

Cicero's *De Divinatione* and Philo of Alexandria's Criticism of Chaldean Astrology as a Form of Artificial Divination

M. Jason Reddoch
COLORADO MESA UNIVERSITY

Introduction

Although Philo nowhere lays out a comprehensive theory of divination, he discusses dreams, prophecy, and other divinatory arts throughout his corpus.¹ Previous scholarship has focused on Philo's treatment of prophecy and in particular on identifying different categories of prophecy in relation to Moses.² Philo's classification system for prophetic dreams has also received attention.³ However, Philo's treatment of divination more generally and his typology for distinguishing prophecy from other forms of divination have not been discussed.

A central feature of Philo's overall treatment of divination is that he praises forms of prophecy such as ecstatic possession and dreams but is critical of other types of divination such as augury, haruspicy, and astrology. Furthermore, Philo's distinction between these two groups is identical to the typology found in Cicero's *De divinatione*, where a rigid distinction is made between natural divination (*divinatio naturalis*) and artificial divination (*divinatio artificiosa*).⁴

1. *De somniis* 1-2 are the only treatises that focus on prophecy or divination of any kind; see esp. *Somn.* 1.1-2, 2.1-4. Other key passages include *Mos.* 2.188; *Migr.* 190-191; *Decal.* 35; *Spec.* 1.60-61, 219; *Mos.* 1.274-291; *Her.* 264-266.

2. É. Bréhier, *Les idées philosophiques et religieuses* esp. 180-205; H. Wolfson, *Foundations of Religious Philosophy* 2.11-54; D. Winston, "Two Types of Mosaic Prophecy:" *Ibid.*, "Philo and Rabbinic Literature" 241-244; *Ibid.*, "Judaism and Hellenism" 12-18; J. Levinson, "Two Types of Ecstatic Prophecy;" G. Ruiz, "Profetas y profecía en la obra de Filón Alejandrino;" D. Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity* 147-152; R. Berchman, "Arcana Mundi: Prophecy and Divination in the *Vita Mosis*."

3. M. Reddoch, "Enigmatic Dreams;" S. Torallas Tovar, "Sobre la clasificación de los sueños de Filón de Alejandría;" B. Decharneau, "Mantique et Oracles" 129-132; D. Dodson, "Philo's *De Somniis* in the Context of Ancient Dream Theories;" A. Kessels, "Ancient Systems of Dream Classification" esp. 396-410; R. Berchman, "Arcana Mundi: Magic and Divination;" E. Hilgert, "A Survey of Previous Scholarship."

4. S. Pease, *De Divinatione*; D. Wardle, *De divinatione* 1-44; H. Klauk, *The Religious Context* 178-184; F. Guillaumont, *Le De divinatione de Cicéron*.

According to Cicero, natural divination is a form of divine inspiration that comes from the gods. By contrast, artificial divination is a skill based on human observation. Although Philo is not as dogmatic in his terminology, he consistently uses the same basic characteristics to distinguish between prophecy and other divinatory arts.⁵

The purpose of this paper is to explain the importance of the distinction between natural and artificial divination for Philo's theology and exegesis. In particular, I will show how Philo criticizes Chaldean astrology because of its theological implications as a form of artificial divination. Philo's criticism of artificial divination and specifically Chaldean astrology may be rooted in the biblical rejection of certain forms of divination, but Philo expresses his criticism in terms of the Greco-Roman philosophical understanding of artificial divination as found in Cicero's *De divinatione*. As I will explain, Philo rejected Chaldean astrology because as a form of artificial divination, he thought it fostered a view of the world as an impersonal mechanistic system too far removed from the control of a personal god. My analysis of Philo's criticism of the Chaldeans will allow me to demonstrate the importance of Philo's understanding of natural divination as a product of moral and spiritual progress.

Artificial and Natural Divination in Cicero's De Divinatione

The term divination refers to a wide variety of sometimes loosely connected activities, and modern scholars are not consistent in the way they classify different types of divination.⁶ There was also no universal theory or typology for divination in the ancient Mediterranean world, but from at least the 5th century BCE onwards, one sees a tendency to distinguish between divination as a learned technique and divination as an inspired madness.⁷ The typology found in Cicero's *De*

5. That Philo was likely influenced by the same typology used by Cicero is discussed briefly by F. Guillaumont, *Le De divinatione de Cicéron* 104-105.

6. Sometimes modern commentators use ancient typologies and sometimes they devise their own. A. Bouché-Leclercq, *Histoire de La Divination* 1.111-374 more or less preserves the ancient distinction between natural and artificial divination but prefers to describe the former as interior, subjective or intuitive and the latter as inductive, rational, or conjectural (cf. 1.109). M. Jastrow, "Hepatoscopy and Astrology" distinguishes between voluntary and involuntary. E. Zuesse, "Divination" devises a tripartite scheme based on intuition, demon possession, and human wisdom. S. Johnston, *Ancient Greek Divination*, esp. 28 distinguishes between institutional and independent. Cf A. Jeffers, *Magic and Divination* 21-22.

7. On ancient typological distinctions see W. Halliday, *Greek Divination* 54-55 (cf. S. Johnston, *Ancient Greek Divination* 18-21); M. Flower, *The Seer in Ancient Greece* 84-91; D. Wardle, *De Divinatione: Book I* 126-127; F. Guillaumont, *Le De divinatione*

divinatione is a highly developed version of this distinction, and the following is one of Cicero's most vivid descriptions of it:

Eis igitur assentior, qui duo genera divinationum esse dixerunt, unum, quod particeps esset artis, alterum, quod arte careret. est enim ars in eis qui novas res coniectura persequuntur, veteres observatione didicerunt. carent autem arte ei qui, non ratione aut coniectura observatis ac notatis signis, sed concitatione quadam animi aut soluto liberoque motu, futura praesentiunt, quod et somniantibus saepe contingit et non numquam vaticinantibus per furorem...

So I agree with those who have said that there are two kinds of divination: one in which technique has a part and the other which involves no technique. For there is a technique for those who by conjecture deduce new things and have learnt the ancient by observation. On the other hand, they involve no technique who foretell the future not by reason or conjecture based on observed and recorded signs, but by a certain stirring of the mind or some free and unrestrained movement, as happens often to people who dream and sometimes to those who prophesy in frenzy... (*Div.* 1.34; cf. *Div.* 2.26-27)⁸

Cicero provides variations on his descriptions of the categories throughout his treatise, but he is fairly consistent. He emphasizes that

de Cicéron 87-110; S. Johnston, *Ancient Greek Divination* 6-10; G. Manetti, *Theories of the Sign in Classical Antiquity* 19-23, 149-50; M. Nissinen, "Prophecy and Omen Divination" 341-351. The explicit typological distinction between natural and artificial divination found in Cicero's *De divinatione* was foreshadowed in earlier Greek sources. Early but speculative possibilities include Homer *Od.* 20.100-101 and Aeschylus *Pr.* 494-499. The typology becomes more distinct in Herodotus (*Hist.* 9.94.3), where he contrasts inborn forms of divination with those that are techniques (cf. *Hist.* 8.77). In his *Phaedrus* (244a-245a), Plato explains that there is a divinatory madness that is different from other forms of divination such as augury (cf. Plato *Tim.* 72b and G. Manetti, *Theories of the Sign in Classical Antiquity* 15-16, 21-23). According to F. Guillaumont, *Le De divinatione de Cicéron*, the distinction is essentially Stoic in the form Cicero received it, but Aristotle and his followers probably made important contributions to its development. Cicero may derive his terminology for this typology from Posidonius' *Natural Philosophy* (See D. Wardle, *De Divinatione: Book I* 127; L. Edelstein, *Posidonius* 1.108-109, 150). After Cicero, the distinction appears in Ps-Plutarch's *Essay on the Life and Poetry of Homer* 212 and Iamblichus (esp. *De myst.* 3.15-16).

8. Translations are my own unless otherwise noted.

artificial divination is a human technique based on the observation of nature. In contrast, natural divination is consistently described as a movement of the soul that is initiated by the gods.⁹ The soul is further described as being drawn away from the body because of its divine nature.¹⁰ Thus artificial divination prioritizes human knowledge, but natural divination prioritizes divine knowledge.

Cicero's dialogue is chiefly concerned with whether or not divination really works and provides an effective means of prognostication. The typology and other theoretical concerns are important only to the extent that they provide plausible or persuasive explanations for divination. In book 1, the interlocutor Quintus Cicero puts forth the argument in favor of divination but Quintus' argument is not complex.¹¹ He mostly gives example after example, arguing that if just one example proves true, then the practice of divination has been validated.¹² In book 2, Marcus Cicero argues against divination.¹³ Interestingly, Quintus is eventually persuaded to reject artificial divination but still holds firm to his belief in natural divination defined as a separation of the soul from the body.¹⁴

When Cicero gives theoretical explanations, artificial divination is explained in terms of cosmic sympathy. Cosmic sympathy is a

9. Cic., *Div.* 1.109. Although artificial divination is said to require no effort on the part of the gods, Quintus also puts forth the Posidonian argument that both forms of divination are due to God, fate and nature (*Div.* 1.125, 2.27).

10. Cic., *Div.* 1.4, 34, 113; 2.27, 100; on the description of natural divination at *Div.* 1.110-114, see H. Tarrant, "Recollection and Prophecy" 66-68.

11. Cicero's interweaving of sources is difficult to unravel, but most of the treatise seems to be based on Posidonius the Stoic and Cratippus the Peripatetic (see S. Pease, *De Divinatione* and D. Wardle, *De Divinatione* 28-36).

According to Cicero, Xenophanes and Epicurus were the only philosophers to reject divination outright (*Div.* 1.5). On the other hand, the Stoics seemed to be the only philosophical school that accepted all forms of divination without question. Posidonius wrote five books on divination that were probably used by Cicero; however, Panaetius questioned divination and thus seems to have been an exception among the Stoics (Cic. *Div.* 1.6).

12. Marcus Cicero is critical of Quintus Cicero's strict use of examples instead of reason (*Div.* 2.27).

13. When I refer to Quintus or Marcus, I am referring strictly to the fictional interlocutors in the dialogue. It is tempting to view the interlocutor Marcus Cicero as the mouthpiece of the real Cicero, but this is not so simple. Although Marcus expresses criticism of divination in Cicero's philosophical dialogues, Cicero is more accepting of divination in his speeches. See S. Rasmussen, "Cicero's Stand on Prodigies" 9-24; M. Schofield, *Cicero for and Against Divination* 47-65; M. Beard, "Cicero and Divination" 33-46.

14. The separation of the soul from the body is described as the Peripatetic position maintained by Cratippus (Cic., *Div.* 2.100).

modern phrase used to refer to the Stoic doctrine asserting an interconnection between all elements of nature. The key Greek terms are *συμπάθεια* or *συμπαθής*. They appear numerous times in the fragments of the Old Stoa where in one instance cosmic sympathy is connected with the harmony of astronomical phenomena.¹⁵ Just as a person's body consists of interdependent parts, the whole universe is said to be an organic living thing that is composed of interdependent parts.¹⁶ It is uncertain at what point in the Stoic tradition the concept was fully developed.¹⁷ Regardless, it is clear that by the time of Cicero cosmic sympathy had an influence on ancient theories of divination.¹⁸

The primary technical term *συμπάθεια* appears in Cicero's treatise on divination three times, but he has a number of synonyms and often describes the concept without reference to the Greek technical term.¹⁹ It is usually described as an interconnectedness in nature which justifies the reliability of divination. The theoretical function of cosmic sympathy is that it explains how two seemingly unrelated sets of data can have some kind of correlation. For example, in the realm of divining animal entrails, cosmic sympathy explains how there could be a

15. *SVF* vol. 2, fr. 1013.

16. Cf. Philo, *Det.* 49; on the concept of a unified body and its relation to *sympatheia*, see S. Sambursky, *Physics of the Stoics* 8-9. Cf. Synesius, *Aegyptii* 2.7.3.

17. K. Reinhardt's monumental study (*Kosmos und Sympathie*) on Posidonius and cosmic sympathy argued that the concept was central to Posidonius and his legacy; however, there is reason to believe that the concept may not have been as specifically Posidonian as Reinhardt argued since it is never attributed explicitly to him in the fragments. See W. Theiler, *Die Fragmente* 2.150-4 for an overview of cosmic sympathy that also touches on Philo. L. Edelstein, *Posidonius* 2.423 points out that Cicero (*Div.* 2.33-5) attributes *sympatheia* to the Stoics in general and not to Posidonius specifically; cf. D. Runia, *On the Creation of the Cosmos* 285. The fragments of Posidonius collected in Edelstein only include those which are explicitly attributed to Posidonius and *sympatheia* does not occur in any of them. At least one passage (*Div.* 2.34) where *sympatheia* occurs is included in both conservative and liberal collections of Posidonius' fragments; however, *sympatheia* is not attributed to Posidonius by name.

18. A. Long, "Astrology: Arguments Pro and Contra" 167-8 points out that the Stoic concept of cosmic sympathy became the primary philosophical way of talking about astrology and appears emphatically in Manilius (1.247-254, 2.60-81). According to Long, it is reasonable to think that it goes back to Zeno.

19. *Div.* 2.34, 124, 142. Although there are probably many more, the following are the terms Cicero makes clear are synonyms for *sympatheia*: *Cognatio naturalis*, *concentus*, *consensus* (*Div.* 2.34); *convenientia*, *coniunctio naturae* (*Div.* 2.124), *continuatio*, *coniunctio naturae* (*Div.* 2.142). See S. Pease, *De Divinatione* 2.225-226, 369, 389-390. Pease provides extensive notes on the Stoic concept of *sympatheia* and also discusses some of its synonyms in Cicero's *Div.* and elsewhere.

direct correlation between one's fortune and marks on a liver.²⁰

In book 2 of the dialogue, Marcus undertakes an extended attack on Chaldean astrology.²¹ His attack focuses on the absurdity of there being a direct connection between celestial objects and one's personal fate. Over and over he proclaims the absurdity of attributing everything about a person to the time of birth when there are plenty of other factors such as environment and family. This criticism is striking because from the Hellenistic period on the Chaldeans are often praised for being the best astrologers.²² Even the opening of Cicero's treatise contains a brief praise for the Chaldeans' reputation for astrology.²³

Although Marcus does not attribute the term *συμπάθεια* to Chaldean astrology, his criticism of the interconnections between celestial objects and personal fortune is very similar to the examples that I mentioned above where he criticized other types of unrelated data in dreams and livers. He explains that the Chaldeans base their practice of astrology on the idea that there is a force (*vis*) in the zodiac that causes the organization of the stars and planets within the zodiac to exert an influence on everything else, and thus one's fate can be predicted by analyzing the organization of the zodiac in relation to one's birth.²⁴ Philo is also critical of Chaldean astrology, but as I will explain below, for very different reasons.

Philo on Artificial Divination

When Philo refers to prophetic dreams or waking prophecy,

20. Cic., *Div.* 2.34-35. In this passage, Marcus finds the assertion that the condition of the liver can have a correlation to one's fortune ridiculous. Interestingly, he further points out that certain types of correlations in nature such as the moon and the tides are more reasonable. Similarly, cosmic sympathy is also brought to bear on the question of how a dream about an egg could be related to the fortune of finding buried treasure (*Div.* 2.142). See K. Reinhardt, *Kosmos und Sympathie* 245-6, where it is argued with reference to *Div.* 2.142 that using *sympatheia* to refer to the connection between that which is seen and that which happens is specifically a Posidonian formulation; cf. *Div.* 2.124.

21. Cic., *Div.* 2.87-99. A. Long, "Astrology: Arguments Pro and Contra" 172-178 provides a summary and analysis of Cicero's arguments against astrology and assesses the accuracy of Cicero's knowledge about contemporary developments in astronomy. Long emphasizes that Cicero uses the stoic Panaetius as a source for his arguments against Chaldean astrology (see esp. 169).

22. Cicero also mentions other critics of the Chaldeans such as Plato's pupil Eudoxus (*Div.* 2.87-88).

23. Cic., *Div.* 1.2.

24. Cic., *Div.* 2.89. According to J. Jacobs, "Traces of the Omen Series" 317-339 there is evidence in Cicero's *Div.* of familiarity with Near Eastern divinatory sources dealing with malformed births.

he emphasizes divine inspiration and the withdrawal of the soul from the body;²⁵ however, when Philo refers to other forms of divination, he characterizes them as human skills and thus types of artificial divination. A clear example of this appears in *De somniis* 2, where Philo makes a distinction between having a prophetic dream and using the science of dream interpretation. Philo describes his three classes of prophetic dreams as “godsent” (θεοπέμπτος) and says they are brought about through a movement of the soul. Thus the experience of prophetic dreaming is a form of divine inspiration and corresponds to Cicero’s natural divination; however, as Philo explains, some dreams don’t make sense to the dreamer and thus require interpretation, a skill which Philo explicitly characterizes as a τέχνη and an ἐπιστήμη.²⁶ Similarly, Cicero calls artificial divination an *ars*.²⁷

The influence of Cicero’s typology is most important in terms of how Philo criticizes forms of artificial divination. An example of this appears in Philo’s treatment of Balaam (Num. 22-24).²⁸ Philo first presents Balaam as a “renowned diviner” (ἐπιμαντεία περιβόητος) who was particularly good at augury (*Mos.* 1.264). Philo then explains that later Balaam was divinely inspired, and the prophetic spirit drove away his other divinatory abilities. Moreover, Philo specifically refers to these other forms of divination as belonging to the category of ἡ ἔντεχνον μαντική (*Mos.* 1.277), thus denigrating them as human skills and characterizing them as forms of artificial divination.²⁹ In this way, Philo’s typological distinction is the basis for his criticism of Balaam, who is presented essentially as the embodiment of artificial divination. As I will discuss below, Philo similarly applies his theoretical understanding of divination to his exegesis of the Chaldeans.³⁰

Although Philo expresses the distinction between prophecy and

25. *Somn.* 1.1-2, 2.1-2; *Migr.* 189-190.

26. *Somn.* 2.4; see M. Reddoch, “Enigmatic Dreams” esp. 2-3.

27. Philo, *Somn.* 2.3-4; Cic., *Div.*, 2.144, 146.

28. On Philo’s treatment of Balaam as a diviner, see É. Bréhier, *Les idées philosophiques et religieuses* 187-189; R. Berchman, “Arcana Mundi: Between Balaam and Hecate” esp. 115-117, 122-124, 128-130; B. Decharneux, *Mantique et Oracles*; B. Betz, “Die Bileamtradition” esp. 26-31; F. Guillaumont, *Le De divinatione de Cicéron* 104-105.

29. Philo’s treatment of Balaam appears most extensively in *Mos.* 1.263-300; cf. *Deus* 181, *Conf.* 159, *Cher.* 32-33, *Det.* 71, *Migr.* 113-115.

30. Philo may use the term χαλδαῖοι and its variations to refer to astrology (i.e. Chaldean astrologers), geography (i.e. people who live in Mesopotamia), or the Hebrew language. See C. Wong, “Philo’s Use of Chaldaioi” 1-14.

divination in terms of Cicero's typology, Philo's preference for forms of natural divination is fairly consistent with the biblical evidence. The Bible does not contain a typology and is not totally consistent in its approval or disapproval of divination, but it is most accepting of prophecy and dreams and most critical of artificial divination and magic. In the Pentateuch, one finds various legal prohibitions on divination and magic.³¹ The strongest and most elaborate condemnation occurs in Deuteronomy where prohibitions are laid out for augury, sorcery, casting spells, communicating with ghosts, and communicating with the dead (Deut. 18.9-14). The prohibition in Deuteronomy suggests that the primary motivation for rejecting divination was that it was perceived as a foreign practice.³² Of course the biblical text does not describe these foreign practices in terms of artificial divination or the typical characteristics associated with it.

The fact that Philo refers to the prohibition in Deuteronomy suggests that it did have some impact on his views of divination.³³ Referring to Deuteronomy 18, Philo praises Moses for his rejection of various forms of divination (μαντική) and specifically criticizes augurs, purifiers, soothsayers and enchanters.³⁴ He admits that all people have an innate desire to learn about the future but that it is better to wait for a prophet.³⁵

Although Philo's attitudes to divination are consistent with the biblical evidence, the importance of the Greco-Roman typology is hard to escape. When Philo discusses the Deuteronomic prohibition on divination, he imposes on his biblical paraphrase the typical characteristics associated with artificial divination. In fact, Philo says that Moses rejected certain forms of divination specifically because they were based on human knowledge and unstable conjecture (*Spec.* 1.61-3). In sum, Philo says that "the diviners" (οἱ στοχασταί) use their observations of the natural world to provide predictions, but this is misguided and leads to impiety because they disregard the true cause of all things. Therefore, although Philo's general preference for prophecy may be biblically inspired, his theological

31. Exod. 22:28; Lev. 17-26 (esp. 19:26, 20:2-6, 27); Deut. 18:9-14; cf. S. Nigosian, *Magic and Divination in the Old Testament* 5-16; M. Nissinen, "Prophecy and Omen Divination" 341-342.

32. "When you are coming to the land that the Lord your God is giving you, you must not learn to imitate the abhorrent practices of those nations" (Deut. 18:9; NRSV). The LXX is very similar: "And if you should come into the land, which your lord gives you, then you should not learn to practice the abominations of those nations."

33. *Spec.* 1.59-66.

34. *Spec.* 1.59-60.

35. *Spec.* 1.65; this appears to be a reference to Deut. 18:18.

criticism of certain types of divination is expressed in terms of the Greco-Roman theoretical understanding of artificial divination.

Philo's discussion of the prohibition on specific forms of divination by Moses highlights the two most important ways he applies the typology to his exegesis. One is to express the priority that should be given to divine knowledge over human knowledge. The other is to insist that the practice of artificial divination leads to a misunderstanding of God's relationship to the natural world and thus causes impiety. As I will explain below, both of these points are central to Philo's treatment of Chaldean astrology and Chaldea itself.

Chaldean Astrology as a Form of Artificial Divination

Essentially, for Philo, the Chaldeans are the archetypal diviners who have gone astray since they rely too heavily on their human science of prediction. Philo criticizes Chaldean astrology in multiple treatises and each time emphasizes his theological objections to their practice.³⁶ His main criticism is that as a human science that makes predictions based on natural phenomena, it encourages people to forget the personal role of God in the universe. For example, in using the stars to predict, they begin to think of the stars themselves as divine beings that bring about particular fates instead of God, who is the first cause of everything and controls all the movements of celestial phenomena.³⁷ In sum, the practice of astrology is effective and the Chaldeans are really good at it, but it is theologically dangerous and results in impiety. Philo's description of Chaldean astrology also often includes the Stoic concept of cosmic sympathy, which, as I explained, Cicero uses in relation to explanations of artificial divination throughout the dialogue.³⁸ The following is a typical example of Philo's criticism of Chaldean astrology:

Χαλδαῖοι τῶν ἄλλων ἀνθρώπων ἐκπεπονηκέναι
καὶ διαφερόντως δοκοῦσιν ἀστρονομίαν καὶ

36. Passages where Philo is critical of Chaldeans (most often because they do not understand God as the first cause): *Migr.* 178-179, 184; *Abr.* 68-72; *Her.* 96-99; *Mut.* 16; *Ebr.* 94; *Congr.* 48-49; *Virt.* 212-213.

37. See P. Frick, *Divine Providence* 118-138 on Philo's rejection of astral fatalism. On Philo's rejection of the divinity of the stars, see esp. pp. 130-133.

38. It may be that in the Hellenistic period as Stoic divination flourished, their theoretical explanations were imposed on the Chaldeans, who had a well-known reputation for divination. In the roughly contemporary Diodorus Siculus (1.2.30), there is even a description of Chaldean astrology where Diodorus explains their divinatory theory in terms of divine providence, another important Stoic concept with related significance. See A. Long, "Astrology: Arguments Pro and Contra" 169-170.

γενεθλιαλογικὴν, τὰ ἐπίγεια τοῖς μετεώροις καὶ τὰ οὐράνια τοῖς ἐπὶ γῆς ἀρμοζόμενοι καὶ ὡσπερ διὰ μουσικῆς λόγων τὴν ἐμμελεστάτην συμφωνίαν τοῦ παντός ἐπιδεικνύμενοι τῇ τῶν μερῶν πρὸς ἄλληλα κοινωνίᾳ καὶ συμπαθείᾳ, τόποις μὲν διεζευγμένων, συγγενείᾳ δὲ οὐ διωκισμένων. Οὗτοι τὸν φαινόμενον τοῦτον κόσμον ἐν τοῖς οὐσιν ὑπετόπησαν εἶναι μόνον, ἢ θεὸν ὄντα αὐτὸν ἢ ἐν αὐτῷ θεὸν περιέχοντα, τὴν τῶν ὄλων ψυχὴν· εἰμαρμένην τε καὶ ἀνάγκην θεοπλαστήσαντες ἀσεβείας πολλῆς κατέπλησαν τὸν ἀνθρώπινον βίον... (*Migr.* 179)

The Chaldeans seem to have undertaken astronomy and the casting of horoscopes well beyond other people. They harmonize the things on earth with the things up high and the heavens with the things on earth, showing as if through the logic of music that the universe has a most harmonious symphony because of the relationship of the parts to each other and *cosmic sympathy*. The parts are separated by location, but because of a kinship, not disconnected. They suppose that the visible cosmos is the only thing in existence: either being itself God or containing God in it, the soul of the universe. Deifying fate and necessity, they fill human life with much impiety...

Unlike Marcus Cicero, the interlocutor who argued against Chaldean astrology, Philo does not object to Chaldean astrology on the grounds that it is a bogus pseudo-science. In fact, Philo not only admits the limited effectiveness of Chaldean astrology; he also explicitly says that Moses is in agreement with the doctrine of cosmic sympathy.³⁹ However, there is an important difference in Moses' understanding of the concept and that embraced by the Chaldeans:

Τῇ δὲ περὶ θεοῦ δόξῃ διαφέρεισθαι· μήτε γὰρ τὸν κόσμον μήτε τὴν τοῦ κόσμου ψυχὴν τὸν πρῶτον εἶναι θεὸν μηδὲ τοὺς ἀστέρας ἢ τὰς χορείας αὐτῶν τὰ πρὸςβύτατα τῶν συμβαινόντων ἀνθρώποις αἰτία, ἀλλὰ συνέχεσθαι μὲν τόδε τὸ πᾶν ἀοράτοις δυνάμεσιν, ἅς ἀπὸ γῆς ἐσχάτων ἄχρις οὐρανοῦ

39. *Migr.* 180-181. According to Philo (*Mos.* 1.23-24), Moses learned Chaldean astrology while in Egypt.

περάτων ὁ δημιουργὸς ἀπέτεινε, τοῦ μὴ ἀνεθῆναι
τὰ δεθέντα καλῶς προμηθεύμενος· δεσμοὶ γὰρ αἱ
δυνάμεις τοῦ παντὸς ἄρρηκτοι. (*Migr.* 181)

He (sc. Moses) has a different opinion about God: that neither the universe nor the soul of the universe is the first god, and that the stars and their movements are not the most important causes of the things that happen to men; rather, the whole universe is held together by invisible powers, which the creator of the universe extended from the farthest reaches of earth all the way to the ends of heaven, taking care that what was well bound should not be undone. For the powers of the universe are unbreakable.

The reference to God's powers is a typical way for Philo to explain how a perfect, unchanging, and utterly transcendent God is nonetheless able to intervene in a physical world that is, metaphorically speaking, beneath him.⁴⁰ A middle Platonist, Philo describes God as transcendent and unaffected by the physical world. This gap requires that God interact with the world primarily through a chain of intermediaries or powers as Philo calls them in the passage above. But according to Philo there is a danger for one who focuses too much on God's powers and the harmonious influence he exerts on the world and forgets the invisible mover himself.

On the one hand, Philo's rejection of Chaldean astrology is not surprising since Philo emphasizes the Deuteronomic prohibition and the Bible often presents divination as a foreign practice. However, Philo's emphasis on his theological objection to their practice as a human skill and his use of cosmic sympathy show that his Greco-Roman philosophical understanding of artificial divination was an important factor, which is not biblically based.

From Chaldea to Natural Divination

Just as Philo criticizes Chaldean astrology for its misguided theological implications, Philo also criticizes Chaldea itself. As a result of its association with astrology as a form of artificial divination, Philo interprets Chaldea as a locus for impiety where

40. On Philo's use of God's powers, see J. Dillon, *The Middle Platonists* 161-166 and F. Calabi, *God's Acting, Man's Acting* 73-109 (esp. 84-90); R. Radice, "Philo's Theology and the Theory of Creation" 135-142; C. Termini, "Philo's Thought within the Context of Middle Judaism" 100-101; D. Winston, *Logos and Mystical Theology* 18-21.

nature and human knowledge are revered more than God and divine knowledge. Philo then relates this to his understanding of moral and spiritual progress by interpreting Chaldea as a place that must be abandoned as one progresses along a personal journey toward higher levels of virtue. Thus Philo's exegesis of Chaldea is a criticism of Chaldean theological views, which he closely associates with the theological dangers of artificial divination.

Philo's interpretation of Abraham's journey from Chaldea to Haran demonstrates how Philo understood natural and artificial divination in terms of his theory of moral and spiritual progress.⁴¹ In this passage, Philo refers to the journey away from Chaldea as an illustration of the need to leave behind the Chaldean view of God. The journey is an allegory of seeking self-knowledge, and Haran is specifically interpreted as a symbol of the self and in particular, the senses. Knowledge of the self and the senses is recommended as a cure for one who, like the Chaldeans, is obsessed with mastering the study of nature without recognizing God. Through self-examination, one is eventually able to attain divine knowledge. After one has traveled to Haran (i.e. investigated the self), this person is able to undertake a second journey. Philo then describes the prophetic experience that is made possible as a result of rejecting the Chaldean view and investigating the self:

ἐπειδὴν μέντοι σφόδρα ἀκριβῶς πάντα τὸν ἴδιον
 διασκέψησθε οἶκον καὶ ὃν ἔχει λόγον ἕκαστον αὐτοῦ
 τῶν μερῶν ἀνυγάζησθε, διακινήσαντες αὐτοῦς
 τὴν ἐνθένδε μετανάστασιν ζητεῖτε, οὐ θάνατον
 ἀλλ' ἀθανασίαν καταγγέλλουσιν. ἥς δείγματα
 σαφῆ καὶ ἐν τοῖς σωματικοῖς καὶ ἐν τοῖς αἰσθητοῖς
 ἐγκατελημμένοι φωλεοῖς κατόψεσθε, τοτὲ μὲν ἐν
 τοῖς βαθέσιν ὕπνοις—ἀναχωρήσας γὰρ ὁ νοῦς καὶ
 τῶν αἰσθήσεων καὶ τῶν ἄλλων ὅσα κατὰ τὸ σῶμα
 ὑπεξεληθῶν ἑαυτῷ προσομιλεῖν ἄρχεται ὡς πρὸς
 κάτοπτρον ἀφορῶν ἀλήθειαν, καὶ ἀπορροψάμενος
 πάνθ' ὅσα ἐκ τῶν κατὰ τὰς αἰσθήσεις φαντασιῶν
 ἀπεμάξατο τὰς περὶ τῶν μελλόντων ἀψευδεστάτας
 διὰ τῶν ὀνειρῶν μαντείας ἐνθουσιᾶ, τοτὲ δὲ κὰν ταῖς

41. Migr. 184-194. Philo often presents the biblical patriarchs as representing different methods of accomplishing moral and spiritual perfection. In general, Philo's understanding of moral and spiritual progress seems to go back to the Stoic idea of a prokopton. See C. Lévy, "Philo's Ethics" 164-167; D. Winston, "Philo's Ethical Theory" 409-416; M. Reddoch, "Enigmatic Dreams" 8-12.

ἐγρηγόρσῃσιν. (*Migr.* 189-190)

Moreover, when you have very precisely scrutinized all of your own dwelling and seen clearly the rationale which each of its parts has, rouse yourselves and make a migration from here, one that does not proclaim death, but immortality. You will see clear examples of this when you have been enclosed in the caverns of the body and the senses. Sometimes it happens during deep sleep. For after the mind withdraws from the senses and everything else related to the body, it begins to converse with itself since it has pulled back, and it looks upon truth as if in a mirror, and upon cleansing itself of everything that it has modeled out of sensory images, it is inspired by the most true divination through dreams concerning the future. And this is also true for those who are awake.

The description here of prophecy through dreams is presented in terms of the language of natural divination that corresponds to Cicero's *De divinatione*. It is an experience in which the mind withdraws from the body and thus purified, is capable of divination through dreams. This passage also illustrates the extent to which Philo's views on divination were not composed of static categories but rather dynamic progressions.⁴² Chaldea represents a theological view associated with artificial divination that must be abandoned for future progress to be possible. The implication seems to be that those who are without divine knowledge must resort to human knowledge, which is inferior by far. At the other end of the spectrum, natural divination is a product of advanced moral and spiritual progress, which gives one direct access to divine knowledge.

Conclusion

In Cicero's *De divinatione*, the distinction between natural and artificial divination is an important organizing device for the treatise. The separation is necessary because Cicero is exploring the plausibility of each form of divination on theoretical grounds, and they have different explanations: natural divination is a movement of the soul and a product of divine inspiration; and artificial divination is a human science made possible by cosmic sympathy.

42. Cf. É. Bréhier, *Les idées philosophiques et religieuses*. 189-191 for a related discussion of divination in terms of transformation and moral progress.

Philo's habit of characterizing practices like augury and astrology as human skills shows the influence of Cicero's typology on him, but Philo has very different reasons for emphasizing the distinction.

While Philo may have accepted the validity of artificial divination on the basis of cosmic sympathy, he was simply unable to reconcile his monotheistic belief in a personal god with the theological implications of artificial divination. As it was understood within its Greco-Roman philosophical context, artificial divination suggested a relatively mechanistic and impersonal view of the natural world. This was not a big problem for polytheists because natural phenomena were often directly identified with god(s).⁴³ But as Philo points out, this is simply incompatible with his understanding of a personal god who created the universe and exerts his influence on it as something other than himself.

Philo's exegesis of Chaldean astrology and Chaldea itself is the most important focus for him to express his theological views in relation to artificial divination. The reason may be precisely because of the widespread reputation of Chaldea for astrology. Philo's exegesis emphasizes that natural and artificial divination are not only different but actually at odds with one another and somewhat mutually exclusive. When Balaam becomes a prophet, his divinatory powers are usurped. Similarly, one cannot practice natural divination until one has rejected theological views associated with Chaldean astrology and Chaldea itself.

43. Iamblichus was clearly an exception. He also characterized technical forms of divination as inferior to other kinds for similar reasons. In particular, he stresses the risk of human fallacy in interpretation (see esp. *De myst.* 3.15). However, the point for Iamblichus seems to be not that God was personal but that human knowledge was inferior. See E. Clarke, *Iamblichus' De Mysteriis* 26-27; P. Athanassiadi, "Dreams, Theurgy and Freelance Divination" 119-120.

Bibliography

- Athanassiadi, Polymnia. "Dreams, Theurgy and Freelance Divination: The Testimony of Iamblichus," *The Journal of Roman Studies* 83 (1993): 115-130.
- Aune, David E. *Prophecy in Early Christianity and the Ancient Mediterranean World*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983.
- Beard, Mary. "Cicero and Divination: The Formation of a Latin Discourse," *The Journal of Roman Studies* 76 (1986): 33-46.
- Berchman, Robert. "Arcana Mundi: Between Balaam and Hecate: Prophecy, Divination, and Magic in Later Platonism," *SBLSP* 28, Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989, 107-185.
- . "Arcana Mundi: Magic and Divination in the *De Somniis* of Philo of Alexandria," *SBLSP* 26, Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987, 403-428.
- . "Arcana Mundi: Prophecy and Divination in the *Vita Mosis* of Philo of Alexandria," *SBLSP* 27, Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988, 385-423.
- Betz, O. "Die Bileamtradition und die biblische Lehre von der Inspiration," ed. Görg Manfred. *Religion im Erbe Ägyptens. Beiträge zur spätantiken Religionsgeschichte Zu Ehren von Alexander Böhlig, Ägypten und Altes Testament, Studien zu Geschichte, Kultur und Religion Ägyptens und des Altens Testaments* 14, Wiesbaden: Otto Harassowitz, 1988, 18-53.
- Bouché-Leclercq, Auguste. *Histoire de la divination dans l'antiquité*, 4 vols., Paris: Leroux, 1879. repr. Aalen: Scientia, 1978.
- Bréhier, Émile. *Les idées philosophiques et religieuses de Philon d' Alexandrie*, 2nd ed, Paris: Vrin, 1925.
- Calabi, Francesca. *God's Acting, Man's Acting: Tradition and Philosophy in Philo of Alexandria*, Leiden: Brill, 2008.
- Clarke, Emma C. *Iamblichus' De Mysteriis: A Manifesto of the Miraculous*, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001.
- Decharneux, Baudouin. "Mantique et oracles dans l'oeuvre de Philon d'Alexandrie," *Kernos* 3 (1990): 123-132.
- Dillon, John. *The Middle Platonists*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996.
- Dodson, Derek. "Philo's *De Somniis* in the Context of Ancient Dream Theories and Classifications," *PRSt* 30 (2003): 299-312.
- Edelstein, L. and I. G. Kidd. *Posidonius: The Fragments*, 3 vols., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972-1999.
- Flower, Michael Attyah. *The Seer in Ancient Greece*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008.
- Frick, Peter. *Divine Providence in Philo of Alexandria, Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism* 77, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999.
- Guillaumont, François. *Le De divinatione de Cicéron et les théories antiques de la divination*. Bruxelles: Éditions Latomus, 2006.
- Halliday, W. R. *Greek Divination: A Study of Its Methods and Principles*, Chicago: Argonaut, 1913 (Reprint 1967).
- Hilgert, E. 1987. "A Survey of Previous Scholarship on Philo's *De Somniis* 1-2," *SBLSP* 26, 394-402.

- Jacobs, John. "Traces of the Omen Series Šumma Izbu in Cicero, *De Divinatione*," ed. Amar Annus. *Divination and Interpretation of Signs in the Ancient World*, Oriental Institute Seminars 6, Chicago: The Oriental Institute of the University Of Chicago, 2010, 317-339.
- Jastrow, Morris. "Hepatoscopy and Astrology in Babylonia and Assyria," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 47:190 (1908): 646-676.
- Jeffers, Ann. *Magic and Divination in Ancient Palestinian Syria*, Leiden: Brill, 1996.
- Johnston, Sarah Iles. *Ancient Greek Divination*, Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2008.
- Kamesar, Adam. ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Philo*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.
- Kessels, A.H.M. "Ancient Systems of Dream Classification," *Mnemosyne* 22 (1969): 389-424.
- Klauk, Hans-Josef. *The Religious Context of Early Christianity*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003.
- Levinson, John R. "Two Types of Ecstatic Prophecy According to Philo," *The Studia Philonica Annual* 6 (1994): 83-89.
- Lévy, Carlos. 2009. "Philo's Ethics," ed. Adam Kamesar, *The Cambridge Companion to Philo*, 146-171.
- Long, A. A. "Astrology: Arguments Pro and Contra," ed. Barnes, Jonathan, et al. *Science and Speculation: Studies in Hellenistic Theory and Practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982, 165-192.
- Manetti, Giovanni. *Theories of the Sign in Classical Antiquity*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993.
- Nigosian, Solomon. *Magic and Divination in the Old Testament*, Portland, OR: Sussex Academic Press, 2008.
- Nissinen, Martti. "Prophecy and Omen Divination: Two Sides of the Same Coin," ed. Amar Annus. *Divination and Interpretation of Signs in the Ancient World*, Oriental Institute Seminars 6. Chicago: The Oriental Institute of the University Of Chicago, 2010, 317-339.
- Pease, Stanley. *De Divinatione. Liber Primus, Liber Secundus, 2 vols.*, Urbana, IL: University of Illinois, 1920.
- Radice, Roberto. "Philo's Theology and Theory of Creation," ed. Adam Kamesar. *The Cambridge Companion to Philo*, 124-145.
- Rasmussen, S. 2000. "Cicero's Stand on Prodigies. A Non-existent Dilemma," ed. Isager, Jacob and Robin Lorsch Wildfang. *Divination and Portents in the Roman World*, Odense, Denmark: Odense University Press, 2000, 9-24.
- Reddoch, M. Jason. "Enigmatic Dreams and Onirocritical Skill in *De Somniis* 2," *The Studia Philonica Annual* 25 (2013): 1-16.
- Reinhardt, Karl. *Kosmos und Sympathie*, München: Beck, 1926.
- Ruiz, Gregorio. "Profetas y profecía en la obra de Filón Alejandrino," *Miscelánea Comillas* 40 (1982): 113-146.
- Runia, David T. *On the Creation of the Cosmos According to Moses*. Introduction, Translation, and Commentary, Leiden: Brill, 2001.
- Sambursky, S. *Physics of the Stoics*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1959.
- Schofield, Malcolm. "Cicero for and Against Divination," *The Journal of Roman Studies* 76 (1986): 47-65.

- Tarrant, H. "Recollection and Prophecy in the *De Divinatione*," *Phronesis* 45 (2000): 64-76.
- Termini, Cristina. "Philo's Thought within the Context of Middle Judaism," ed. Adam Kamesar, *The Cambridge Companion to Philo*, 95-123.
- Theiler, Willy. *Die Fragmente*, 2 vols., Berlin: de Gruyter, 1982.
- Torallas-Tovar, Sofía. "Sobre la clasificación de los sueños de Filón de Alejandría y sus implicaciones posteriores," *Cuadernos de filología clásica* 9 (1999): 191-212.
- Wardle, David. *De Divinatione: Book I*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006.
- Winston, David. "Judaism and Hellenism: Hidden Tensions in Philo's Thought," *The Studia Philonica Annual* 2 (1990): 1-19.
- . *Logos and Mystical Theology in Philo of Alexandria*, Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1985.
- . "Philo and Rabbinic Literature," ed. Adam Kamesar. *The Cambridge Companion to Philo*, 231-253.
- . "Philo's Ethical Theory," *ANRW* 21.1, 1984, 372-416.
- . "Two Types of Mosaic Prophecy according to Philo," *Journal for the Study of Pseudepigrapha* 2 (1989): 49-67.
- Wolfson, Harry Austryn. *Philo: Foundations of Religious Philosophy in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*, vols. I-II, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1947.
- Wong, Chan-Kok. "Philo's Use of Chaldaioi," *The Studia Philonica Annual* 4 (1992): 1-14.
- Zuesse, Evan M. "Divination," ed. Mircea Eliade. *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, 4 vols., New York: MacMillan, 1986. 375-381.