Protestant Theological University

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Hartog, P.B.

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The ship of state: Metaphor and intertextuality in Philo of Alexandria

Pieter B. Hartog
Protestant Theological University, The Netherlands

Abstract

This article discusses Philo's use of the well-known *state is ship* metaphor. After offering a definition of topos and intertextuality, I discuss passages from the Philonic corpus in which this image features. I will argue that Philo's use of the *state is ship* metaphor in most of his writings must be attributed to Philo's familiarity with a literary trope rather than to intertextual borrowing. The exception is Philo's *Legatio ad Gaium* where, I intend to show, Philo's formulation of the metaphor draws an intertextual connection with Plato's Republic.

Keywords

intertextuality, *Legatio ad Gaium*, Philo of Alexandria, Plato, ship of state, topos

Nautical metaphors are popular depictions of political life. One of the best-known ancient examples is Plato's extended depiction of the state/polis as a ship delivered to unskillful helmsmen in *Resp*. 488a–489d.[1] Before Plato, authors including Alcaeus, Theognis, and Sophocles had employed the image of the ship of state; after him, writers such as Horace and Cassius Dio would do the same, each author developing the metaphor in

1. David Keyt, "Plato and the Ship of State," in *The Blackwell Guide to Plato's* Republic, ed. Gerasimos Santas (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 2006), 189–213; Pablo García Castillo, "Plato: *The Ship of State*," *Philosophical Inquiry* 32/3–4 (2010): 1–22; Alex G. Long, "The Ship of State and the Subordination of Socrates," in *Plato and the Power of Images*, ed. Pierre Destrée and Radcliffe G. Edmonds III (MnemosyneSup 405; Leiden: Brill, 2017), 158–78.

Corresponding author:
Pieter B. Hartog, Protestant Theological University, 25 Oude Ebbingestraat, 9712 HA Groningen, The Netherlands.
Email: P.B.Hartog@pthu.nl

distinctive ways.[2] Closer to our days, Henry Wadsforth Longfellow's poem "O ship of state"[3] offers a classical formulation of the metaphor, which is frequently applied to modern nation-states.[4]

Ancient Jewish authors writing in Greek were familiar with this metaphor, too. The most extended use of the ship of state image by a Jewish author occurs in the works of Philo of Alexandria, a first-century C.E. philosopher and politician from Alexandria. The metaphor of the state as a ship features in several of Philo's writings and plays a central role in his virulent critique of the emperor Gaius Caligula in the *Legatio ad Gaium*. In this contribution, I explore intertextual connections between Philo's development of the metaphor and the works of other authors. As I intend to show, instances where Philo's use of the metaphor must be explained from his knowledge of the writings of others are rare. Instead, Philo, like other writers developing this particular image, draws on a common philosophical topos. The only exception, I shall argue, is Philo's *Legatio*, which exhibits intertextual connections with Plato's *Republic* in how it exploits the metaphor in Philo's critique of the Roman emperor Caligula.

Topos: a cognitive approach

To account for the difference between a literary or philosophical topos and an intertexual link, I suggest a cognitive approach to metaphor can be helpful.[5] As they study pat-

2. Most scholarly attention has been paid to how the metaphor functions as a conception of ancient Greek polis life, especially in Athens. See, for example, Richard Hunter, *Plato and the Traditions of Ancient Literature: The Silent Stream* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 68–81; Carol Dougherty, "Ships, Walls, Men: Classical Athens and the Poetics of Infrastructure," in *Space, Place, and Landscape in Ancient Greek Literature and Culture*, ed. Kate Gilhuly and Nancy Worman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 130–70 (140–42).
3. On the circumstances that inspired Longfellow to write these lines see Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Dana, "'Sail on, O Ship of State!' How Longfellow Came to Write These Lines 100 Years Ago," *Colby Library Quarterly* 13 (1950): 209–14. Online: https://digitalcommons.colby.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1228&context=cq.
4. Consider, for instance, how the high school textbook, David M. Kennedy and Lizabeth Cohen, *The American Pageant: A History of the American People* (15th ed. Boston: Wadsworth, 2013), 180–201, applies the image to the United States. For a broad discussion of the reception of the metaphor, see Norma Thompson, *The Ship of State: Statecraft and Politics from Ancient Greece to Democratic America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001).
5. The classic study of metaphor from a cognitive perspective is George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1980). Cognitive metaphor theory has been influential in the study of biblical and ancient Jewish literature; for helpful surveys of the state of the art see Hanneke van Loon, *Metaphors in the Discussion on Suffering in Job 3–31: Visions of Hope and Consolation* (Biblical Interpretation Series 165; Leiden: Brill, 2018), 4–34; Johan de Joode, *Metaphorical Landscapes and the Theology of the Book of Job: An Analysis of Job's Spatial Metaphors* (Supplements to *Vetus Testamentum* 179; Leiden: Brill, 2019), 12–67.

   I thank Marieke Dhont for suggesting the relevance of cognitive metaphor theory to account for Philo's use of the image of the ship of state. For her own application of this approach see her "A Spring of Living Waters in a Pool of Metaphors: The Metaphorical

terns of human thought, cognitive metaphor theorists would approach the *ship is state* metaphor as an image ingrained in human thinking rather than a series of more or less conscious intertextual developments, with one necessarily building on the other. A wide range of such metaphorical relationships between two or more input spaces have been recognized in the literature.[6] One example is the *anger is heat* metaphor, as discussed by George Lakoff.[7] The popularity of this image as a pattern of human thinking speaks from a comparison of, for instance, the modern-day emoji with steam coming from the nose, which depicts an angry person, with the ancient (and modern) Hebrew expression חרה אף "the burning of the nose," likewise referring to anger.[8] Though separated in time, space, and cultural background, the emoji and the Hebrew expression combine the same input spaces in a blended space, which Lakoff dubs the *anger is heat* metaphor. No historical connection should be assumed between the Hebrew expression and the emoji, but both attest to a cognitive model ingrained in human thought. In short, the connection between anger and heat serves as a literary and conceptual topos.

In similar vein, cognitive theorists have pointed to the *state is ship* metaphor as constituting a cognitive model, which is open to a wide range of applications depending on which elements of the input spaces are mapped onto one another in the blended space.[9] What defines the *state is ship* image as a topos, in this case, is the correlation it assumes between the input spaces "state" and "ship," which each user of the metaphor develops in their own way. In other words, the fact that blending occurs between these two input spaces defines the *state is ship* metaphor as a pattern of human thinking, while the way in which this blending comes about depends on the purposes of individual users of the metaphor.

Ancient Jewish writings that employ the *state is ship* metaphor illustrate this point. In *T. Naph.* 6.1–10, Naphtali sees a ship inscribed "the Ship of Jacob," which symbolizes the political entity of Jacob's sons. The ship is tossed around by a storm, after which Jacob's sons are "all dispersed, even to the outer limits" (7).[10] And 4 *Macc.* 7.1–5

Landscape of 1QH[a] 16:5–27," *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 77/1 (2021): e1–e7.

6. Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner describe metaphorical thinking as a process of blending. Blending, on their view, entails the establishment of connections between two or more input spaces, via a generic space constituting elements shared by the involved input spaces, to arrive at a blended space in which elements from the input spaces are creatively combined. See Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner, *The Way We Think: Conceptual Blending and the Mind's Hidden Complexities* (New York: Basic Books, 2002).
7. *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things: What Categories Reveal about the Mind* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1990 [1987]), 380–415. I owe this example to Fauconnier and Turner, *The Way We Think*, 299–302.
8. See, for example, Gen 39:19; Exod 32:19, 22; Num 22:27 and many other instances.
9. Joseph E. Grady, Todd Oakley, and Seana Coulson, "Blending and Metaphor," in *Metaphor in Cognitive Linguistics: Selected Papers from the Fifth International Cognitive Linguistics Conference, Amsterdam, July 1997*, ed. Raymond W. Gibbs and Gerard J. Steen (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1999), 101–24 (108–10). See also Dhont, "A Spring of Living Waters," 3–4.
10. Trans. H.C. Kee in James H. Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (2 vols.; Peabody: Hendrickson, 2011[2] [orig. 1983]). On the image of the ship representing a patriarch's family, see also Philo, *Abr*. 116.

portrays Eleazar as "an excellent navigator" (ἄριστος κυβερνήτης) who "steer[ed] the ship of piety (πηδαλιουχῶν τὴν τῆς εὐσεβείας ναῦν) in the open sea of the passions" (1) and "in no way turned the handles of the rudder of piety" (3).[11] These two passages—and others might be added[12]—demonstrate how a single metaphor, depending on two identical input spaces, can be developed in different ways: in its development of the image Testament of Naphtali stresses bad weather conditions, whereas 4 Maccabees focuses on the role of the pilot/politician. In neither of these cases should intertextual borrowing be assumed to inspire the use of the metaphor; rather, the authors of the Testament of Naphtali and 4 Maccabees were familiar with a literary topos in the Hellenistic and Roman periods, which they each developed in their distinctive ways.[13] Their use of the *state is ship* image depends on the workings of the human mind rather than more or less conscious intertextual borrowing.

Defining intertext

Attributing the variegated uses of certain metaphors, including the *state is ship* image, across time and space to human thinking rather than intertextual borrowing is not to deny the possibility of the latter. It does, however, raise the question which criteria intertextual connections should meet for them to be acknowledged as such. Previous studies on the intertextual world Philo inhabited have not been particularly outspoken on this point. The closest to a definition of echo and allusion comes David Lincicum:

> I have operated on the basis of a generous conception of echo and allusion (without distinguishing between them) as indicating a textual recollection of lower volume than a citation, although I have mostly attempted to avoid listing references that merely supply a parallel idea, philosophical commonplace or similar lexical usage.[14]

Lincicum's definition is helpful to avoid parallelomania, but does not, as Erkki Koskenniemi points out, provide a "deeper reflection on the nature of 'quotation', 'reference' and 'allusion.'"[15] Unfortunately, Koskenniemi's definitions are hardly more help-

11. Trans. David deSilva, *4 Maccabees: Introduction and Commentary on the Greek Text in Codex Sinaiticus* (Septuagint Commentary Series; Leiden: Brill, 2006).
12. Steve Mason has suggested, for instance, that Josephus' use of the verb ἐξοκέλλω in *J.W.* 2.251 to describe Nero's "drift[ing] into stage and theater" may allude to the *state is ship* metaphor. See Steve Mason, *Judaean War 2: Translation and Commentary* (Flavius Josephus: Translation and Commentary 1b; Leiden: Brill, 2008), 205 (n. 1577). Others argue that in the gospel tradition of Jesus stilling the storm while on a boat (Mark 4:35–41, par. Matt 28:23–27, Luke 8:22–25), the ship may symbolise Israel. In Christian iconography and interpretation, the boat in this story was often equated with the church. See Mary Ann Beavis, *Mark*, Paideia (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 89–91 (with references).
13. So also deSilva, *4 Maccabees*, 150 (with references).
14. "A Preliminary Index to Philo's Non-Biblical Citations and Allusions," *The Studia Philonica Annual* 25 (2013): 139–67 (139); David Lincicum, "Philo's Library," *The Studia Philonica Annual* 26 (2014): 99–114 (100).
15. *Greek Writers and Philosophers in Philo and Josephus: A Study of Their Secular Education and Educational Ideals* (Studies in Philo of Alexandria 9; Leiden: Brill, 2019), 24.

ful than Lincicum's. Hence, even if both authors are surely correct to stress the subjective nature of recognizing echoes and allusions in literary works, what they consider an echo or allusion to be remains somewhat underdeveloped.[16]

With the caveat of subjectivity, I do think we can tread of slightly firmer ground than Lincicum and Koskenniemi have suggested, in two ways. First, transfers of meaning between the co-texts of hypotexts and hypertexts (to adopt Gérard Genette's terminology[17]) can serve as indications of conscious borrowing alongside verbal and conceptual parallels. In terms drawn from the cognitive study of metaphor, hypotexts and hypertexts should be seen to blend the input spaces that constitute the metaphor in similar ways. Carmela Perri has argued persuasively that allusions worth their salt involve not merely similarities in terminology or contents but also a transfer of co-textually determined meaning between intertexts.[18] On Perri's view, the recognition of echoes and allusions in a particular writing should include an explanation of how the co-textually determined meaning of the hypotext resurfaces in the hypertext. This does not mean that the co-textual meanings of both texts are exactly the same, but it does imply that the co-textual meaning of the hypotext—even when applied in different historical or social contexts—shines through in and contributes to the meaning of the hypertext.

Second, a plausible scenario should be provided for how the author(s) of the hypertext may have known the hypotexts to which they are thought to allude. Sometimes, explicit references elsewhere in the hypertext or in the corpus of the same author make a connection with a hypotext or group of hypotexts more plausible. Thus, Philo's references to Plato bolster the likelihood of other allusions to, echoes of, or references to Plato's

Koskenniemi moves beyond Lincicum by defining a broader range of types of intertextuality than Lincicum had done and treating them at more length. Even so, when he arrives at allusions and reminiscences, Koskenniemi does not offer a clear definition, but points out instead that "it is very difficult for us to enter the world of the author and know what his intention was and whether his readers could follow the link or not" (18).

16. In addition to Lincicum's and Koskenniemi's studies, see James R. Royse, "Some Overlooked Classical References in Philo," *The Studia Philonica Annual* 32 (2020): 249–55.
17. *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree* (trans. Channa Newman and Claude Doubinsky; Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997; orig. ed. Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1982), 1–7. On the impact of Genette's work in the study of ancient literature, see Philip Alexander, Armin Lange, and Renate Pillinger, eds., *In the Second Degree: Paratextual Literature in Ancient Near Eastern and Ancient Mediterranean Culture and Its Reflections in Medieval Literature* (Leiden: Brill, 2010).
18. "On Alluding," *Poetics* 7 (1978): 289–307. Perri's work has been fruitfully applied in studies on intertextuality and allusion in the Qumran scrolls and the New Testament. See Susan Hylen, *Allusion and Meaning in John 6* (Beihefte zur Zeitschrift der neutestamentlichen Wissenschaft 137; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2005), 44–59; Julie A. Hughes, *Scriptural Allusions and Exegesis in the Hodayot* (Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah 59; Leiden: Brill, 2006), 44–59; Mika S. Pajunen, *The Land to the Elect and Justice for All: Reading Psalms in the Dead Sea Scrolls in Light of 4Q381* (Journal of Ancient Judaism Supplements 14; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013), 47–48; Pieter B. Hartog, *Pesher and Hypomnema: A Comparison of Two Commentary Traditions from the Hellenistic-Roman World* (Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah 121; Leiden: Brill, 2017), 153–54.

works in the Philonic corpus.[19] When such explicit references are absent, the question how the author(s) of a certain hypertext may have acquainted themselves with potential hypotexts must be addressed in the study of intertextual relations. Here again, an element of subjectivity is involved, as the answers given to this question may be more plausible for one scholar than for the other. Even so, I would suggest an attempt at answering this question should be part of the study of intertextuality.

An example of this approach is the intertextual connection between Alcaeus' use of the *state is ship* metaphor and Horace's.[20] Alceaus, in fragments 6 and 208, writes as follows:

> This wave in turn comes (like) the previous one, and it will give us much trouble to bale out when it enters the ship's . . . Let us strengthen (the ship's sides) as quickly as possible, and let us race into a secure harbour; and let soft fear not seize any of us; for a great (ordeal) stands clear before us. Remember the previous (hardship): now let every man show himself steadfast. And let us not disgrace (by cowardice) our noble fathers lying beneath the earth, who . . . the city . . . being . . . from fathers . . . our spirit . . . is like . . . swift . . . heart (?) . . . tyranny . . . and let us not accept . . .

> I fail to understand the direction (στάσις) of the winds: one wave rolls in from this side, another from that, and we in the middle are carried along in company with our black ship, much distressed in the great storm. The bilge-water covers the masthold; all the sail lets the light through now, and there are great rents in it; the anchors are slackening; the rudders . . . my feet both stay (entangled) in the ropes: this alone (saves) me; the cargo . . . (is carried off) above . . .[21]

Aside from a possible wordplay on στάσις,[22] these lines may not at first sight convey a political meaning. Even so, many of Alcaeus' readers both ancient and modern took his lines metaphorically to refer to the vicissitudes of the state.[23] In his use of the *state is ship*

19. *Opif.* 119, 133; *Prob.* 13; *Contempl.* 57, 59; *Aet.* 13–14, 16, 27, 38, 52, 141.
20. On Horace's intertextual indebtedness to Alcaeus in *Carm.* 1.14 see, for example, C.W. Mendell, "Horace I. 14," *Classical Philology* 33 (1938): 145–56; Steele Commager, *The Odes of Horace: A Critical Study* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964; repr., Norman: The University of Oklahoma Press, 1995), 164; R.G.M. Nisbet and Margaret Hubbard, *A Commentary on Horace: Odes* (book 1; Oxford: Clarendon, 1970), 179–80; Niall Rudd, *Horace: Odes and Epodes*, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), 51; Michèle Lowrie, *Horace: Odes and Epodes* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 343–45; Timothy S. Johnson, *Horace's Iambic Criticism: Casting Blame* (Iambikē Poiēsis) (Mnemosyne Supplements 334; Leiden: Brill, 2012), 202 (n. 43); Ewen Bowie, "Alcaeus' *stasiotica*: Catullan and Horatian Readings," in *Essays on Ancient Greek Literature and Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 748–61; Simon Preece, *Horace's* Odes *and* Carmen Saeculare*: Introduction, Texts, Translations in the Original Metres and Notes* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2021), 308–9.
21. Trans. Campbell (LCL).
22. See David A. Campbell, *Greek Lyric I: Sappho and Alcaeus* (Loeb Classical Library 142; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), 321.
23. Heraclitus, *Homeric Problems* 5.10–11. Ewen Bowie has plausibly suggested that Horace's engagements with Alcaeus' image take up both the literal and the metaphorical meaning of

metaphor, Alcaeus stresses the ship's change of course in view of bad weather conditions and the need of a secure harbor. Horace emphasizes the same elements when he develops his version of the metaphor:

> O ship! New waves are about to carry you out to sea. O, what are you *doing*? One final effort now, and make port before it is too late! Don't you notice how your side is stripped of oars, your mast is split by the violence of the Southwester, the yardarms groan, and the hull, without the support of ropes, can scarcely withstand the overbearing sea?[24]

Seeing that Alceaus and Horace develop the same aspects of the *state is ship* image, an intertextual connection between the two is possible. The likelihood of such a link becomes apparent in light of Horace's reference to Alcaeus in Hor., *Carm*. 1.32, where he describes his Lesbian predecessors as "a citizen of Lesbos, who . . . would sing of Bacchus and the Muses and Venus and the little boy who clings to her side."[25] Hence, it is because of their shared development of the metaphor and the explicit indebtedness Horace claims to Alcaeus, that the *state is ship* metaphor in their two writings can be classified as an intertextual link.

In short, I will assume an intertextual connection to exist between writings when, first, they display not only terminological and conceptual, but also co-textual, overlap and, second, when a plausible relationship between the writings in question can be established. When these criteria are not met, I will assume that conceptual parallels or the development of the same metaphor in the writings in question result not from intertextual borrowing, but rather from both writings taking up a broader literary topos. Applied to Philo, my argument will be, first, that his use of the *state is ship* metaphor demonstrates Philo's familiarity with a literary trope and, second, that Philo's formulation of the metaphor in the *Legatio ad Gaium* constitutes an intertextual connection with Plato's *Republic*.

The state as ship in Philo's writings

The *state is ship* metaphor appealed to Philo. His works attest to variegated uses of the metaphor, which serves as an instructive image in Philo's anthropology, theology, cosmology, and politics. Furthermore, Philo can be seen to blend the *state is ship* image with other images, particularly that of the charioteer, which stands for mind governing human behavior or for humans ruling all life on earth.[26] This variation in the use of the metaphor and its combination with other metaphors suggests that Philo plays on a common topos,

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Alcaeus' ship. See his "Alcaeus' *stasiotica*." For a helpful and more critical engagement with Heraclitus' reading of Alcaeus, see Anna Uhlig, "Sailing and Singing: Alcaeus at Sea," in *Textual Events: Performance and the Lyric in Early Greece*, ed. Felix Budelmann and Tom Phillips (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 63–91.

24. Hor., *Carm*. 1.14 (trans. Rudd [LCL]). Horace's lines, like Alcaeus', are not overtly political, but the prevalent reader does assume a metaphorical meaning for them. See already Quint., *Inst*. 8.6.44; also Nisbet and Hubbard, *Odes, book 1*, 179.
25. Trans. Rudd (LCL).
26. See below.

which he develops in distinctive ways in different literary contexts, instead of drawing intertextual links with previous writings in which the *state is ship* metaphor occurred.

A substantial part of the appeal that the *state is ship* metaphor had for Philo resides in his own familiarity with the realia of seafaring. An inhabitant of harbor city Alexandria and at least a one-time sea traveler, Philo was well acquainted with ships, their management, and the dangers that sea travelers faced.[27] As a result of Philo's own experiences, portrayals of travel in the Philonic corpus frequently combine realistic and metaphorical elements, and Philo's use of the *state is ship* image is no exception.[28] An illustrative case in point is *Opif.* 88:

> [87] It is important, however, to be aware that the human being was not created last of all as an indication of inferior rank. [88] As witnesses we can call on charioteers and pilots (ἡνίοχοι καὶ κυβερνῆται). The former come after their team and have their place behind it. They guide it wherever they wish with the reins in their hands, sometimes loosening them for a fast trot, at other times restraining it if it races along faster than is required. Pilots in turn take up their position on the stern at the very end of the ship (νᾱός), but they are, so to speak, the best of all those sailing, because they hold in their hands the safety of the ship and the people on it. The Maker thus proceeded to fashion the human being after all the others as a kind of charioteer and pilot, so that he could guide and steer earthly affairs (ἵνα ἡνιοχῇ καὶ κυβερνᾷ τὰ περίγεια), taking on the care of animals and plants like a governor acting on behalf of the first and great King (οἷά τις ὕπαρχος τοῦ πρώτου καὶ μεγάλου βασιλέως).[29]

In Philo's writings, the two images of charioteer and pilot (ἡνίοχος ἢ κυβερνήτης) often occur together. Both images evoke Platonic imagery: in *Phaedrus*, Plato describes the soul (ψυχή) as a charioteer holding the reigns of the two horses and attempting to lead the chariot upward to the divine realm, whereas in *Republic*, the pilot stands for those governing the ship of state. The combination of the two images appears a Philonic invention, however. What is more, Philo's use of the image is broader than Plato's: in this passage humans—rather than reason—appear as charioteers who guide life on earth, whereas in other passages (to be discussed presently) reason is depicted as a ship-pilot. These changes in co-textual meaning suggest that Philo, in his use of these images, did not simply draw on Plato, but used a literary topos, known also from Plato's works, to his own ends.

Opif. 88 concludes a longer section dealing with the order of creation and humans' position as the last being to have been created (*Opif.* 77–88). This longer account and

27. See Maren Niehoff, "Wie wird man ein mediterraner Denker? Der Fall Philon von Alexandria," in *Ein pluriverses Universum: Zivilisationen und Religionen im antiken Mittelmeerraum*, ed. Richard Faber and Armin Lichtenberger (Mittelmeerstudien 7; Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2015), 353–67.

28. See Pieter B. Hartog, "Space and Travel in Philo's *Legatio ad Gaium*," *The Studia Philonica Annual* 30 (2018): 71–92 (85–87). More generally on Philo's portrayal of travel Catherine Hezser, *Jewish Travel in Antiquity* (Texte und Studien zum antiken Judentum 144; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 201–6.

29. Translations of *De opificio mundi* follow David T. Runia, *Philo of Alexandria, On the Creation of the Cosmos According to Moses* (Philo of Alexandria Commentary Series 1; Leiden: Brill, 2001).

the reasons it gives for the position of humanity in the order of creation offers a suitable point of entry into Philo's use of the *state is ship* metaphor in his other writings. Two strains of thought that Philo develops in this section provide helpful pegs for categorizing other passages in which the *state is ship* metaphor occurs. First, *Opif*. 83 shows that Philo perceives of humanity as the "director and master" of life on earth.[30] In that capacity human beings resemble God, in whose image they were created (*Opif*. 77): just as God governs the cosmos, so humans—in principle—govern life on earth. In *Opif*. 77–88, both God and humans appear as directors (ἡγεμὼν)[31] and kings (βασιλεύς),[32] the former ruling the universe (τὰ ὅλα; *Opif*. 78), the latter "all the creatures in the sub-lunary realm" (*Opif*. 84). Philo's use of the *state is ship* metaphor in *Opif*. 88 captures this line of thought, as it portrays humans in nautical terms as ship-pilots (κυβερνῆται) steering "earthly affairs" on behalf of God, "the first and great King."

In another combination of the charioteer and ship-pilot images, Philo portrays God in the same terms he used for humans in *Opif*. 88. In *Her*. 300–301,[33] Philo depicts God as "pilot" of "the common bark of the world" and "charioteer" of the "winged chariot, the whole heaven":

> [300] How that "until" is fixed he will himself shew us, when he says "for the iniquities of the Amorites are not yet fulfilled" (Gen 15:16). Such words as these give weaker minds a handle for supposing that Moses represents fate (*εἱμαρμένη*) and necessity (*ἀνάγκη*) as the cause of all events. [301] But we should recognize that while as a philosopher and interpreter of God he understood that causes have their sequence, connexion and interplay, he did not ascribe the causation of events to these subsidiary factors. He envisaged something else higher than and antecedent to these, a Someone who is borne on the universe like a charioteer or pilot (*ἡνιόχου τρόπον ἢ κυβερνήτου*). He steers the common bark of the world (*πηδαλιουχεῖ γὰρ τὸ κοινὸν τοῦ κόσμου σκάφος*), in which all things sail; He guides that winged chariot (*τὸ πτηνὸν ἅρμα*), the whole heaven, exerting an absolute sovereignty which knows no authority but its own.

The issue at stake in this passage is the role of fate and necessity as causal factors. As Philo points out, Moses, "as a philosopher and interpreter of God," was well aware that behind fate and necessity stands God's rule over the universe, which he governs as a pilot does a ship.

Opif. 88 and *Her*. 301 show that Philo employs the *state is ship* metaphor to describe both God's governance of the cosmos and human governance over life on earth. If the parallel between human and divine governance was apparent already in *Opif*. 77–88, this passage underscores it once more. So does the formulation "common bark" (*τὸ κοινὸν σκάφος*). Apparently a Philonic invention, the phrase occurs elsewhere only in *Legat*. 50, where it refers to the world ruled by the Roman emperor as a ship-pilot.[34] This

30. Cf. *Opif*. 142.
31. God: *Opif*. 78 (cf. *Opif*. 100). Humans: *Opif*. 83, 87.
32. God: *Opif*. 88. Humans: *Opif*. 84–85.
33. Cf. *Conf*. 97–98; *Migr*. 6.
34. *Legat*. 50 (see below). Philo may have invented the formulation *τὸ κοινὸν σκάφος*, but *σκάφος* occurs in a political sense see already in Ar., *Vesp*. 29. See also Philo, *Leg. all*. 2.104; *De somn*. 2.201; *De Jos*. 33–34.

terminological parallel shows that, for Philo, human governance of life on earth is a mirror of God's governance of the cosmos.[35]

A second line of thought gained from *Opif.* 77–88 is that humans, in order to live up to their likeness to God and govern justly, must themselves be governed by reason. *Opif.* 77 has reason (ἡ λογική) as the defining characteristic of the kinship (συγγένεια) between humans and God, and *Opif.* 137 portrays a human being as "a home or holy temple for the rational soul (οἶκος . . . τις ἢ νεὼς ἱερὸς . . . ψυχῆς λογικῆς)."[36] This rational soul, however, is subject to temptation from "unreasoning pleasures (αἱ ἄλογοι ἡδοναὶ)" that "construct [. . .] gluttony and lust as battle stations in the soul (ψυχή)" (*Opif.* 79).

The same notion underlies *Leg*. 3.222–224, where Philo builds on Plato's *soul is charioteer-and-two-horses* metaphor. Just as Plato described the soul in terms of a charioteer who leads two horses, so Philo calls for Mind to prevent the soul from giving in to Sense-perception and "irrational sense" (ἡ ἄλογος αἴσθησις):

> [222] Most profitless is it that Mind (νοῦς) should listen to Sense-perception (αἴσθησις), and not Sense-perception to Mind: for it is always right that the superior should rule and the inferior be ruled; and Mind is superior to Sense-perception. [223] When the charioteer (ἡνίοχος) is in command and guides the horses with the reins, the chariot goes the way he wishes, but if the horses have become unruly and got the upper hand, it has often happened that the charioteer has been dragged down and that the horses have been precipitated into a ditch by the violence of their motion, and that there is a general disaster. A ship, again, keeps to her straight course, when the helmsman (κυβερνήτης) grasping the tiller steers accordingly, but capsizes when a contrary wind has sprung up over the sea, and the surge has settled in it. [224] Just so, when Mind, the charioteer or helmsman (ἡνίοχος ἢ κυβερνήτης) of the soul (ψυχή), rules the whole living being as a governor (ἡγεμών) does a city (πόλις), the life holds a straight course, but when irrational sense (ἡ ἄλογος αἴσθησις) gains the chief place, a terrible confusion overtakes it, just as when slaves have risen against masters: for then, in very deed, the mind (ὁ νοῦς) is set on fire and is all ablaze, and that fire is kindled by the objects of sense which Sense-perception supplies.[37]

This passage occurs as part of an interpretation of Gen 3:17 (quoted in *Leg*. 3.222), where God rebukes Adam for having listened to Eve (symbolizing Sense-perception) and having strayed from his course. This makes the Philonic notion of the prevalence of Mind over Sense-perception a thoroughly gendered concept.[38] Most important for the topic of this contribution is how Philo merges the *soul is charioteer-with-two-horses* and the *state is ship* metaphors. If we approach Philo's use of these metaphors in terms of how they feature in Plato's writings, *Opif.* 88 and *Her*. 300–301 proceed in one direction, *Leg*. 3.222–224 in another: the former passages stay relatively close to Plato's interpretation of the ship as referring to political affairs and adjust the charioteer image—which in Plato refers to part of the soul—accordingly, the latter passage does the opposite. Again,

35. More elaborately on rulers as mirrors of God in Philo see Erwin R. Goodenough, *The Politics of Philo Judaeus: Practice and Theory* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1938), 86–120.
36. Cf. *Opif.* 149–150.
37. Unless indicated otherwise, all translations from Philo follow Colson and Whitaker (LCL).
38. See Françoise Mirguet, "Gender in Early Jewish Literature," in *Early Judaism and Its Modern Interpreters*, ed. Matthias Henze and Rodney A. Werline (2nd ed.; Atlanta: SBL Press, 2021), 93–114 (104).

this merger of metaphors testifies to Philo's creativity as a writer, but not to conscious intertextual borrowing from Plato's *Phaedrus* and *Republic*.

The importance of Mind as a rational principle to conquer irrational tendencies is well-attested in Philo.[39] Yet elsewhere in *Legum allegoriae*, Philo qualifies the picture of *Leg*. 3.222–224, again employing the *state is ship* metaphor, this time arguing for Right Principle (ὀρθός λόγος) as the pilot of human conduct. In *Leg*. 3.79–81, he writes,

> [79] Melchizedek, too, has God made both king of peace, for that is the meaning of "Salem," and His own priest (Gen 14:18). He has not fashioned beforehand any deed of his, but produces him to begin with as such a king, peaceable and worthy of His own priesthood. For he is entitled "the righteous king," and a "king" (βασιλεύς) is a thing at enmity with a despot (τύραννος), the one being the author of laws, the other of lawlessness. [80] So mind (νοῦς), the despot, decrees for both soul and body (τῇ τε ψυχῇ καὶ τῷ σώματι) harsh and hurtful decrees working grievous woes, conduct, I mean, such as wickedness (κακία) prompts, and free indulgence of the passions (πάθη). But the king in the first place resorts to persuasion rather than decrees, and in the next place issues directions such as to enable a vessel (σκάφος), the living being I mean, to make life's voyage successfully, piloted by the good pilot (κυβερνήτης), who is right principle (ὀρθός λόγος). [81] Let the despot's title therefore be ruler of war, the king's prince of peace, of Salem, and let him offer to the soul food full of joy and gladness.

This passage contrasts with the one quoted just before, in that it offers a more negative appraisal of Mind.[40] While in *Leg*. 3.222–224, Mind served as the ruling rational principle for good behavior, here it features as a despot decreeing humans to lived wickedly. Later on in *Leg*. 3.81, Philo even chastises the Ammonites and Moabites for holding "that all things owe their coherence to these two things, mind and sense-perception" and taking "no thought of God." In this context, it is no longer Mind that serves as pilot, but Right Principle. A term derived from Aristotelian ethics, Right Principle for Philo induces knowledge of "the Father of the all," that is, God.[41] This is where the Ammonites and Moabites go wrong: they do not heed God and, consequently, fail to live in accordance with his laws.[42]

39. George H. van Kooten notes that in Philo's works, *nous* often serves as a "near-synonym" for *logike psyche*. See *Paul's Anthropology in Context: The Image of God, Assimilation to God, and Tripartite Man in Ancient Judaism, Ancient Philosophy and Early Christianity* (WUNT 232; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 277.
40. This is not the place to indulge in the debate to what extent Philo was a systematic philosopher. The contrast between Mind and Right Principle in *Leg*. 3.79–81 does seem to be inspired at least in part by Melchizedek's portrayal as King of Salem in Gen. 14. This may lend credence to Peder Borgen's reading of Philo as primarily an exegete rather than a systematic philosopher. See *Philo of Alexandria: An Exegete for His Time* (Leiden: Brill, 1997).
41. *Ebr*. 81. In this passage, Philo defines the wise human as having been instructed both by ὀρθός λόγος and παιδεία. See Jason M. Zurawski, "Mosaic *Paideia*: The Law of Moses within Philo of Alexandria's Model of Jewish Education," *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 48 (2017): 480–505 (487).
42. Which Philo identifies in turn with the law of Nature. See Émile Bréhier, *Les idées philosophiques et religieuses de Philon d'Alexandrie* (Paris: Alphonse Picard & Fils, 1908), 10–14; Hindy Najman, "The Law of Nature and the Authority of Mosaic Law" and "A Written Copy of the Law of Nature: An Unthinkable Paradox?" in *Past Renewals: Interpretative Authority,*

Considering the Philonic notion that proper human behavior must be mediated by a rational principle—whether it be Mind or Right Principle—it is hardly surprising that for Philo, wise individuals make the best rulers.[43] In *Spec.* 3.187–191, for instance, Philo describes philosophy as the study of "God and the Universe embracing all that is therein" (191). And in *Ebr.* 86 Philo explains how those who contemplate both the divine rule over the cosmos and earthly customs and conventions make for good rulers, again adducing the image of the state as a ship:

> [86] For the wise man (σοφός) must be adorned with the prudence (φρόνησις) that is more precious than all gold, both in the inward invisible things of the soul (κατὰ ψυχὴν) and in the outward which are seen of all men. Again, when he has retired from the press of human pursuits and worships the Existent only, he must put on the unadorned robe of truth which nothing mortal shall touch. For the stuff of which it is made is linen, not the produce of animals whose nature is to perish. But when he passes to the citizen's life (πολιτεία), he must put off that inner robe and don another, whose manifold richness is a marvel to the eye. For life is manysided, and needs that the master (κυβερνήτης) who is to control the helm should be wise with a wisdom of manifold variety (πολύτροπος γὰρ ὢν ὁ βίος ποικιλωτάτου δεῖται τὴν σοφίαν τοῦ πηδαλιουχήσοντος κυβερνήτου).

This passage belongs to a longer section (*Ebr.* 80–92) praising those individuals who love both metaphorical parents from which they have received their education: their father, Right Principle, and their mother, Paideia. Philo sings the praises of the wise, whose wisdom can assume many forms, but is nonetheless always recognizable due to its being attuned jointly to God and custom:

> [91] All these—piety, holiness, nature-study, [92] meteorology, ethic, politic, economic, king-craft, legislator-craft and many other powers—find their home in him who is in the truest sense many-voiced and many-named, even the Sage, and in all he will be seen to have one and the same form.

To summarize, Philo employs the *state is ship* metaphor on a variety of levels. The ship can refer to life on earth governed by humans, to the cosmos governed by God, to the human being governed by a rational principle, or to a political entity ruled by wise persons. A red thread in Philo's use of the metaphor is his emphasis on the individuals who rule the ship. This emphasis contrasts with how Alcaeus and Horace develop the image: as we have seen, they give center stage to weather conditions in their texts. Philo

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Renewed Revelation and the Quest for Perfection in Jewish Antiquity (Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism 53; Leiden: Brill, 2010), 87–106 and 107–18; Trent A. Rogers, "Philo's Universalization of Sinai in *De decalogo* 32–49," *The Studia Philonica Annual* 24 (2012): 85–105; Hindy Najman and Benjamin G. Wright, "Perfecting Translation: The Greek Scriptures in Philo of Alexandria," in *Sibyls, Scriptures, and Scrolls: John Collins at Seventy*, ed. Joel Baden, Hindy Najman, and Eibert Tigchelaar (Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism 175; Leiden: Brill, 2017), 897–915.

43. See *Mut.* 149.

shares this emphasis with Theognis,[44] however, who, like Philo, stresses the importance of having a ship under the control of an able pilot. At the same time, parallels with Plato and Theognis in Philo's writings hardly testify to intertextual borrowing. Given Philo's volatility in his use of the image and how he freely combines it with other metaphors, the more likely explanation of these parallels is to attribute them to Philo's familiarity with a common literary and philosophical trope, which he developed as he saw fit.

Philo's *Legatio* and Plato's ship of state

The situation is somewhat different in the *Legatio*. In this treatise, Philo reflects on an embassy to the emperor Gaius Caligula, which he headed on behalf of the Alexandrian Judaeans. The purpose of the embassy was to confirm the rights of the Judaeans after the riots that broke out in Alexandria in 38 C.E.[45] The *Legatio* is a stylized account of Philo's experiences, written under Gaius' successor Claudius and directed (at least in part) to the circles around the new emperor.[46] In this treatise, Philo portrays Gaius as a failed emperor, who did not live up to the example set by his predecessors Augustus and Tiberius and consequently posed a threat to the stability of the empire. At the same time, the Judaeans appear as guardians of the empire's stability, in that they live across the Roman world and look favorably upon its emperors—provided these emperors show the necessary reverence toward the Judaeans, as indeed Augustus and Tiberius had done.[47]

In the context of his broader argument in the *Legatio*, Philo adduces the *state is ship* metaphor twice. At the beginning of his treatise, Philo puts the metaphor in the mouth of Macro, chief advisor to the young Gaius[48]:

44. Cf. Thgn. 675, which refers to a "noble helmsman (κυβερνήτης) who skilfully (ἐπισταμένως) kept watch" (trans. Gerber [LCL]).
45. On the historical circumstances of the embassy see E. Mary Smallwood, *Philonis Alexandrini Legatio ad Gaium* (2nd ed.; Leiden: Brill, 1970), 3–43; eadem, *The Jews under Roman Rule from Pompey to Diocletian: A Study in Political Relations* (Leiden: Brill, 1976; repr., 2001), 220–55; Sandra Gambetti, *The Alexandrian Riots of 38 C.E. and the Persecution of the Jews: A Historical Reconstruction* (Supplements to Journal for the Study of Judaism 135; Leiden: Brill, 2009).
46. The implied audience of Philo's historical works remains a point of debate in Philonic scholarship. I tend to agree with Pieter van der Horst that Philo implies a mixed Judaean-Roman audience for *In Flaccum* and the *Legatio*. See his *Philo's* Flaccus*: The First Pogrom: Introduction, Translation and Commentary* (Philo of Alexandria Commentary Series 2; Leiden: Brill, 2003), 15–16.
47. See for Philo's argumentation in the *Legatio* more elaborately Pieter B. Hartog, "Contesting *Oikoumene*: Resistance and Locality in Philo's *Legatio ad Gaium*," in *Intolerance, Polemics, and Debate in Antiquity: Politico-Cultural, Philosophical, and Religious Forms of Critical Conversation*, ed. George van Kooten and Jacques van Ruiten (Themes in Biblical Narrative 25; Leiden: Brill, 2019), 205–31. See also Katell Berthelot, *Jews and Their Roman Rivals: Pagan Rome's Challenge to Israel* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2021), for example, 119–26, 145–46; Casper C. de Jonge, "Greek Migrant Literature in the Early Roman Empire," *Mnemosyne* 75 (2022): 10–36 (27–29), who inventively approaches Philo as a migrant writer.
48. On Macro as Gaius' advisor see Philo, *Flacc*. 11–14; *Legat*. 32–40.

> [41] Accordingly, in the knowledge that he had saved Gaius countless times when he was on the brink of destruction, [Macro] began to give him advice directly and frankly. Like a good craftsman (δημιουργός), he wanted his own handiwork to survive intact, and not to be destroyed by itself or by any other agent. . . . [45] [H]e would say, "When you attend shows in the theatre or gymnasium or circus, . . . [46] [a]rgue with yourself as follows: If some people work as hard as this at things which are of no value to human life but simply provide delight and pleasure for the spectators, . . . what ought the expert (ἐπίστημος) in the highest and greatest art to do? [47] The greatest and best art of all (μεγίστη δὲ καὶ ἀρίστη τέχνη πασῶν) is that of government (ἡγεμονία). We owe it to this that all the fertile, deep land on plains and hills is farmed, and that merchant-ships safely navigate every sea to exchange the goods which countries offer to each other in their desire to associate, receiving what they need and sending their surplus products away in return. . . . [49] For your family has banished all the evils which used to flourish and be found in our midst over the frontiers to the ends of the earth and the depths of Tartarus, while it has brought those benefits and blessings which had been, as it were, in exile back from the limits of earth and sea to the world which we inhabit. All these things have been committed to your hand alone to govern (κυβερνᾶν). [50] Seeing, then, that Nature has escorted you to a lofty position in the stern (ἐπὶ πρύμναν ἀνωτάτω) and put the helm into your hand (τοὺς οἴακας ἐγχειρισθεὶς), steer the common ship of mankind safely (πηδαλιούχει τὸ κοινὸν ἀνθρώπων σκάφος σωτηρίως), making it your chief delight and pleasure to do good (εὐεργετεῖν) to your subjects." [49]

> Philo's Macro appears as an embodiment of able rulership, who advises Gaius on all aspects of the craft. This notion of government as a craft echoes Plato, who employs the term τέχνη to refer to that set of knowledge and abilities which defines craftspersons (δημιουργός) and distinguishes them from non-experts.[50] In Plato's ideal state, whose various parts are in full harmony, each craftsperson fulfills their own role (ἔργον) by virtue of their τέχνη (e.g., Pl., *Resp*. 346d). Hence, the true pilots/politicians are those individuals who possess the τέχνη needed for the political task; in Plato's view, those that "take to the pursuit of philosophy seriously and adequately" (*Resp*. 473d).[51] Philo accepts this Platonic notion of rulership and piloting a ship as a craft (cf. *Mut*. 149) and, by classifying Macro as a δημιουργός (41), locates this craft not with the future emperor, but with his long-time mentor.

Things do not end well for Macro, however. Being "a quarrelsome and cantankerous person, [Gaius] turned his mind in the opposite direction" (*Legat*. 52) and began "trumping up false but credible and convincing charges against [Macro]" (*Legat*. 57). Gaius' explicitly rejects Macro's teaching (see below) and ultimately has Macro and his wife commit suicide (*Legat*. 61). Narrating Macro's death in a longer passage on Gaius' murderous start of his emperorship (*Legat*. 23–75), Philo presents these events as a turning point in his narrative.[52] With the craftsman dies the craft, and after these political

49. Translations of the *Legatio* follow Smallwood, *Legatio*.
50. See Richard Parry, "*Episteme* and *Techne*," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta (Fall 2020). Online: https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2020/entries/episteme-techne/. On the connection between τέχνη and rule see Melissa Lane, "*Technē* and *archē* in Plato's Republic Book 1," *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 57 (2019): 1–24.
51. Translations of the *Republic* follow Shorey (LCL).
52. Maren Niehoff's comparison between Philo, Suetonius, and Dio Cassius is illustrative in this respect (*Philo of Alexandria: An Intellectual Biography*, The Anchor Yale Bible Reference Library [New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018], 52–53). As Niehoff shows, Macro is one

murders Gaius' behavior proceeds quickly downhill, with his plan to erect a giant statue of himself in the Jerusalem temple (*Legat*. 203) as its tragic low point.

Gaius' unfitness for the imperial office also speaks from the comparison Philo draws with his predecessors Augustus and (to a lesser extent) Tiberius.[53] Employing the *state is ship* metaphor for a second time, Philo speaks highly of Augustus' "remarkable grasp of the science of government":

> [149] [I]f new and exceptional honours should have been voted to anyone, it was appropriate in [Augustus'] case. This was not merely because he founded and originated the Augustan dynasty, nor because he was the first and greatest universal benefactor (εὐεργέτης), who ended the rule of many by handing the ship of state over to a single helmsman (ἀντὶ πολυαρχίας ἑνὶ κυβερνήτῃ παραδοὺς τὸ κοινὸν σκάφος οἰακονομεῖν ἑαυτῷ), namely himself with his remarkable grasp of the science of government (θαυμασίῳ τὴν ἡγεμονικὴν ἐπιστήμην), to steer.

The contrast between the two emperors is striking indeed. While Augustus did well (εὐεργέω) to the whole world, Gaius rejected Macro's advice "to do good (εὐεργετεῖν) to [his] subjects" (*Legat*. 50). While Augustus ended polyarchy by uniting the ship of state under his single helmsmanship, Gaius did not, by rejecting Macro's advice, "steer the common ship of mankind safely" (*Legat*. 50). While Augustus can be credited with a "remarkable grasp of the science of government" (ἡγεμονική ἐπιστήμη), Gaius' rejects Macro's teaching of that same science (*Legat*. 53; see above). As a result, writes Philo, August and Tiberius had brought universal peace (εἰρήνη),[54] but Gaius replaced that peace with empire-wide war (πόλεμος).[55]

Philo's deployment of the *state is ship* metaphor in his critique of Gaius resembles Plato's development of the same metaphor in several ways. Apart from general parallels such as the notion of rulership as a craft, the idea that philosophers and wise individuals make the best rulers (a notion we have already encountered in *Ebr*. 86), or the importance of good rulers/pilot for the well-being of the state/ship, which must be ascribed to Philo's familiarity with a common philosophical trope, two elements in the *Legatio* appear to point to conscious borrowing of Plato's image on Philo's part.

First, like Plato, Philo emphasizes the role of proper education to acquire the craft of rulership/piloting. In Plato's formulation of the metaphor, terms such as διδάσκαλος, διδακτός, and μανθάνω convey the necessity of proper training for those in positions of power.[56] Thus, Plato writes in *Resp*. 488b–488c:

> Conceive the sailors to be wrangling with one another for control of the helm (περὶ τῆς κυβερνήσεως), each claiming that it is his right to steer though he has never learned the art (μήτε

of the few victims of Gaius Philo mentions by name; Suetonius and Dio both mention others as well.

53. Philo's remarkably positive portrayal of Augustus has often been noted. See, for example, Maren Niehoff, *Philo on Jewish Identity and Culture* (Texte und Studien zum Alten Judentum 86; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), 115–24.
54. Philo, *Legat*. 8, 309.
55. See Philo, *Legat*. 90, 119, 121, 132.
56. Hunter, *Plato and the Traditions of Ancient Literature*, 74–76 recognises a parallel with the attitudes of the unfit helmsmen in Ar., *Eq*. 185–193.

> μαθόντα πώποτε τὴν τέχνην) and cannot point out his teacher (διδάσκαλος) or any time when he studied it (ἐμάνθανεν). And what is more, they affirm that it cannot be taught at all (μηδὲ διδακτὸν εἶναι), but they are ready to make mincemeat of anyone who says that it can be taught (διδακτὸν), and meanwhile they are always clustered about the shipmaster importuning him and sticking at nothing to induce him to turn over the helm (τὸ πηδάλιον) to them.

Philo's extensive description of how Gaius rejects Macro's craftmanship in favor of other sources of knowledge (*Legat*. 52–58) plays on the situation Plato describes. Unlike the unfit pilots in Plato's metaphor, Gaius both acknowledges that the craft of ruling must be learnt and is explicit on the education that qualifies him for the task. What is more, Philo's Gaius attributes the hereditary quality of his education to the "seminal Logoi," a Stoic concept referring to "the rational principle permeating and activating the cosmos, the principle of growth and development or evolution."[57] At the same time, the future emperor ridicules Macro, the sources of whose knowledge remain unknown to Gaius:

> [53] Here comes the schoolmaster of one who no longer needs to learn (ὁ διδάσκαλος τοῦ μηκέτι μανθάνειν ὀφείλοντος) . . . He . . . sets himself up as an expert and an instructor in the science of ruling (ἡ ἡγεμονικῆς ἐπιστήμη), although I have no idea where he learnt the principles of government (παρὰ τίνι μαθὼν τὰ ἀρχικὰ ἔγωγε οὐκ οἶδα). [54] Right from my cradle I have had thousands of teachers—parents, brothers, uncles, cousins, grandfathers, ancestors right back to the founders of the family . . . [55] For just as physical and mental resemblances as regards appearance, attitudes, movements, plans, and actions are preserved within the seminal Logoi (ἐν τοῖς σπερματικοῖς . . . λόγοις), so it is likely that some resemblance to a capacity for government will also be roughly sketched out within the same Logoi. [56] When I was fashioned to be an Emperor even before my birth, in Nature's workshop, my mother's womb, does a mere nobody dare to instruct me? Does the ignorant dare to instruct the learned?

Given the role of the *state is ship* metaphor in Macro's speech directly preceding this passage, Gaius' biting comments resonate strongly with Plato's image of the ship of state in the *Republic*. It is here that we see Philo's irony at work. Whereas at first glance Gaius meets the criteria Plato had set for the training of able helmsmen, Philo's decision to locate craftmanship and knowledge of "the science of government" (ἡγεμονική ἐπιστήμη) with Macro instead of Gaius means that Gaius' boasting does not serve as a sign of his erudition, but rather of his self-centeredness and his lack of ability to hold the imperial office.

Second, the co-text in which the *state is ship* metaphor features is strikingly similar in Plato and Philo. In Plato's *Republic*, the image of the ship of state serves to show that those who rule tend not to be the most skilled at ruling and taunt those who are—that is, philosophers. The co-text of the image is Adeimantus' observation that philosophers are often mocked for their knowledge (Pl., *Resp*. 487c–487d). In response, Socrates presents the image of a ship whose sailors vie for the helm by intoxicating the ship owner, with disastrous consequences:

> [T]hey praise and celebrate as a navigator, a pilot, a master of shipcraft, the man who is most cunning to lend a hand in persuading or constraining the shipmaster to let them rule, while the

57. Smallwood, *Legatio ad Gaium*, 183.

> man who lacks this craft they censure as useless. They have no suspicion that the true pilot must give his attention to the time of the year, the seasons, the sky, the winds, the stars, and all that pertains to his art (τέχνη) if he is to be a true ruler of a ship (νεὼς ἀρχικός). . . . With such goings-on aboard ship do you not think that the real pilot would in very deed be called a star-gazer, an idle babbler, a useless fellow, by the sailors in ships managed after this fashion? (Pl., *Resp*. 488d–488e)

The point, Socrates adds, is clear (Pl., *Resp*. 489a): just as the sailors in the image may rule the ship and scoff at the true pilots, so those in positions of political power may pose as skillful rulers while scoffing at the true experts. In his *Legatio* Philo develops the same thought, yet not in regard to an ideal Kallipolis, but with respect to the real-life emperor Gaius. Just as the unskilled ruler-pilots in Plato's image, Gaius holds the highest office in the empire despite his lack of knowledge of the craft of ruling and while mocking the true craftsmen (Macro, Augustus, Tiberius).

Conclusion and implications

The *state is ship* metaphor features broadly in Philo's writings and is attested both in Philo's earlier (*Allegorical Commentary*) and later (historical works, philosophical treatises) writings. As I have aimed to show, Philo's use of the metaphor attests to his familiarity with a philosophical trope common in Jewish and non-Jewish writings in Greek.

In the *Legatio*, however, Philo draws more consciously on Plato's *Republic* in his use of the metaphor. Just as Plato before him Philo emphasizes the importance of education in acquiring the skill of ruling and embeds the *state is ship* metaphor in a co-text strikingly similar to that of Plato's *Republic*: in both writings the metaphor serves to locate good rulership outside of the ruling class.

In sum, the image emerges of a development in Philo' use of the metaphor. In most of Philo's writings, the likening of the state and its rulers to a ship and its pilots occurs in the co-text of a broader philosophical point Philo is making. Thus, for instance, in *Her*. 300–301, where Philo depicts God as the κυβερνήτης steering the cosmos; or in *Ebr*. 86, where he portrays the person engaging in politics as "wise with a wisdom of manifold variety" to serve as κυβερνήτης of many-sided society. Philo's argument in the *Legatio*, in contrast, is stamped by his experiences in Rome: in that treatise, the *state is ship* metaphor takes on a more concrete shape and serves to criticize a specific emperor, Gaius. As part of his discrediting of Gaius, Philo adduces the metaphor not merely as a philosophical trope, but develops an intertextual connection with Plato's *Republic*, where the image of the state as a ship likewise serves to discredit the ruling class. On this view, Philo's use of the *state is ship* metaphor serves as yet another indication of the impact Philo's journey to Rome made on his thinking.[58]

58. Niehoff, *Philo of Alexandria* has recently stressed the impact of Philo's journey to Rome on his thinking. For Niehoff, Philo's acquaintance with a Roman context triggered an increasingly Stoic way of thinking. However, as Michael B. Cover noted, "the young Philo . . . was already well acquainted with Stoicism" and "Philo's Platonist vision is alive and well in the Exposition" (review of Maren R. Niehoff, "Philo of Alexandria: An Intellectual Biography," *Classical World* 112 [2018]: 735–37 [736]). The intertextual connection Philo draws with

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ORCID iD

Pieter B. Hartog https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7935-858X

Author biography

Pieter B. Hartog is Assistant Professor of Ancient Judaism at the Protestant Theological University. He is the author of *Pesher and Hypomnema: A Comparison of Two Commentary Traditions from the Hellenistic-Roman Period* (2017) and co-editor of *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Study of the Humanities* (2018); *Jerusalem and Other Holy Places as Foci of Multireligious and Ideological Confrontation* (2021); and *The Dead Sea Scrolls in the Context of Hellenistic Judea* (2022).

Plato's *Republic* may support Cover's observation that Philo continued to apply Platonic concepts and images in his later works.