves. The written laws are related to the lives of the patriarchs as commentaries to the main text. To have access to the main source, therefore, is nothing less than emulate the examples of the patriarchs, a feat that could be accomplished, in Philo’s schema, only by means of allegorical interpretation.

There are three main types of patriarchs: one who pursues the good through teaching, one becomes good by nature, and one becomes good by practice. Corresponding to these three types of patriarchs are, respectively, the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (§ 52), though for the rest of the treatise Philo is occupied with Abraham, the one who pursues the good through teaching. In the story of Abraham’s migration from his home in Chaldea to Haran (Gen 12.1-9), the literal text depicts a wise man journeying to Canaan. But allegorically interpreted, according to Philo, the story is really about a “virtue-loving soul in its search for the true God” (§ 69). Abraham, in other words, represents the soul of the student who, if he or she is to take the first step towards the true goal of education, the embrace of wisdom, must take the same journey the biblical Abraham takes. In particular, this journey entails three discrete movements. First, there must be the awakening of the soul. Abraham had been reared as a Chaldean who worshipped stars and natural phenomena while ignoring God who is behind them all.

Then opening the soul’s eye as though after profound sleep, and beginning to see the pure beam instead of the deep darkness, he followed the ray and discerned what he had not beheld before, a charioteer and pilot presiding over the world and directing in safety his own work, assuming the charge and superintendence of that work and of all such parts of it as are worthy of divine care (§ 70).

Second, the newly-awakened soul must take an orderly account of its surrounding, and this is accomplished by means of revelation, through the guidance of “the divine Logos” (§ 71). Third, finally, the soul could hope to catch a vision of God (§ 71).³⁸

The Torah, therefore, has a twofold significance to the readers. While being a literal text which contains written ordinances, it contains a journey of the soul at the allegorical level. Both are clearly important to Philo, and he does not elevate the allegorical at the expense of the literal. But he sees the allegorical as the embodiment of the lives of patriarchs. More important for our purpose, his *Expositions of the Law* lay out the agenda of this allegory of the soul for his novice-readers.

Questions and Answers: Education on Scripture

In the *Questions and Answers on Genesis and Exodus*, Philo’s purpose is much broader and could be described as having general educative purpose: that is, to provide readers with a storehouse of basic information on the Torah. Its central concern is not quite as focused as we have seen in the *Expositions*, but it nevertheless fulfills an indispensable intermediate function of providing readers with the basic contents of the Torah.

The *Questions and Answers* belong to a well-established genre in Greek literature, first developed to defend Homer against the charge of immorality, illogicality, impiety—in other words, the very same criticisms that lie behind Plato’s rejection of the epic poems. Aristotle appears to have composed the first such work, which like other similar works of the period was on Homer, aptly named *Homeric Problems*.³⁹ Others like Heraclides Ponticus (Fourth Century BCE), a student of Plato but later a close associate of Aristotle, and Aristotle’s students Dicaearchus (fl. 326-296 BCE) and Demetrius of Phalerum (b. c.350 BCE) have also composed Homeric problems, though only fragments have survived.⁴⁰

The use of standard zetematic terminology like “why” and the compilation of discrete question-and-answer units places Philo’s *Questions and Answers* squarely in the tradition of the genre. But beyond this most obvious level, there are also

significant differences. First, in terms of organization the *Questions and Answers* follow the biblical text of Genesis verse by verse, in a manner unparalleled by any extant work before Philo.⁴¹ Second, the types of questions asked in Philo's *Questions and Answers* are mostly "rhetorical," i.e., questions composed of a stereotypical formula ("why" or "what is") and a biblical phrase but do not introduce any substantial problem. There is often little attempt in the question to define what, if any, the underlying problem might be; one has to turn to the solution to gather hints of what is to come. Third, a Philonic innovation is the combination of literal and allegorical interpretations in the same solution. For Philo, every biblical phrase is a code that can be decoded only by allegorical interpretation and every text becomes a new type of problem that must be resolved.⁴²

This quick survey above yields three general characteristics of the genre Questions and Answers: apologetic, public, and popular or educative.⁴³ It is in the educative milieu that I propose to locate Philo's *Questions and Answers on Genesis and Exodus*. The apologetic concerns of the work have by and large receded into the background, though echoes are still heard through the few remaining anti-anthropomorphic passages.⁴⁴ The public character does not readily spring to the fore but is assumed throughout the work. The adoption of the technique of enumerating other people's views in order to set up for one's own points to a well-constructed, tendentious work meant to persuade as well as educate. When seen in conjunction with the technique of combining literal and allegorical interpretations side by side each other, which is a Philonic innovation, it also serves another purpose, and that is creating an encyclopedic storehouse of knowledge for readers. All this, in addition to the observation of generally simpler argumentation in the *Questions and Answers* as compared to the more discursive *Allegorical Commentary*, leads to the conclusion that the work was intended for Jewish readers who have gone beyond the rudiments of Biblical exegesis but were poised to learn more. The final goal of such an educative endeavor was perhaps the type of allegorical sophistication represented by the *Allegorical Commentary*, progress towards which, however, would require better command of and greater skills in the art of allegorical interpretation. In the overall schema of Philo, the *Questions and Answers* served as a ladder to higher sophistication and as a bridge between

Scripture and Philo's Hellenistic-Jewish goal of perfection.⁴⁵

Allegorical Commentary: The Pinnacle of Achievement

In the third and the most sophisticated series of commentaries, the *Allegorical Commentary*, itself also includes a good number of treatises like the *Expositions of the Law*. Philo pursues his allegorical interpretation of the Torah. Like the *Questions and Answers*, this commentary also follows the biblical text verse by verse, but unlike the former, in which Philo is restricted by the question-and-answer structure, it gives him the freedom to range freely in his allegorical comments.

As illustration of the level of exegetical complexity of this commentary, we might consider a passage from the treatise *On the Cherubim*. In §§ 21-30, Philo pursues a detailed, phrase-by-phrase exegesis of Gen 3.24, a biblical text on the two cherubim stationed outside Paradise with the turning sword of flame after the expulsion of Adam and Eve.⁴⁶ Philo first presents a cosmological interpretation, identifying the two cherubim as the outer and inner spheres of the fixed stars, and the turning sword of flame as the eternal revolution of the whole heaven (§§ 21-25). Next, Philo advances a second interpretation, this time identifying the two cherubim as the earth's two hemispheres and the flaming sword as the sun (§§ 25-26). These cosmological interpretations completed, Philo is free to propose a third interpretation, one which he clearly considers to be the most superior option. Accordingly, the two cherubim are interpreted allegorically as the two powers of God and the flaming and turning sword as Logos. Unlike the first two cosmological interpretations, however, this third position is claimed to be reached under divine inspiration:

Then I heard an even more worthy explication in my soul which is accustomed to be frequently possessed by God and to divine what it does not know. This I will recollect from memory if I can. It said to me, "God is indeed one, but his highest and foremost powers are two, Goodness and Authority: it is through Goodness that he begot all and through Authority that he rules the begotten. And there is a third gathering both and standing between them, namely Logos: for it is through Logos that God is both sovereign and good. The Cherubim, therefore, are symbols of these two

powers, Sovereignty and Goodness, while the flaming sword is the symbol of Logos. For exceedingly swift and fiery is Logos—and even more so is that of the Cause—because this is that which preceded and outstripped all, was conceived before all, and was manifested above all” (*Cher.* 27-28 my translation).

The clear distinction between conditions *prior to* divine inspiration and conditions *after* points to two different altered states of consciousness in this passage. Philo insists that he could only *attempt to remember* what he has learned. It is possible, perhaps even necessary, to communicate what is learned under inspiration after the event, albeit with difficulties. Ecstatic experience can be expressed and its articulation may conform to a prior, acceptable doctrine of God, since Philo does manage to present a coherent picture of the two divine powers and Logos immediately after *Cher.* 27-28. His statement, “God is indeed one, but his highest and foremost powers are two, Goodness and Authority,” is intended not as a justification for his exegesis,⁴⁷ but as a further description of his vision. It is indeed by means of Logos that God is both sovereign and good. But once Logos is recognized and the new understanding grasped, the differentiation between the two powers melts away, the divine powers dissolve into each other, and the mind is left with a vision of God who appears *at once* royal and beneficent:

Receive, O my mind, the unadulterated impression of each of the cherubim, so that having been instructed clearly regarding the Sovereign and Goodness of the Cause you may reap the fruits of a happy lot. For you will know immediately the union and commingling of the unmixed powers: God is good when Sovereignty is revealed and God is sovereign when Goodness is revealed (*Cher.* 29 my translation).

Logos seems to have disappeared in this passage. Or has it? Logos plays the mediating role between the two powers (“for it is through Logos that God is both sovereign and good;” *Cher.* 27); once that role is fulfilled, there is no longer any need to refer to Logos explicitly.⁴⁸ It is by means of appreciating the centrality of Logos that the soul integrates the vision of the multiple powers and sees the kingly manifestation through the beneficent and the beneficent manifestation through the kingly. The vision has not revealed what is beyond the powers; what the soul sees in this context is not so much God as Logos.⁴⁹ When Logos does

reappear in the subsequent interpretation, it becomes the tool which Abraham “the wise” used “to divide and to burn away the mortal from himself, that he might fly high up to God with his mind stripped naked” (*Cher.* 31).⁵⁶

The ascent of the soul described in this passage is not qualitatively different from that which we saw earlier in the treatise *On Abraham* in the *Expositions of the Law*. The major difference is that here, Philo is talking about *his own* experience: “I heard an even more worthy explication in my soul which is accustomed to be frequently possessed by God and to divine what it does not know.” The unmistakable implication of this autobiographical reference is that once the aspirant is led by Scripture—properly interpreted always—to a sufficiently sophisticated degree, as he himself has been, he or she will begin to experience the spiritual ascent as he himself has experienced. And his composition of these commentaries, but in particular the *Allegorical Commentary*, is intended to guide the initiate in his or her education into the deeper truth of the Torah, which at the end is never far from the ascent of the soul to a vision of God.

Conclusion

Was the Philonic project successful? That is to say, was Philo able to make the Jewish Scripture alive by means of his commentary? Historically within Judaism, Philo failed miserably. Philonic Judaism disappeared without a trace. If it had not been for the Christians who preserved, collected, and propagated Philo’s writings, memories of Philo would have perished with the great fire of Alexandria which destroyed the fabled library. The rabbis, building on Tannaitic Judaism and its legacy, developed their own commentarial traditions, the midrashim and talmudim. These latter eventually came to replace and displace all other competing forms of interpretation.

But in a drastically different setting, in the emerging Jewish sect that came to be known later as Christianity, the Philonic strategy was wildly successful. The early Christian church fathers preserved Philo’s writings and made them the object of intense study. Early church fathers emulated the Philonic hermeneutics, albeit fitting it into a Christian structure, so much so that Philonic allegorical

interpretation would totally dominate the landscape of Christian interpretation for the next fifteen centuries. That is because in Philo they discovered a method of adapting Scripture to a new community, to a new faith. The method allowed the Christians to read Christian messages out of the so-called Old Testament and to make it compatible with the New.

In the examples of Philo and later Christians, it seems clear to conclude that commentary and Scripture live in a hermeneutical symbiosis. Without commentary, Scripture would be incomprehensible or, at the very least, misinterpreted—as judged by the standards of those who have a serious stake in calling Scripture. There is always a social or communal dimension to calling something Scripture or classic,⁵¹ and commentary is what makes a classical or scriptural text finally acceptable to that community. The survival, indeed continual viability, of Scripture depends on the vitality of the commentarial tradition. And if this turns out to be the responsibility of every generation of educators, then the educators themselves cannot but be interpreters, hermeneuts, and commentators of their Scriptural tradition.

Notes

1. I use “scripture” and “classics” as synonymous terms in this essay. The distinction between the two, as Smith, *What is Scripture?*, 184-95, has recently shown, is an artificial one. See also Tracy, *Analogical Imagination*, 99-153; and the response to Tracy in part by Stendahl, “Bible as Classic,” 3-10.
2. Scripture and community are inextricably bound up together, and they form a mutually dependent relationship; see the recent discussion in Smith, *What is Scripture?*, passim, but esp. pp. 212-42.
3. The term is David Tracy’s; see Tracy, *Analogical Imagination*, 99-153, for a general discussion of idea of “classic.”
4. Smith, *What is Scripture?*, 231; emphasis his.
5. Here I echo Prof. Gerhard Schmidt’s concerns for hermeneutics, expressed elsewhere

in this conference. This line of understanding the hermeneutical enterprise reflects the philosophy of Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, passim. See also Tracy, *Analogical Imagination*, 99-153.

6. Jaeger, *Paideia*, 1.xiv.
7. In an oral report at the conference, Prof. Hammond suggested that the Bible was a “barbarous” text. His evaluation of the Bible is founded on a rather simplistic view of scriptural texts, one which simply does not correspond with how they have functioned in the history of human civilization. In fact, it is through literary criticism, through interpretation, and—as I will try to establish in this paper—through commentary that classical texts become alive, fluid, dynamic, and relevant to the receiving community.
8. See, e.g., the account in Xenophon, *Symposium* 3.5. The concept of *paideia* did not appear in Homer’s Greece. Nobility and birth determined worth (see Homer, *Iliad* 6.208, 211; 9.443). This led to a view that virtue, *aretē*, is a gift of the gods (*Iliad* 20.242). For a fuller discussion of *paideia* among the Greeks, see Bertram, “*paideuō, kt.,*” 597; and Jaeger, *Paideia*, vols. 1-3.
9. See more detailed discussion in Lamberton, *Homer the Theologian*, 17-18. This admittedly is an extreme view of Plato’s attitudes towards the poets as presented in the *Republic*. For a more balanced evaluation of Plato’s statements on Homer, see Havelock, *Preface to Plato*, passim.
10. Here the expression *ho hypo tou nomou logos orthos eirēmenos* refers to the written form of city custom. It should be noted that though the city law dominated Plato’s view of education, he was not blind to the need of such individual disciplines as *mousikē paideia* (“musical education”) and *gymnastikē paideia* (“gymnastic education”), as well individual disciplines. See *Republic* 2.376E; *Laws* 7.795D, 7.822D. All these, however, were properly the education of the individuals and ought not be confused with the overall goals of education that benefit the whole city.
11. Jaeger, *Paideia*, 3.243.
12. Cited in Plato, *Theaetetus* 152A. Cf. also *Cratylus* 386A.

13. Jaeger, *Paideia*, 3.241.
14. Jaeger, *Paideia*, 2.295. See *Rep.* 2.518C-D.
15. Jaeger, *Paideia*, 2.285-86, 295-96; 3.241. It follows, then, that for Plato education was the cultivation of good citizen and must be available to all free citizens, that is, free males in the *polis*.
16. According to Jaeger, *Paideia*, 3.21, Plato was the inventor of theology.
17. A similar view is taken by Jaeger, *Paideia*, 3.255-56.
18. Lamberton, *Homer the Theologian*, 19-20.
19. So Lamberton, *Homer the Theologian*, 19.
20. *ho gar alla men agoreuōn tropos, hetera de hōn legei sēmainōn, epōnymōs allēgoria kaleitai.* For discussion of Stoic allegorical method see Buffière, *Héraclite*, ix-x; and Thompson, "Heraclitus's *Homeric Allegories*," passim; Wan, "Allegorical Interpretation East and West," 157-59.
21. Criticisms of Homer probably began with Plato in his debates with the Sophists. See J. Tate, "Plato and Allegorical Interpretation," *Classical Quarterly* 23 (1929) 142-54. For a discussion on the origins of allegorical interpretation, see Tate, "Beginnings of Greek Allegory," 214-15; Tate, "Plato and Allegorical Interpretation," 41-44; 24 (1930) 1-10; Tate, "History of Allegorization," 105-14.
22. See a summary of criticisms in Aristotle, *On Poetics* chapter 25.
23. In this respect, allegorical interpretation is not so different from the historical-critical method. Both are concerned with recovering the authorial intention and both manipulate the text to arrive at the desired result. What is different, of course, is that while the historical critic sees the hermeneutical gap as one created by the historical and epistemological distance between the text and the interpreter (see the classical formulation of this *Problematik* by Schleiermacher, *Hermeneutics*, passim), the allegorical interpreter sees the gap as primarily a doctrinal one. The historical critic must bridge the hermeneutical gap by means of historical tools and criticisms, whereas the allegorical interpreter must construct a system, a set of principles, or

cultural assumptions to reproduce the author's "intended" meaning. If this is the case, we onlookers have no way of understanding the allegorical interpreter's claim unless we know the underlying doctrinal system. The task of evaluating an allegorical interpretation is primarily one of understanding the internal, often unstated, logic of the allegory and of delineating the pattern of the *tertium comparationis*, the middle term, between the text and the desired results. To present the problem as a discovery of the allegorical interpreter's assumptions, philosophical presuppositions, and prejudices is not to imply that a historical critic is free from such problems. The very work of Heidegger indicates the indispensability of prejudice (*Vorverständnis*) in interpretation. R. Bultmann, furthermore, has answered decisively the impossibility (and by implication the undesirability) of presuppositionless exegesis. Cf. Bultmann, "Is Exegesis without Presupposition Possible?," 289-96.

24. Lamberton, *Homer the Theologian*, 19.
25. In all likelihood, Jews participated in Greek secular institutions of higher learning. See the careful discussion of the question in Colson, "Philo on Education," 151-62; Daniélou, *Philon*, 29-33; against Erbse, "Iliasscholien," 1.79.
26. Mendelson, *Secular Education*, 4-24, 42.
27. Colson, "Philo on Education," 156.
28. So in *Allegorical Interpretation* 3.228-29; see Goodenough, *Light*, 125; Mendelson, *Secular Education*, 43.
29. I was first called attention to this text by Mendelson, *Secular Education*, 43.
30. The text is discussed in greater detail in Mendelson, *Secular Education*, 30, 44-45.
31. The same imagery is used in *On Flight and Finding* 137. Here *paideta* becomes a hypostasis, equated to Wisdom.
32. These stages of perfection are summarized in *On the Migration of Abraham* 194-195; cf. also Fallon, "Law in Philo and Ptolemy," 19; Daniélou, *Philon*, 69-76.
33. *Migration of Abraham* 134. Daniélou, *Philon*, 76, draws the inference that such juxtaposition is a kind of *via negativa*.

34. *Migration of Abraham* 34-35. See Festugière, "Commentaires de Proclus," 54-71.
35. So Goodenough, "Exposition," 109-25.
36. Koester, "*NOMOS PHYSEŌS*," 521-41.
37. On the ambiguity of this term, see von Premerstein, "Commentarii," 725-59; Fuhrmann, "Hypomnema," 1282-83.
38. This *allegory of the soul* is an overriding motif in Philo's writings. The works of P. Boyancé, J. Daniélou, and most recently the cogent arguments of Thomas Tobin have demonstrated, persuasively I think, that what distinguishes Philo from his predecessors is his consistent effort at reading external events—the creation story, the fall, and the patriarchs in Genesis—as internal struggles of our soul on its tortuous journey to perfection. See Boyancé, "Études philonniennes," 68; Daniélou, *Philon*, 135, 137; Tobin, *Creation of Man*, 145-54.
39. The title of which has been variously reported as *Aporēmata Homērika*, *ta Homērou problēmata*, or *Homērika zētēmata*. These titles bespeak the interchangeability of the three terms, *zētēma*, *problēma*, and *aporēma*, when dealing with this genre.
40. For survey of this genre see Gudeman, "*Lyseis*," 2511-2529; and more recently Wan, "*Quaestiones in Genesisim*," 24-38.
41. As far as can be judged from the extant fragments. Cf. Dörrie and Dörries, "Erotapokriseis," 344: Philo was "an exception" to the aimless tendency of the zetematic literature.
42. In their assessment of Philo's role in the genre of what they called "religious question-and-answer dialogues," Daly and Suchier suggested that Philo contributed not only the allegorical method to later Christian writers but also the *aporia* and question-and-answer method; cf. Daly and Suchier, *Altercatio*, 26. If my evaluation here is correct, it was Philo's concern for allegory that necessitated the question-and-answer method.
43. See also Daly and Suchier, *Altercatio*, 19; Bardy, "La littérature patristique," 210-11.
44. Only seven such cases remain: *Questions in guenesis* 1.21, 42, 55, 68, 93; 2.54; 4.24,

which are far fewer than either the *Allegorical Commentary* or the *Expositions*.

45. For a fuller discussion of Philo's *Questions and Answers*, see Wan, "Quaestiones in Genesim," 38-53.
46. For a more detailed discussion of this passage see Wan, "Charismatic Exegesis," 63-71.
47. Against Hay, "Philo's View of Himself as an Exegete," 44 and n. 8.
48. Another way to conceptualize what I call here the "mediating role" of Logos is to see it as the sum total of all powers; cf. Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven*, 169, 175, 177.
49. Cf. also *Confusion of Tongues* 95-96, where Philo goes to great lengths to demonstrate that what Moses saw in Exod 24:10-11 was not God himself but only Logos. See the discussion of this passage in Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven*, 167-68; and Wan, "Charismatic Exegesis," 68 and n. 61.
50. I.e., Abraham's "fire and knife" in the sacrifice of Isaac (Gen 22:6) allegorized as a copy of the "flaming sword." Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven*, 171, comments on *On the Migration of Abraham* 173: "There can be no doubt that Philo meant to say that rare men of uncommon abilities can share in God's immutability by being summoned into or guided into His presence by means of the *logos*."
51. This is in fact the conclusion of Smith, *What is Scripture?*, 212-42.

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以釋義作為教學指引： 朱蒂亞斯思想中的經典與釋義

溫司卡*

摘 要

經典與教育兩者並非自然而然彼此互助，而是彼此矛盾衝突。經典以超脫自我侷限的方式傳輸其權威，但是這種性質也令經典難免成為特異的章經，自外於活生生的社群。另一方面，教育的目的是為了在社群成員中培養崇高的社群理想，這種理想也就是希臘人所謂的 *paideia*。因此，經典或古典經書在教育中所扮演的角色並不單純；一旦沒有典律所賦予的永恆願景，教育頓失所依，而無法承擔發揚社區價值的功能。然而，經典的古典地位也不斷有種隱憂；這種地位易使經典託付於過失並與教育的首要任務脫節。每個新世代因此必須根據其教育理想去重新衡量其權威經典的地位。這種矛盾關係有一種解決之道：也就是以釋義的方式作為教學利器、提供溝通管道、跨越經典與教育理想之間的鴻溝，這種解決方式是本文

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所要研究的。本文首先探討柏拉圖對荷馬的批判，荷馬的作品是一種教育經典，但柏拉圖認為荷馬削弱了社會公民的價值體系，因而加以譴責。柏拉圖提議以他自己的著作取代荷馬的詩作，但柏拉圖的後輩卻把荷馬的作品當作寓言，寧願透過註解荷馬來曉以大義，並調解這位哲學先進和這位詩人之間的衝突。另一方面，公元第一世紀的哲學家朱蒂亞斯（Philo Judaeus）也曾經面對這種挑戰—如何使猶太聖典切合猶太人的教育理想，那些散居各地、講希臘語言的猶太人。為此，朱蒂亞斯設計了三套釋義文集，以解讀寓言的方式發掘典籍的弦外之音：《律法要義》（*Expositions of the Law*）、《問題與答覆》（*Questions and Answers*）、《聖典旨意言詮》（*Allegorical Commentary*）。這些文集目的是要引導學習者循序漸進，達到他們的教育目標，最終理當導致他們預視神。《律法要義》解釋猶太聖典的性質；《問題與答覆》提供讀者一個有關猶太宗教典籍的基本資料庫；《聖典旨意言詮》帶引學習者進入最後階段，使其領悟猶太聖典的深層意義。對於義理追求者而言，釋義因此帶有教學指引的功能；就詮釋學的意義而言，釋義與經典彼此一直相生相成；對於把文本當作權威經典的人而言，不經過釋義，經典就會被誤解或無法讓人了解。