AN ESSENCE–ENERGY DISTINCTION IN PHILO AS THE BASIS FOR THE LANGUAGE OF DEIFICATION

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Abstract

This article advances a new interpretation of Philo of Alexandria's 'deification' of Moses. Though previous scholarship has provided a variety of explanations for how the Jewish writer was able to extend the name 'God' to Moses, the present study attempts to improve upon earlier theories by rooting the language of deification in the philosophical distinctions that Philo himself espouses in his doctrine of God. Rejecting the notion that Philo was not a strict monotheist, and that the language of deification implies a mitigated monotheism, it is argued that Philo's God is indeed one, but that the singular Deity has both an *essence*, which remains transcendent and imparticipable, and an *energeia*, or activity, which is operative and present in the world and shareable with such biblical figures as Moses. The distinction, between 'what' God is and how he is present in creation, in turn accounts for the well-known but problematic concept of the Logos, which David Winston has properly called 'the face of God turned toward creation'. That the name 'God' encompasses both dimensions of the Deity is what allows Philo to call Moses 'God' without attributing to him the very divine essence.

INTRODUCTION

In his *Life of Moses*, Philo of Alexandria states boldly that the ancient liberator of the Hebrews 'enjoyed communion (κοινωνίας) with the Father and Maker of all, being made worthy of his very name (προσρήσεως)'.[1] Stemming from his commitment to Exod. 7:1,[2] Philo indeed calls Moses θεός multiple times throughout his

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[1] *Mos.* 1.158 (LCL 289:356). All citations are from the Loeb series. In certain places I have modified the translations of Colson, Whitaker, and Marcus.

[2] Καὶ εἶπε Κύριος πρὸς Μωυσῆν λέγων· ἰδοὺ δέδωκά σε θεὸν Φαραώ. Philo's exegesis of Exod. 7:1 has been subjected to detailed examination in the now classic study by Carl Holladay, '*Theios Aner' in Hellenistic-Judaism: A Critique of the Use of this Category in New Testament Christology* (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1977), pp. 103–98.

works,[3] such that Martha Himmelfarb has called Philo's 'the most extended treatment in Jewish or Christian literature of the divinization of a human being'.[4]

The sense in which Philo in fact deifies Moses has, not surprisingly, received considerable treatment and generated extensive debate, for in obvious tension with Philo's daring statements concerning the divinity of Moses are the Alexandrian's fundamental devotion to Jewish monotheism and his consistent affirmation of divine simplicity.[5] Yet, as I will argue, a solution to the problem of deification is to be found in Philo's doctrine of God and the rigorous philosophical distinctions that it contains. As David T. Runia has pointed out, theologians have generally ignored 'the philosophical underpinnings of Philo's doctrine of God'.[6] Philo's theology reveals a precise and nuanced theory of divine being, which, in itself, effectively accounts for the possibility of deification.

Philonic metaphysics, rooted in the antinomy between divine transcendence and immanence, begins with the distinction between God's incommunicable divine essence and his participable divine operation, or energy. God, in himself, is ultimately unsharable and wholly unlike his creation. Though known to exist insofar as the world admits of a creator, 'what' God is is entirely beyond human knowledge and ascent. Yet, as the world's artificer and father, God is also present to the world, in his Powers, or Logos, as the indwelling cause and overseer of his creation. This polarity, which reveals Philo's deep concern for God's simultaneous exclusivity and interpenetration of the world, is what will

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[3] See esp. *Mos.* 1.158–9, *Somn.* 2.189, *Sacr.* 9–10, discussed below.

[4] *Ascent to Heaven in Jewish and Christian Apocalypses* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 49. Himmelfarb's remark is by now familiar to specialists, and speaks to the importance of Philo for the later tradition. But her claim is potentially exaggerated, since she does not take into account the elaborate treatments of deification in Byzantine theology; see e.g. Maximos the Confessor, *Ambiguum* 10 (ed. N. Constas, *On Difficulties in the Church Fathers*, vol. 1 (Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library, 27); Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 2014, pp. 150–342).

[5] A recent proposal by M. David Litwa suggests that this tension may be resolved by understanding that Philo was not constrained by belief in 'a numerically singular divine being', since this was not at all the ancient conception of monotheism. As such, Philo is able to speak freely of 'gods' in the plural, since to do so does not detract from 'the idea of the high God's absolute power' and thus does not render Philo in any way un-Jewish ('The Deification of Moses in Philo of Alexandria', *SPhilo* 26 [2014], pp. 1–27 at p. 6, n. 25). As this essay will show, such a qualification is far from an accurate representation of Philonic theology, to say nothing of ancient monotheism.

[6] 'God and Man in Philo of Alexandria', *JTS* 39 (1988), pp. 48–75, at 56.

allow Philo to transfer the name of God to Moses without impinging on divine transcendence and simplicity, since the remote divinity is made sharable not in his essence, but in his operation. Indeed, Philo will ascribe divinity to Moses precisely as a way of bridging the gap between the imparticipable God and the world he has created, in a way that shows the language of deification to be neither reductively metaphorical nor irreconcilably un-Jewish. For Philo, deification is none other than the consequence of God's ability to permeate, in the most intimate way, a world from which he is ultimately independent—an ability that ultimately depends on the philosophical distinction between divine essence and *energeia*.

DIVINE TRANSCENDENCE

In the *Special Laws*, Philo identifies two questions stemming from philosophical inquiry into the nature of God: (1) whether the Divine exists and (2) what its essence is (τὸ τί ἐστι κατὰ τὴν οὐσίαν).[7] The latter, he warns, is not only difficult, but altogether impossible. Somewhat surprisingly, this does not mean that the question must be abandoned. 'Both', he says, 'must be examined', for the quest for God is worthwhile for its own sake.[8] 'The very seeking, even without finding, is felicity in itself.'[9] The obvious distinction at play is between inquiry (ζήτησις), and discovery (εὕρεσις). The latter, which would result in a true vision or contemplation (φαντασία) of God, is entirely out of reach. But the former, characterized by speculative reason (εἰκασία καὶ στοχασμός), is nonetheless praiseworthy, and Philo compares it to second prize.[10]

The thirst for knowledge of what God is at the level of essence finds expression in the petition of Moses on Mt Sinai: 'reveal thyself to me' (Exod. 33:13).[11] Creation has revealed the existence of God as its father and artificer, but not a single portion of the universe contains evidence of 'who' God is.[12] As such, Moses must ask God directly for experience of the divine essence, since there

[7] *Spec.* 1.33–4 (LCL 320:116).
[8] Ibid., 1.32 (LCL 320:118).
[9] Ibid., 1.40 (LCL 320:120).
[10] Ibid., 1.38.
[11] Ibid., 1.41, 42 (LCL 320:122).
[12] 'This world has taught me that you are, and that you exist. As a son, it has taught me of its father; and as an artefact, it has taught me of its maker. But who you are according to essence, I find nothing in all the universe that might lead me into such knowledge, though I long to know' (ibid., 1.41–2).

is no inductive way in to such knowledge.[13] His request is denied on the grounds that the divine essence is incomprehensible.[14]

The idea that God's existence can be known while his essence remains out of reach is thus grounded in Philo's interpretation of Scripture.[15] The distinction between essence and existence, between 'what' God is (ὅ ἐστιν) and 'that' God is (ὅτι ἔστιν),[16] is presented as a gloss on Exod. 33:23: 'You shall see what is after me (τὰ ὀπίσω μου), but my face shall not be shown you.'[17] This interpretation is further extended to Exod. 3:13–14, so that Philo links divine transcendence with absolute ineffability. When Moses asks God his name, he is told simply, ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ Ὤν.[18] Philo interprets this 'name' as yet another expression of divine existence (τῷ εἶναι), since God is 'not of a nature to be spoken'. As he understands the verse, then, no actual name is given.[19] Rather, God,

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[13] 'As knowledge of the light does not come by any other source but what it itself supplies, so too Thou alone canst tell me of Thyself. Wherefore I crave pardon if, for lack of a teacher, I venture to appeal to Thee in my desire to learn of Thee' (ibid., 1.42).

[14] τὴν δ᾽ ἐμὴν κατάληψιν οὐχ οἷον ἀνθρώπου φύσις ἀλλ᾽ οὐδ᾽ ὁ σύμπας οὐρανός τε καὶ κόσμος δυνήσεται χωρῆσαι (ibid., 1.44; LCL 320:124). To express the insufficiency of the human intellect to grasp God, Philo uses the Stoic language of apprehension and containment (κατάληψις and χωρῆσαι) (ibid.; LCL 320:122–4. Cf. ibid., 1.46–7, where God speaks of his nature as intelligible rather than sensible).

[15] David Winston has argued that this distinction stems from Philo's philosophical, rather than exegetical, commitments ('Philo's Conception of the Divine Nature', in Lenn E. Goodman (ed.), *Neoplatonism and Jewish Thought* [Studies in Neoplatonism: Ancient and Modern, 7; Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1992], pp. 21–42, at 21). Clearly, Philo's exegetical and philosophical commitments need not be mutually exclusive. It is nearly impossible to speculate, without ideological prejudice, whether Philo was a Jew first and a Hellenistic philosopher second, or vice versa—whatever such a distinction may mean. On the exegetical nature of Philo's philosophical project, see Peder Borgen, *Philo of Alexandria: An Exegete for his Times* (NovTSup 86; Leiden: Brill, 1997).

[16] *Praem.* 40 (LCL 341:334).

[17] *Post.* 169 (LCL 227:429). 'What is after me' is a better translation from the Greek than 'back parts', since it better corresponds to Philo's interpretation of the divine glory as being περὶ τὸν θεόν (see *Spec.* 1.45; LCL 320:124). Indeed, this is precisely how Philo interprets it: πάνθ᾽ ὅσα μετὰ τὸν θεὸν τῷ σπουδαίῳ καταληπτά, αὐτὸς δὲ μόνος ἀκατάληπτος (*Post.* 169; LCL 227:429). Cf. *Fug.* 165; *Mut.* 9.

[18] Cf. Ex. 6:3: ὤφθην πρὸς Ἀβραὰμ καὶ Ἰσαὰκ καὶ Ἰακώβ, Θεὸς ὢν αὐτῶν, καὶ τὸ ὄνομά μου Κύριος οὐκ ἐδήλωσα αὐτοῖς, which Philo understands not as referring to the tetragrammaton, but, again, to God's proper (κύριος) name (*Mut.* 13; LCL 275:148).

[19] But cf. *Abr.* 121 (LCL 289:65).

even as Being (τὸ ὄν), lacks a 'proper name' by which he can be known.[20]

'If he is ineffable', therefore, 'he is also unknowable (ἀπερινόητον) and incomprehensible.'[21] For Philo, as for Plato, names reflect ontology, and in the case of the Godhead would actually compound essence and destroy its simplicity.[22] That God should be unnamable, then—so that even Being is not his proper name—is not only a principle of Hebrew piety,[23] but also of metaphysics. Divine unknowability is not merely a product of intellectual humility or inadequacy, since humanity is unable to apprehend even the essence of the stars,[24] or of the soul, but, rather, it is a byproduct of divine simplicity.[25] As an uncompounded nature,[26] God does not admit of predicates, and the divine names, if taken univocally, would only serve to render him correlative with creation in some way.[27]

For Philo, even the name θεός is to be taken catachrestically,[28] since the Alexandrian sees in it a distinctly oeconomic designation. '"I am thy God"', he states, 'is the equivalent of "I am thy creator and fashioner".'[29] Far from denoting essence in contradistinction to other aspects of the Divine, be they conceived as hypostases or operations, the term 'God' is itself relative to the world's experience of divine rule and beneficence.[30] This maximalist adherence to divine transcendence on the part of Philo culminates

[20] *Mut.* 11 (LCL 275:146); cf. *Deo* 4; *Somn.* 1.230. Cf. Runia, 'Naming and Knowing: Themes in Philonic Theology', in R. van den Broek, T. Baarda, and J. Mansfeld (eds.), *Knowledge of God in the Graeco-Roman World* (EPRO 112; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1988), pp. 69–91.

[21] Ibid., 15 (LCL 275:150). Cf. Runia, 'Naming', 75–8.

[22] Cf. Runia, 'Naming', p. 77; Wolfson, *Philo: Foundations of Religious Philosophy in Judaism, Christianity and Islam*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1947), 2.130.

[23] Wolfson in particular sees in Philo's apophaticism a specifically Jewish reverence for the divine name; cf. n. 33 below.

[24] See *Spec.* 1.39.

[25] *Mut.* 10–11. See Francesca Calabi, *God's Acting, Man's Acting: Tradition and Philosophy in Philo of Alexandria* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), pp. 42–8, for a discussion of whether Philo thinks God is absolutely unnamable or whether his name is simply beyond human ken.

[26] See *Mut.* 184 (LCLC 275:236): οὐ σύγκριμα, φύσις ὢν ἁπλῆ.

[27] Ibid., 27 (LCL 275:157). Here Philo uses the term πρός τι; see Aristotle, *Categories* 6a36–8b26. Cf. Runia, 'God and Man in Philo of Alexandria', *JTS* 39 (1988), pp. 48–75, at 73.

[28] *Mut.* 27 (LCL 275:157): καταχρηστικῶς, οὐ κυρίως. See Runia, 'Naming and Knowing', pp. 75–91.

[29] Ibid., 29–30 (LCL 275:159).

[30] Ibid., 28 (LCL 275:157–9).

in the statement that God is 'greater than the Good, more basic than the Monad, and purer than the One'.[31] All human conceptions, in other words, no matter how fundamental, are insufficient and only serve to dilute the transcendence of God. Indeed, even negative statements cannot be said of God, since these presume a kind of knowledge.[32]

As Philo scholars have rightly pointed out, Philo's uncompromising apophaticism looks forward to later developments in Greek philosophy, as well as in patristic theology, especially after the appearance of the Dionysian corpus.[33] Though he makes no use of the word, Philo's association of the name 'God' with divine providence and sovereignty clearly makes the divine essence ὑπέρθεος.[34] In the same way, his doctrine of the Logos would seem to suggest that, for Philo, God is ἐπέκεινα τοῦ νοῦ, even without any explicit employment of the phrase.[35] This follows from the fact that the Logos, which he equates in the *De opificio* with the divine Mind,[36] is regularly subordinated to the divine essence, most famously earning the label 'second God'.[37]

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[31] *Praem*. 40 (LCL 341:334): ἐκεῖνο μὲν γάρ, ὃ καὶ ἀγαθοῦ κρεῖττον καὶ μονάδος πρεσβύτερον καὶ ἑνὸς εἰλικρινέστερον, ἀμήχανον ὑφ' ἑτέρου θεωρεῖσθαί τινος, διότι μόνῳ θέμις αὐτῷ ὑφ' ἑαυτοῦ καταλαμβάνεσθαι. What Philo means by πρεσβύτερον is clear from *Contempl*. 2 (LCL 363:114): μονάδος ἀρχεγονώτερον (more basic than the monad).

[32] *Leg*. 3.206–7 (LCL 226:440–2). Winston, 'Philo's Conception', p. 23, n. 6: 'Wolfson rightly pointed out that "though Philo used many negative descriptions of God, he does not say outright that, as a result of the unknowability and ineffability of God, He is to be described by negations. Nor does he apply the principle of negation as an interpretation of those predicates in Scripture that are couched in positive form" (*Philo* 1.117). Philo did not need to do so, since in his view these predicates indicate only God's properties and not his absolute essence.'

[33] Runia, 'The Beginnings of the End: Philo of Alexandria and Hellenistic Theology', in Dorothea Frede and Andre Laks (eds.), *Traditions of Theology: Studies in Hellenistic Theology, its Background and Aftermath* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), pp. 281–312, at 312; John Whittaker, 'Catachresis and Negative Theology: Philo of Alexandria and Basilides', in S. Gersh and Ch. Kannengiesser (eds.), *Platonism in Late Antiquity* (Christianity and Judaism in Antiquity, 8; Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1992), pp. 61–82. Cf. Wolfson, *Philo* 2:110–38. Wolfson's identification of Philo himself (and specifically his synthesis of Jewish religion and Greek philosophy) as the main source of subsequent apophatic theology is critiqued by Runia, 'Naming', pp. 82–3.

[34] Cf. *Divine Names* 1.5–2.11 (ed. Beate Regina Suchla [Patristische Texte und Studien, 33; Berlin: De Gruyter, 1990], pp. 117, 125, 126, 135, 136).

[35] Cf. J. Whittaker, 'Ἐπέκεινα νοῦ καὶ οὐσίας', *VC* 23 (1969), pp. 91–104.

[36] *Opif*. 20, 24–5.

[37] Cf. *QG* 2.62 (LCL 380:150); *Leg*. 3.207–8.

The consequently supernoetic character of the divine essence is expressed in the divine reply to Moses, where God says that, insofar as he is not sensible, he is intelligible (νοητός), but only in the sense that *if he could be grasped*, it would be by the intellect and not by the senses.[38]

  Along similar lines, it is important to note that though Philo calls God τὸ ὄν,[39] he does not identify the divine essence with Being as such. As already noted, Philo does not see in Exod. 3:14 (ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ Ὤν) the communication of a 'proper name'.[40] As Philo's interpretation of Deut. 32:39 makes clear, 'that God is' is not the same as 'what God is': 'It is quite enough for a man's reasoning faculty to advance as far as to learn that the cause of the universe is (ἐστι) and exists (ὑπάρχει). To be anxious to continue this course yet further, and inquire about essence (οὐσίαν) … is a folly fit for the world's childhood.'[41] Not yet present in Philonic metaphysics is the conflation of essence and existence in the Divine which will develop as a later solution to the problem of divine simplicity. For Philo, the divine οὐσία, as absolutely transcendent, is beyond all names and even beyond 'being' itself. As we shall see, such distinctions will ultimately allow Philo to apply the name of 'God' to Moses without impinging on 'what' God is.

THE ONTOLOGICAL GAP AND DIVINE IMMANENCE

  As radically transcendent, the Divine constitutes within Philonic ontology an absolutely unique category, so that all other beings are distinguished from God as being outside him and below him. In contrast to God, who simply 'is', Philo speaks of creation—the world (ὁ κόσμος) or the universe (τὸ πάν)[42]—as generate.[43] In his substance, God is disconnected from this realm of becoming,[44] being entirely singular and alone, with the result that there is

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[38] *Spec.* 1.46–7 (LCL 320:124). For Philo the intelligible world is also created, and a product of the divine Mind (see *Opif.* 16).

[39] For an additional example, see *Fug.* 89 (LCL 275:59).

[40] See n. 19 above. Cf. *Deo* 4: 'This name "Being" is not his own and proper name. For he himself is unnamable and beyond expression, as being incomprehensible. But, inasmuch as he is, he is named "the Being"' (F. Siegert, 'The Philonian Fragment *De Deo*: First English Translation', *SPhilo* 10 [1998], pp. 1–33).

[41] *Post.* 168 (LCL 227:430); cf. n. 14 above. Cf. Runia, 'Beginnings', p. 299.

[42] *Spec.* 1.34, 41 (LCL 320:119, 122).

[43] τὸ εἰς γένεσιν ἧκον (ibid. 1.43); γενητὴ φύσις (*Praem.* 39; LCL 341:334); cf. *Mut.* 27 (275:157); ibid., 181 (LCL 275:234), where Philo contrasts created (τὸν γενόμενον) and uncreated (ἀγένητον).

[44] πάσης γενέσεως διεζευγμένος κατὰ τὴν οὐσίαν (*Somn.* 2.28; LCL 275:457).

nothing at all which is like him.[45] Runia accurately speaks of the resultant dichotomy as an 'ontological divide'.[46] Creation, in other words, exists not on a continuum with Divinity, but in opposition to it.[47]

At the same time, Philo's principal concern in characterizing the world as generate and contingent is to emphasize God's role in bringing it about and caring for it.[48] God, though transcendent, is not unqualifiedly remote and inaccessible. For Philo, it is equally important that the unnamable God be active and solicitous for creation, since the denial of his involvement would imply that the universe is somehow autonomous and parallel to divinity.[49] The result is that the sensible world, whose existence and reality is naturally taken for granted, would detract from, rather than lead to, divine majesty.[50] If the affirmation of transcendence is to exalt God, therefore, it must be taken together with divine immanence, lest the world be left to itself, unexplained and self-determining.

To bridge the gap between the divine essence and the creation, Philo articulates an elaborate though diffuse doctrine of divine Powers (δυνάμεις), which Roberto Radice has described as 'a kind of screen between a transcendent God and the sensible world'.[51]

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[45] μόνος δὲ καὶ καθ' αὑτὸν εἷς ὢν ὁ θεός, οὐδὲν δὲ ὅμοιον θεῷ (*Leg.* 2.1; LCL 226:224).

[46] Runia, 'Beginnings', p. 304; cf. Runia, 'God and Man', p. 67. According to Runia, it is precisely this fundamental difference between God and creation, and not the eternity of the world per se, which is at stake in the early chapters of the *De opificio* (7–12) ('Beginnings', p. 289).

[47] M. David Litwa's claim that only 'in later Christian theology the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo* constructed an impermeable barrier between *the essence of God* and that of every creature' ('Deification', pp. 5–6), seems a regrettable confusion of Philo's terms, since Litwa otherwise acknowledges that 'there *is* an unbridgeable gap in Philo's onto-theology—but it is the gap between *Being and becoming,* not between divinity and generate reality' [*sic*] (ibid., p. 8).

[48] *Opif.* 7 (LCL 226:8): Τινὲς γὰρ τὸν κόσμον μᾶλλον ἢ τὸν κοσμοποιὸν θαυμάσαντες τὸν μὲν ἀγένητόν τε καὶ ἀίδιον ἀπεφήναντο.

[49] Ibid.: τοῦ δὲ θεοῦ πολλὴν ἀπραξίαν ἀνάγνως κατεψεύσαντο, δέον ἔμπαλιν τοῦ μὲν τὰς δυνάμεις ὡς ποιητοῦ καὶ πατρὸς καταπλαγῆναι, τὸν δὲ μὴ πλέον ἀποσεμνῦναι τοῦ μετρίου.

[50] The passage just cited manifests the reciprocal relationship between idolatrous 'wonder' before the cosmos (cf. θαυμάσαντες above), with its attendant 'veneration' (cf. ἀποσεμνῦναι), and the disregard for divine power. By Philo's account of the world, it is likewise contradictory to argue that the universe, with all its order, has no principle and overseer outside itself: ἀπερίμαχητον δὲ δόγμα καὶ ἀνωφελὲς ἀναρχίαν ὡς ἐν πόλει κατασκευάζον τῷδε τῷ κόσμῳ τὸν ἔφορον ἢ βραβευτὴν ἢ δικαστὴν οὐκ ἔχοντι, ὑφ' οὗ πάντ' οἰκονομεῖσθαι καὶ πρυτανεύεσθαι θέμις (*Opif.* 11; LCL 226:10). Cf. *Praem.* 41.

[51] 'Philo's Theology', in Adam Kamesar (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Philo* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 136.

These are 'the things after God', or the divine glory, which Moses asks to see upon being refused access to the divine essence.[52] Philo therefore likens them to 'reflections' of the Divine (ἀπαυγαζομένων ἀπὸ τούτου σκιῶν).[53] Unlike the divine essence, which leaves no *vestigia* among created things,[54] the operation (ἐνέργεια) of God's Powers is reflected in creation and visible to the 'eyes of the mind'.[55] Philo thus refers to the Powers as 'activities' (δρώμενα),[56] distinguishing God's work in the world from the divine essence, so that 'what God is' is not determined by what he does.[57] For, 'no one should think that these reflections can be *properly* spoken of as God'.[58]

Though manifold, Philo ultimately reduces the Powers to two.[59] 'Whereas God', he says, 'is in fact (ὄντως ὄντα) one, his highest and primary Powers are two: Goodness and Authority (ἐξουσίαν).'[60] Through the former, God created the world, and through the latter he governs his creation.[61] This division is expressed in a variety of names for the two divine 'squires' of the Transcendent:[62] creative (κτίζον) and ruling energies,[63] creative (ποιητική) and royal Powers,[64] Benefactor and Lawgiver.[65] They

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[52] *Spec.* 1.45 (LCL 320:124): δόξαν δὲ σὴν εἶναι νομίζω τὰς περὶ σὲ δορυφορούσας δυνάμεις, ὧν διαφεύγουσα ἡ κατάληψις ἄχρι τοῦ παρόντος οὐ μικρὸν ἐνεργάζεταί μοι πόθον τῆς διαγνώσεως.

[53] *Abr.* 119 (LCL 289:62). To call these 'shadows', as Colson does, seems to destroy the image, which Philo describes as ἄσκιος. Similarly, it seems contradictory to speak of shadows as 'shining forth' (ἀπαυγαζομένων) from light. Cf. *Mut.* 6.

[54] See *Spec.* 1.41–2; cf. *Mut.* 8.

[55] Ibid., 47, 49 (LCL 320:124, 126).

[56] *Abr.* 122; LCL 289:64.

[57] Cf. Calabi, *God's Acting*, 52. In this way, 'creatorship does not exhaust the fullness of the divine Being' (Runia, 'Beginnings', 304). Radice ('Philo's Theology', 135) traces the distinction 'between the essence and the power of God, which was no doubt taken over by Philo' to the pseudo-Aristotelian *De mundo* 6, 397ᵇ16–20.

[58] *Abr.* 120 (LCL 289:63). Operative here, again, is the notion of a 'proper name', reflected in the verb κυριολογεῖσθαι.

[59] 'From these two Powers have grown the others' (*QE* 2.68; LCL 401:113–14); cf. ibid. (LCL 401:118); *Fug.* 95; *Legat.* 6–7; *Conf.* 170–2.

[60] *Cher.* 27 (LCL 227:24).

[61] *Her.* 166 (LCL 261:364).

[62] *Migr.* 170 (LCL 261:230). Cf. *Abr.* 122 (LCL 289:65).

[63] *Abr.* 122 (LCL 289:64); see n. 55 above.

[64] Ibid., 121 (LCL 289:62).

[65] *QE* 2.68 (LCL 401:117). Cf. *Fug.* 95.

are represented by the Cherubim[66] and stand, respectively, at the right and left of true Being.[67]

Reinforcing the transcendence of essence even over the name 'God', Philo calls the creative Power (i.e. Goodness) θεός.[68] As discussed earlier, Philo understands by this term an oeconomic designation of God's role as Creator[69] and not of the divine essence *per se*. Etymologically, Philo links θεός with τίθημι, so that to speak of 'God' is to speak of the Divine as builder of creation: 'His creative Power is called God because through it He established (ἔθηκε) and made and ordered this universe.'[70] In the same way, as Goodness,[71] and as subsistent beneficence,[72] the creative Power is understood as relative to the object of divine benevolence.

> For a king is a king of someone and a benefactor the benefactor of someone, while the subject of the kingship and the recipient of the benefit is necessarily something different. Akin to these two is the creative Power called God, because through this the Father who is its begetter and contriver made the universe.[73]

In the same way, the authoritative Power is called κύριος, since to call God 'Lord' is not to say something about what he is, but rather about how he relates to the world.[74] It is on account of his authority (κῦρος) over creation that he is called a king. In a special way, this applies to the experience of God by those unworthy of him, since for them divinity is defined by its firm rule over their lives and actions.[75]

As God and Lord respectively, the Powers represent two distinct experiences of the one God.[76] The Powers, as two

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[66] *On Mos.* 2.99; *QE* 2.62, 64.

[67] *Abr.* 124 (LCL 289:64): τοῦ ὄντως ὄντος.

[68] *QE* 2.62, 68 (LCL 401:109, 116).

[69] See n. 29 above.

[70] *Mos.* 2.99 (LCL 289:497–9); cf. *QE* 2.62 (LCL 401:109). Cf. the metaphor of the city planner in *Opif.* 16–25.

[71] See n. 60 above.

[72] See *Abr.* 125.

[73] *Mut.* 28–9 (LCL 275:157–9).

[74] *Abr.* 121 (LCL 289:62); *Mos.* 2.99 (LCL 289:498).

[75] *Mut.* 23–4 (LCL 275:154–5): 'So then He is shown to be the Lord of the foolish in that He holds over them the terrors that are proper to the sovereign… . for it is His will that the wicked man should be under His sway as his Lord, and thus with awe and groaning feel the fear of the Master hanging over him'. For the same reason the ruling Power is also characterized as 'punitive' (see e.g. *QE* 2.68; LCL 401:117).

[76] See *Abr.* 124 (LCL 289:64): 'The orders of human character are three, each of which is assigned one of the aforementioned visions. The best sees the

refractions of God's light, form, together with Being, a threefold vision (φαντασία) of God. The Divine appears in this way when the mind (διάνοια) is as yet unable to apprehend the divine simplicity—'when it is incapable of apprehending Being alone, but only through its energies'.[77] The apparent multiplicity of God, then, is subjective, and when the mind is 'supremely purified', the vision is resolved into a singularity. In this sense Philo speaks of 'the eternal reciprocity (προσβολήν) of the names'.[78] 'For the Powers which God employs are unmixed (cf. Ps. 74:8) in respect of Himself, but mixed to created beings. For it cannot be that mortal nature should have room for the unmixed.'[79]

The ultimate unity of existence and operation in Philo is consistent with the Alexandrian's insistence on a distinction between the fact 'that' God is and 'what' he is. The former, and not the latter, is comprehensible.[80] 'Here[81] he does not say "see me", for it is impossible that God, who is, should be perceived at all by what comes to be (γενέσεως). What he says is "see *that* I am", i.e. "behold my existence (ὕπαρξιν)".'[82] Even if Being is in a sense more basic than the multiple divine Powers, it nevertheless constitutes a part of the *vision* of God, to which the essence is not susceptible.[83] God's *being* in the world is therefore identical with his creative and sovereign activity. Thus, though ultimately undifferentiated, except subjectively, from the divine energy, God's

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one in the middle: that of true being. The one after it sees the one to its right: the beneficent, which bears the name "God". The third sees the one on its left: the ruling, which is called "Lord".'

[77] *Abr.* 122 (LCL 289:64).

[78] *QE* 2.66 (LCL 401:112). 'For both rightly look at each other and at the mercy seat, for if God were not propitious to those things which exist together, he would not have made anything through the creative Power, nor would he have been a lawgiver through the royal Power' (ibid., 113).

[79] *Deus* 77 (LCL 247:49). Cf. *Sacr.* 17. See Runia, 'Beginnings', p. 301; Wolfson, *Philo* 2:130: 'The problem of the divine predicates, as it presents itself to him as a philosopher, is therefore a problem of the relation of the terms applied to God as predicates to God who is their subject.'

[80] Cf. his reference to κατάληψις in *Abr.* 122 (LCL 289:64). 'For true Being can be perceived and known (κατανοεῖσθαί τε καὶ γνωρίζεσθαι), not only through the ears, but with the eyes of the mind, from the Powers that range the world, and from the constant and ceaseless motion of His ineffable works' (*Post.* 167; LCL 227:426–7).

[81] I.e. in Deut. 32:39.

[82] *Post.* 168 (LCL 227:426–9).

[83] Cf. *Abr.* 119, 124. On the consistent distinction between the higher and lower ways of knowing God, see *Abr.* 123, where creative and ruling action are subordinated to divine Being; and *Praem.* 42–5, where Philo distinguishes the direct knowledge of God from the inductive.

existence, as limited to an existence 'in the world', is nevertheless
distinct from the divine essence, since the latter transcends the
world entirely.

   As reflections of singular Being, the divine Powers are, in turn,
the 'constitutive polar principles' of the Logos,[84] to which they
are ultimately reducible.[85] A more refined expression of God's
subjective multiplicity, the Logos is the first intelligible principle
of creation, ontologically subordinate to the transcendent essence.
Philo outlines the *taxis* in the following way:

> In the first place there is he that is more basic than the One and the
> Monad and the Beginning. Then comes the Logos of him that is: the
> truly seminal essence of beings. And from the divine Logos, as from a
> spring, there divide and break forth two Powers.[86]

Above the Word is he that speaks it (ὁ Λέγων),[87] and the Logos in
turn constitutes God's 'firstborn' (πρωτόγονον).[88] It is a 'second
God',[89] which appeared to Isaac 'in the place of God' (Gen.
31:13).[90] Philo distinguishes it from the Transcendent by the ab-
sence of the article. Whereas the unknowable Divinity is ὁ θεός, the
Logos is simply θεός—(a) God, but not *the* God.[91] It is 'God' in the
sense that a name is catachrestically applied to the Unnamable.[92]

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[84] Winston, 'Philo's Conception', p. 22. 'The various positive properties
attributed to God by Philo are all subsumed under one or the other of these
two polar forces, and are therefore all expressions of the Logos, manifesting
God as thinking/acting' (ibid.).

[85] *QE* 2.68 (LCL 401:116): ἀπὸ δὲ τοῦ θείου λόγου, καθάπερ ἀπὸ πηγῆς,
σχίζονται δύο δυνάμεις. Cf. *Cher.* 28 (LCL 227:24): λόγῳ γὰρ καὶ ἄρχοντα καὶ
ἀγαθὸν εἶναι τὸν θεόν.

[86] *QE* 2.68 (LCL 401:116). Cf. *Leg.* 2.86 (LCL 226:278): τὸ δὲ γενικώτατόν
ἐστιν ὁ θεός, καὶ δεύτερος ὁ θεοῦ λόγος.

[87] Ibid. (LCL 401:117–18).

[88] *Conf.* 146 (LCL 261:88).

[89] See *Leg.* 3.207; *QG* 2.62.

[90] *Somn.* 1.227.

[91] The modern, instinctive attempt to preserve this distinction is evident in
the use of 'god' in place of 'God' (see Runia, 'God and Man', p. 61. Cf. K.
Rahner, 'Theos in the New Testament', in *Theological Investigations* 1: God,
Christ, Mary and Grace, trans. C. Ernst [Baltimore: Helicon Press, 1961], pp.
79–148). Such a method of differentiation, while in one sense convenient, is
also misleading, in that it strongly connotes a multiplicity of 'substance' rather
than a diffusion or energetic replication of the singular Deity. It is, I believe,
one of the root causes of the initial discomfort with deification, which seems to
multiply divinity and thus contradict monotheism (treated below).

[92] *Somn.* 1.230–1. Reflecting the subjective multiplicity of the divine names,
the Logos is in fact polyonymous (πολυώνυμον ὑπάρχοντα) (*Conf.* 146; LCL
261:144). Philo actually refers to it as 'the Name of God' (cf. *Leg.* 207).

As the 'screen' between God and the world, the Logos is the 'instrument of creation' mediating between Divinity and the world.[93] 'For God', he says, 'created by speaking (λέγων).' And, 'his Word was his action'.[94] Indeed, as noted earlier, it is equally important for Philo to maintain the connection between God, as active cause, and the world, as his creation.[95] For, while God is beyond the world, he must also be its maker and provider.[96] 'But between that which has never been brought into being and one who is not its Creator there is no kinship (οἰκείωσις) whatsoever.'[97] Through the Logos, therefore, Philo establishes a true relationship (οἰκειότητα) between creation and its Creator, who is otherwise unreachable.[98]

But the Logos does not only represent the divine operation acting externally upon creation. It is also the *Grund* of creation. The Logos in fact 'holds all things in its embrace and has interfused itself through the parts of the universe'.[99] The Logos is thus God, not only *pro nobis*,[100] but as the very substance of creation, penetrating it and giving it being. It is for this reason that, as we have already seen, Philo calls it the 'seminal essence of beings'.[101] As 'active cause' of what is essentially indeterminate, God gives life, movement, and form to what is of itself soulless, motionless, and shapeless,[102] bringing the non-existent into the realm of being.[103] As Goodness itself, God informs, ensouls, and sets the world in motion not by creating

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[93] Radice, 'Philo's Theology', p. 136. Cf. *QE* 2.68.

[94] *Sacr.* 65 (LCL 227:142). Cf. *Mos.* 1.183.

[95] Cf. *Her.* 169.

[96] 'For it stands to reason that what has been brought into existence should be cared for by its Father and Maker. For, as we know, it is a father's aim in regard to his offspring and an artificer's in regard to his handiwork to preserve them, and by every means to fend off from them aught that may entail loss or harm. He keenly desires to provide for them in every way all that is beneficial and to their advantage' (*Opif.* 10; LCL 226:11).

[97] *Opif.* 10 (LCL 226:10–11).

[98] *QG* 2.62 (LCL 380:151).

[99] *Conf.* 137 (LCL 261:85). Here Philo is referring specifically to the creative Power.

[100] οὗτος γὰρ ἡμῶν τῶν ἀτελῶν ἂν εἴη θεός (*Leg.* 3.207; LCL 226:442).

[101] See n. 86 above.

[102] *Opif.* 21. On the identity of pure receptivity with non-being, see Radice, 'Philo's Theology', p. 145; to ascribe to Philo a belief in pre-existent matter or chaos is to misunderstand the Platonic view of matter and being (cf. Runia, 'Beginnings', p. 289).

[103] τὰ μὴ ὄντα ἤγαγεν εἰς τὸ εἶναι (*Mos.* 2.100; LCL 289:498). It is the intermediary status between non-being and being that earns creation the name γένεσις (see *Opif.* 12; LCL 226:12).

its actualizing properties *ex nihilo*, but by bestowing something 'of his own nature' on the passive principle.[104]

The Logos is thus not simply the 'hand of God', but the very archetype of the sensible world. *In abstracto*, Philo will even equate the world, as Idea, with the divine mind. The relationship between the sensible and intelligible worlds, and between the intelligible world and the divine Intellect, is famously delineated in the early chapters of Philo's *De opificio*. There Philo tells us that, as active cause, the divine Mind permeates creation. It is ὁ τῶν ὅλων νοῦς.[105] As the Logos of God, it is also the 'place' of the divine ideas, after which the sensible world is patterned, just as the intelligible form of a city exists as a blueprint in the mind of a planner.[106] Insofar as it is 'in God' in this way, Philo will even call the human intellect 'a fragment of the Logos'.[107]

The human race, made in the image of God (Gen. 9:6), is thus patterned not after the Transcendent as such, but after the Logos. 'For nothing mortal can be made in the likeness of the most high One and father of the universe, but only in that of the second God, who is his Logos.'[108] This, according to Runia, is one of the principal ways in which Philo maintains 'the distance between God and man', since although God grounds creation as its rational essence, he remains, in himself, simultaneously remote.[109] It is this antinomy which leads Philo to state that 'this divine nature which presents itself to us, as visible and comprehensible and everywhere, is in reality invisible incomprehensible and nowhere'.[110]

THE ONE GOD

As 'the face of God turned towards creation',[111] the Logos/Powers cannot simply remain 'immanent' in the sense of being

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[104] οὗ χάριν τῆς ἀρίστης αὐτοῦ φύσεως οὐκ ἐφθόνησεν οὐσίᾳ μηδὲν ἐξ αὐτῆς ἐχούσῃ καλόν (*Opif*. 21; LCL 226:18). Cf. Wolfson, *Philo* 2:326: 'He does follow, however, Plato's description of the ideas as being not only patterns (παραδείγματα) apart from the world, of which things in the world are only imitations (μιμήσεις), but as being also in the world through their presence (παρουσία) in it, through their communion (κοινωνία) with it, and through the participation (μεθέξις) of things in them.'

[105] *Opif*. 8 (LCL 226:10).

[106] Ibid. 20.

[107] *Det*. 90 (LCL 227:262); cf. *Opif*. 146, *Spec*. 4.123.

[108] *QG* 2.62 (LCL 380:150). Cf. *Somn*. 1.239.

[109] 'God and Man', p. 67.

[110] *Conf*. 138 (LCL 261:84).

[111] Winston, *Logos and Mystical Theology in Philo of Alexandria* (Cincinnati, OH: Hebrew Union College Press, 1985), p. 50.

synonymous with their created effects. Although they are defined by a correlativity with generate reality, they are nevertheless divine (i.e. 'part' of God), and, as such, must, in some way, be *more* than the creation. Philo describes the simultaneity of their indwelling and transcendence as follows:

He existed before everything created, and he who is here exists also there and elsewhere and everywhere, for he has filled all wholly and entirely and left nothing bereft of himself. For He does not say 'I will stand here and there' (Exod. 17:6), but 'even now, when I am present here, I stand at the same time there also. My motion is not one of transference in space, as when one leaves a place and occupies another, but it is a motion of self-extension and self-expansion.'[112]

Even *qua* Creator, then, God transcends his own activity. Mind, though formally identical with the universe as intelligible Idea, is nevertheless 'most pure and unsullied, transcending virtue, knowledge, and the Good itself'.[113] The same language, in other words, which distinguishes the unknowable divine essence is used to separate divine Reason from its effects. In the same way, in his *Special Laws*, Philo distinguishes between the Logos/Powers as they are on the one hand, and the evidence of their activity in the world on the other. 'While in their essence', he says, 'they are beyond your apprehension, they nevertheless present to your sight a sort of impress and copy of their ἐνέργεια.'[114]

This crucial distinction is explained in Philo's precise account of creation by the analogy of the seal, which is *formally* present in its effect, but is unaffected materially by the impress, and even absent from it: 'As, then, the city which was fashioned beforehand within the mind of the architect held no place in the outer world, but had been engraved in the soul of the artificer as by a seal.'[115] According to Runia, it is precisely 'the ontological gap between model and copy' employed by this image that allows Philo to maintain 'the distance between God and man'.[116] As the *formal*, and not only the *efficient*, cause of creation, God is both determinative and constitutive of reality and yet wholly undetermined by it.[117] Expanding on the analogy of the seal, Philo continues: 'They themselves are not docked in any part thereby but remain

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[112] *Sacr.* 67 (LCL 227:144–5). Colson and Whitaker have used the two reflexive nouns to translate τονικῇ κινήσει.

[113] *Opif.* 8 (LCL 226:10).

[114] *Spec.*1.47 (LCL 320:125).

[115] *Opif.* 20 (LCL 226:17).

[116] 'God and Man', p. 67.

[117] See n. 104 above.

as they were. Such you must conceive my Powers to be, supplying quality and shape to things which lack either and yet changing or lessening nothing of their eternal nature.'[118] The relationship, in other words, is entirely one-way. Though the divine names which derive from the Creator–creature relationship are, as we have seen, relative, God is no way defined by them. Unaffected by their creative and providential activity, the Logos/Powers are essentially contiguous with the divine substance, which is in no way implicated in the being, or becoming, of creatures.

In this way, therefore, the Logos/Powers, whereby God penetrates generate reality, are themselves transcendent. In language reminiscent of 'what' God is, Philo states that 'Reason cannot attain to ascend to God, who nowhere can be touched or handled, but subsides and ebbs away unable to find the proper words by which it may approach to expound, I do not say the God who is … but even for God's attendant Powers.'[119] As David Runia puts this,

The Logos as divine hypostasis has a transcendent and an immanent aspect, the former manifest above all in its role as place of the noetic cosmos in the process of creation (cf. the model in the Timaeus), the latter in its role as providential maintainer of the cosmos once it is created (cf. Plato's world-soul or the Stoic Logos).[120]

To the extent, then, that the Logos/Powers are also transcendent, they cannot be divided from the essence, as Wolfson has argued.[121] As we have seen, the Logos/Powers, 'in the sense of the property of God to act', are already reducible to God *qua* being, since a difference *in re* among God's attributes risks

[118] *Spec.* 1.47 (LCL 320:125).

[119] *Legat.* 6 (LCL 279:5); cf. Calabi, *God's Acting*, p. 44.

[120] 'God and Man', p. 72. Cf. Radice, 'Philo's Theology', p. 135: 'The philosophical doctrine of the powers … allowed Philo to maintain both the oneness of God despite His many names and epithets, and the transcendence of God despite His action in the world.'

[121] This is how I have understood Wolfson's point that 'the powers of God in the sense of the property of God to act, as we have seen, are not *distinct* from the essence of God' (Wolfson, *Philo* 2:138, emphasis mine). Wolfson had already argued (p. 132) that the Powers did not 'define' God (cf. Winston, 'Philo's Conception', p. 22; see n. 121). The thrust of his argument is that the essence and the Powers always refer to *the same*, single *God*, not as indistinct from one another in the way that the Powers themselves are ultimately indistinguishable *extra mentem*. For this reason I disagree with Francesca Calabi, who, though approaching an essence–energy distinction in her study of Philo's metaphysics (*God's Acting*, p. 8; cf. pp. 13–14), seems to conclude in favour of a merely conceptual distinction between essence and Powers (see ibid., pp. 53, 55–6).

destroying divine simplicity.[122] Here we see yet a further enfold-
ing of the divine life, so that, although the Logos/Powers are not
reduced to objective identification with the divine essence *per se*,
they are nevertheless identified with the one God who transcends
the universe in that they, too, stand above creation. By being
brought to the level of transcendence, therefore, they fully bridge
the gap between the unknowable God and the world.

DEIFICATION AS PARTICIPATION IN THE DIVINE

The foregoing distinction between God's transcendent and im-
manent aspects, as well their basic unity, constitute for Philo the
basis for a language of deification that is precise and carefully
qualified, so that for the Jewish thinker it is no scandal to call the
saintly Moses 'God'. Yet, overlooking the metaphysical dimen-
sions of Philo's doctrine of God, some scholars have in the past
seen a vacillation[123] or wavering[124] in the Alexandrian's approach
to Moses's divinity.

In his work *On the Sacrifices*, Philo exalts Moses to the status of
the immortal God in words that leave little room for interpret-
ation:

And even when God sent him as a loan to the earthly sphere and suffered
him to dwell therein, he gifted him with no ordinary excellence, such as
that which kings and rulers have, wherewith to hold sway and sovereignty
over the passions of the soul, but He appointed him as God, placing all
the bodily region and the mind which rules it in subjection and slavery to

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[122] Wolfson, *Philo* 2:133: 'But another question must have arisen in the mind
of Philo. The essence of God is one and simple and consequently whatever be-
longs to it as a property must be one and simple, for, if you assume that He
has many properties, then you will have to say either that His essence is not
one or simple or that some of these properties do not belong to Him in virtue
of His essence; in the latter case they would be not properties but accidents.
How could one therefore explain the multiplicity of properties which Scripture
predicates of God? In answer to this Philo reduces all the properties predicated
of God to only a single property, that of acting.' Cf. D. Winston, 'Philo's
Conception of the Divine Nature', p. 22: 'All God's properties are, strictly
speaking properties (*idiotetes*). They are derivative of his Essence, but, unlike
definitions, do not indicate that essence itself and, unlike qualities, are not
shared with others. Further, since the essence of God is one and single, what-
ever belongs to it as a property must be one and single. Thus Philo reduces all
divine properties to a single one, that of acting.' But cf. Calabi, *God's Acting*,
p. 51.
[123] E. R. Goodenough, *By Light, Light: The Mystical Gospel of Hellenistic
Judaism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1935), p. 223.
[124] Wayne Meeks, *The Prophet-King: Moses Traditions and the Johannine
Christology* (Leiden: Brill, 1967), p. 105.

him. 'I give you', he says, '(as) God to Pharaoh' (Exod. 7:1); but God is not susceptible of addition (πρόσθεσιν)[125] or diminution, being fully and unchangeably himself, and therefore we are told that no man knows Moses's grave (cf. Deut. 34:6).[126]

Not only is Moses here assigned an origin 'above the earth', but the absence of any burial site for his remains is attributed to his possession of immortality and immutability *qua* God. And yet Philo is clearly opposed to the apotheosis of pagan leaders, for 'sooner could God transform into a human than a human into God'.[127]

   Philo reconciles the ostensible paradox embodied by Moses by explaining that the Hebrew prophet *receives* the attributes that mark Divinity[128] and does not possess them by nature. Indeed, he 'suffers' them, and plays no active role in their acquisition, since God is the source of the 'energy' that renders Moses divine.[129] Moses is thus not God in an unequivocal sense (μὴ πρὸς ἀλήθειαν). Such heavily qualified language pervades Philo's writings and is a natural outgrowth of his apophatic (i.e. catachrestic) theology. 'Strictly speaking', creation has nothing in common with God.[130] In the same way, if one speaks of Moses as 'God', it is only equivocally (i.e. not 'in truth'). This is possible, as we have seen, because 'God' is not a 'proper name' of the Uncreated. As Runia points out: 'If the name or title θεός cannot be predicated of God as He really is, then it is easier to understand how God and Moses can share the same name.'[131] But taken as a generic name for the ineffable essence, the name 'God' cannot apply to any creature 'strictly speaking'. Caligula's heinous pretensions to divinity must therefore be seen as disrespecting this distinction, mingling the two sides of the ontological divide in a blasphemous way.

   Seen through the lens of participation, the language of deification is not qualitatively different from the language of formal causality. Just as creation comes to be by a bestowal of divine

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[125] Cf. Acts 13:36: Δαυὶδ … προσετέθη πρὸς τοὺς πατέρας αὐτοῦ.

[126] *Sacr.* 9–10 (LCL 227:100–1).

[127] *Legat.* 118 (LCL 279:59).

[128] As divine names indicative of the one God 'who is', the Powers have thus been identified by Wolfson as properties of the divine essence, in contradistinction to accidents or qualities. 'The predicates of God', he notes, 'logically can be nothing but what Aristotle calls property. And so we find that Philo repeatedly uses the term property (ἴδιον) as a description of the terms predicated of God in their relation to their subject' (2:131).

[129] τοῦ διδομένου πάσχοντος, οὐ δρῶντος (*Det.* 161; LCL 227:161).

[130] θεῷ γὰρ ὅμοιον πρὸς ἀλήθειαν μὲν οὐδέν (*Somn.* 1.73; LCL 275:335).

[131] Runia, 'God and Man', p. 56; cf. p. 60.

motion, form, and soul—by Goodness giving *of itself* to a kind of vacuum of goodness[132]—so what is recognized as divinity is presented to creatures as a gift of God's own nature.[133] This is indeed Philo's interpretation of Deut. 5:31.[134] He states: 'Being, which moves and turns all else is itself unmoved and unchanging;[135] and it gives the zealous man a share in its own nature, which is repose.'[136]

As 'imparted', divinity is in turn 'exercised' by the creature. According to Philo, creation therefore evinces a hierarchical order of divinity, since

The mind imparts to the portion of the soul that is devoid of reason a share of that which it has received from God, so that the mind was besouled by God, but the unreasoning part by the mind. For the mind is, so to speak, God of the unreasoning part. In like manner he does not hesitate to speak of Moses as 'God to Pharaoh' (Exod. 7:1). For of the things which come into being some come into being both by God's Power and through God's agency, while others come into being by God's power but not by His agency.[137]

What Philo outlines here is mediated divinity, distinguished as divine *power* distinct from efficient causality. God is operative in lower forms of being, such as in the irrational soul, in the same way that God is present to Pharaoh, namely through the agency and mediation of something higher that has been deified.[138] But he remains the origin and the substance of that power.

The fact that deification is participatory also means that there is no multiplication of deity. Rather, the divinized individual shares in Unity itself, again as a property of God:

For when the prophetic mind becomes divinely inspired and filled with God, it becomes like the Monad, not being at all mixed with any of those

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[132] οὐσίᾳ μηδὲν ἐξ αὑτῆς ἐχούσῃ καλόν (*Opif.* 21; LCL 226:18); cf ibid., 23: τὴν ἄνευ δωρεᾶς θείας φύσιν οὐδενὸς ἀγαθοῦ δυναμένην ἐπιλαχεῖν ἐξ ἑαυτῆς.

[133] The obvious conclusion to be drawn from such an understanding of participation is that Philo does not maintain a hard dichotomy between nature and grace. Though differentiating between the divine properties which are given through creation (nature) and deification (grace), the two phenomena reflect the same metaphysical reality, that of participation.

[134] I.e. the verse σὺ δὲ αὐτοῦ στῆθι μετ᾿ ἐμοῦ.

[135] τὸ ὂν τὸ τὰ ἄλλα κινοῦν καὶ τρέπον ἀκίνητόν τε καὶ ἄτρεπτον.

[136] τῆς ἑαυτοῦ φύσεως, ἠρεμίας, τῷ σπουδαίῳ μεταδίδωσιν (*Post.* 28; LCL 227:342–4).

[137] *Leg.* 1.40–1 (LCL 226:172).

[138] Cf. *Leg.* 1.5; *Mut.* 27–8. See Wolfson, *Philo* 2:134; Radice, 'Philo's Theology', p. 130.

things associated with duality. But he who is resolved into the nature of unity is said to come near God in a kind of family relation, for having given up and left behind all mortal kinds, he is changed into the divine, so that such men become kin to God and truly divine.[139]

As Runia puts it, then, 'to speak of more than one θεός is not necessarily a conscious departure from monotheism such as Philo understands it',[140] since the 'God' that one becomes is the not 'other' to the one and only God.

Philo's description further makes it clear that the properties participated in by the deified human being do not amount to 'what' God is in the sense of defining his essence. Though the inspired human being becomes one, like the Monad, we have also already seen that God in himself transcends this category. He is 'purer than the One and more primordial than the Monad'.[141] Thus, while a creature is in one sense able to become what God is —divine, single, immutable, immortal—it never reaches, and is thus never confused with, the divine essence. In this way there exist two distinct ways of 'being God', which correspond to Philo's handling of God's simultaneous transcendence and immanence.

Conclusion

Throughout his works Philo develops a doctrine of God that allows for a clear distinction between what Peder Borgen has

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[139] *QE* 2.29 (LCL 401:70).

[140] 'God and Man', p. 62, n. 59. I am in fundamental agreement with Litwa that Moses' deification is specifically a participation in the Logos ('Deification', p. 2, n. 5, 22), but I think Litwa has failed in his attempt to qualify 'divinity' to preserve the unity of God as adhered to by Philo. Litwa projects an explicit polytheism onto Philo that is exceedingly problematic in the light of Philo's apology for divine singularity (see e.g. *Leg.* 2.1–3, 3.82; *Opif.* 171, *QE* 2.29; *Her.* 183; *Deus* 11; and Litwa's ostensible accession to such passages: 'Deification', pp. 14, 16, n. 69). Litwa's claim that Philo, and most contemporary Jews, did not believe in 'a numerically singular being' is erroneous on its face. Even if it is true that scholarly consensus holds that 'typically ancient monotheism amounts [only] to the idea of the high God's absolute power', Litwa would need to prove that this applies to first-century Judaism, and specifically Philo. As it stands, Philo's doctrine of God cannot be lumped together with 'fluid' understandings of divinity generically held by 'philosophers and theologians in the ancient Mediterranean world' (p. 6; cf. p. 26). I believe Runia is correct when he says ('Beginnings', 291), 'The unicity of God is a standard apologetic theme of Judaism which Philo wants to retain as one of the five chief lessons of the treatise'. Cf. Radice, 'Philo's Theology', p. 129, n. 10; Wolfson, *Philo* 2:13–14; *Letter of Aristeas* 135–7.

[141] *Contempl.* 2 (LCL 363:114).

called the legitimate and illegitimate ascents to divinity.[142] In the case of Caligula, 'the created and corruptible nature of man was made to appear uncreated and incorruptible by a deification which our nation judged to be the most grievous impiety'.[143] But in the case of Moses, a human being is embraced by his Creator through a generous outpouring of attributes that begins in the very act of creation. For Philo, then, Moses is not a god to be worshipped— his principal objection to idolatry—but a conduit of the uncreated activity of the one and only God. He is 'a God', not replicating and multiplying, but manifesting, the power and being of the Logos, which is the God who permeates the world.

Philo's ability to extend divinity to humankind thus stems from a metaphysical distinction that must be seen as the starting point of a long trajectory culminating in the essence–energies distinction of late Byzantium. The latter may in turn be seen as an analogous, albeit highly developed, form of Philonic ontology. Philo's theology likewise foreshadows more robust treatments of participation in writers like Proclus. As an early synthesis of biblical ideas about God with the conceptual and linguistic inheritance of the Hellenistic world, Philo espouses a nuanced metaphysical system which will have a long history, and which must be taken into account in any attempt to understand his doctrine of deification.

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[142] Borgen, 'Philo', pp. 194–205.
[143] *Legat*. 118 (LCL 279:59); cf. *Contempl*. 6 (LCL 363:116–17).