

A Portrait of Many Colours: Philo's Account of Roman Political Administration in Alexandria

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In the biographical treatises *De Vita Mosis* (*Mos.*) and *De Iosepho* (*Ios.*), Philo presents two very different political characters. On the one hand, Moses represents the ultimate form of leadership as the virtuous philosopher king; on the other, Joseph depicts the *politikos*, or statesman, subject both to the Pharaoh and to the whims of the people over whom he presides.¹ Although Philo's characterization of the statesman in *De Iosepho* is not ostensibly disapproving, he employs terminology and concepts which reappear as censures in *In Flaccum* (*Flacc.*) and *Legatio ad Gaium* (*Legat.*), treatises on his own milieu in Alexandria where tension between the Judeans and the Roman administration was growing. Unlike *De Vita Mosis*, which expresses the Roman cosmopolitan ideal, in *De Iosepho*, Philo merges his views on contemporary Alexandria with the Egypt of Joseph. Maren Niehoff writes:

[A]s opposed to his own writings on Moses and Abraham, where he clearly separates between historiography and allegory, Philo did not keep these categories strictly apart in *Ios* ... [I]t moreover appears that the categories of biblical and contemporary Egypt are not always clearly separated in Philo's thought ... and he tends to apply similar moral criticism also to the Egypt in which he lives.²

How, on the one hand, does Philo's portrayal of Joseph as statesman illumine his views on the conflict between Rome and Judea? On the other,

1. Implicit here is Plato's introduction to the *Sophist*, where he explains that the philosopher is often confused with the sophist and the statesman (216c–d). The aim in both dialogues, the *Sophist* and the *Statesman*, is to define each figure thereby delineating their roles as distinct from that of the philosopher. Similarly, in *Ios.*, Philo delineates the function of the statesman which is distinct from that of the philosopher-king, as described in the first book of *Mos*.

2. Maren Niehoff, *The Figure of Joseph in Post-Biblical Literature* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 78. For a detailed study on the role of Egypt in Philo's writings, see Sarah Pearce, *The Land of the Body: Studies in Philo's Representation of Egypt* (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007). Here, Pearce writes, "Egypt always represents the material sphere, 'the land of the body' which the soul must leave to arrive at its God-given destiny. This symbolic interpretation of Egypt dominates Philo's interpretation of Egypt, the Egyptian people and all things Egyptian throughout his writings" (xxi).

how does Philo's criticism of contemporary politics articulate the dangerous consequences implicit in *De Iosepho*? First I shall briefly comment on the purpose and character of Philo's three treatises used in my examination. Next I shall examine how Philo's allegorical exegesis of the Joseph story in *De Iosepho* develops his views on the statesman. Finally I shall treat the way in which key terms and concepts of his exegesis function in *In Flaccum* and in *Legatio ad Gaium*. By means of this consideration, it shall become clear that the politicians of Philo's own day have actualized the potential dangers he ascribed to the statesman, whose concerns are inextricably bound to the corporeal realm.

THE FIGURE OF JOSEPH AND THE HISTORICAL WRITINGS:
POLITICIANS BEHAVING BADLY

De Iosepho belongs to a group of twelve Philonic treatises forming a commentary on the Pentateuch, which scholars refer to as the *Exposition of the Law*. It follows in sequence after three biographies on Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; its purpose is to describe the statesman-type soul, epitomized by the figure Joseph. Like the majority—if not the totality—of Philo's treatises, *De Iosepho* is a religious, literary, and philosophical treatise. It presupposes a familiarity with both the Pentateuch and Hellenistic culture, alluding to and incorporating Biblical references and Greek philosophical concepts. Thus it is likely that Philo wrote *De Iosepho* for an audience not unlike himself—i.e., for well-educated Greeks familiar with, if not adherents to, Judean culture.³

In Flaccum and *Legatio ad Gaium* belong to the group of treatises termed *Historical Writings*. They are written during the reign of Claudius as didactic works, possibly directed to the Alexandrian prefect, Vitrasius Pollio, Flaccus' successor, and to the emperor Claudius himself. In these treatises, Philo re-interprets and re-tells contemporary events to illustrate the catastrophic effects of an unfit ruler. *In Flaccum* describes Flaccus' role in the persecution of the Alexandrian Judeans, undertaken primarily by a mob of troublesome locals. In *Legatio ad Gaium*, Philo describes his stay on the Esquiline where he led an embassy from Alexandria to plead before the emperor Gaius a case involving two issues, namely, the violation of the Judean meetinghouses in Alexandria, and the civic rights of the Judeans living in Alexandria.⁴ In both

3. For a review of scholarship on the audience of *Ios.*, see Jouette Bassler, "Philo on Joseph. The basic coherence of the *De Iosepho* and *De Somniis* II," in *Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic and Roman Period* XVI.2 (1985): 240–55.

4. These issues involve several contentious questions. What the civic rights of the Judeans entail, whether they were considered citizens, whether the perpetrators of the attacks in Alexandria were Egyptian or Greek, and whether we can view these events as historical examples of anti-Semitism. For an excellent account of all the aforementioned questions, see Erich Gruen, *Diaspora: Jews Amidst Greeks and Romans* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), esp. 54–83.

treatises, Philo argues that the Judean meetinghouses are protected under the constitution of Augustus and that the installation of images and statues therein is in violation of Roman law. However, it is Philo's ethical criticism of Gaius and Flaccus in *Legatio ad Gaium* and *In Flaccum* respectively that shall be the focus of my investigation. As such, I am not concerned with evaluating the historical accuracy of Philo's accounts, but rather the way in which certain motifs function in his understanding of both scripture and the contemporary world.⁵

THE LIFE OF THE STATESMAN

Philo's explanation of the Hebrew etymology of Joseph's name meaning 'addition of a lord' is significant for understanding his conception of Joseph relative to the three patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who are "ensouled and rational laws."⁶ On the notion of 'addition,' Philo writes: "thus, naturally particular polities are rather an addition to the single polity of nature, for the laws of the different states are additions to the right reason of nature, and the statesman is an addition to the man whose life accords with nature."⁷ The causes of 'additional' law codes are the "uncivilized and unsociable"⁸ desires of particular communities and these additions prevent the fellowship of mankind because they serve only individual concerns. Joseph, the statesman, is thus an 'additional' lord, ruling over uncivilized and unsociable particularity.

5. For an in-depth account of the events in Alexandria, see Sandra Gambetti, "The Alexandrian Riots of 38 C.E. and the Persecution of the Jews: A Historical Reconstruction," in *Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism* 135 (2009): esp. 13–22 where she treats the difficulties that Philo's narratives entail when regarded as historical sources.

6. *De Abrahamo* 5: οἱ γὰρ ἔμφυχοι καὶ λογικοὶ νόμοι ἄνδρες. See *Abr.* 11–46, where Philo describes the triad formed by the lives of Enos, Enoch, and Noah, which is followed by the triad formed by the three 'living laws.' The characteristic feature of the first triad is the ability to turn from the ways of the multitude towards the good. Like the traveler who never reaches his destination, the souls in the first triad do not achieve full perfection and are not paradigmatic like the souls of the second. Joseph is distinct from the souls in both triads as he remains unaware of the true goal, directed towards the ways of the many. English translations of Greek text are generally my own. However, in cases where the English rendition of Philo's text is acceptable, I have often retained (or emended) the translation found in *The Works of Philo* vols. 1–10, ed. and trans. F.H. Colson and G.H. Whitaker, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1929). The Greek text is from *Philonis Alexandrini opera quae supersunt*, vols. 1–6, ed. L. Cohn and P. Wendland (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1896–1930).

7. *Ios.* 31–2: ὥστε εἰκότως προσῆται μᾶλλον αἰ κατὰ μέρος πολιτεία μιᾶς τῆς κατὰ τὴν φύσιν· προσῆται μὲν γὰρ οἱ κατὰ πόλεις νόμοι τοῦ τῆς φύσεως ὀρθοῦ λόγου, προσῆκη δέ ἐστι πολιτικὸς ἄνθρωπος τοῦ βιοῦντος κατὰ φύσιν. See also *De Mutatione Nominum* (*Mut.*) 89–90 and *De Somniis* (*Somn.*) 2.47–48. In the former, Philo explains 'addition' in terms of material (i.e., external) wealth, which is an addition to the natural. In the latter, Philo explains that Joseph's name is appropriate because empty opinion (ἡ κενὴ δόξα) is always making 'additions' (i.e., to truth, empty opinion adds falsehood).

8. *Ios.* 30: αἴτιον δὲ τὸ ἀμικτον καὶ ἀκοινώνητον.

Philo's exegesis of the Joseph story develops the character of the statesman as a wholly inconsistent and highly mutable figure. Joseph's coat of variegated (ποικίλος)⁹ colours represents the instability of the political life which demands that the statesman change in accordance with external circumstances. As the prey of wild beasts, Joseph represents the statesman's susceptibility to empty opinions (κενοδοξία).¹⁰ Through his exegesis of the sale of Joseph as a slave, Philo develops the notions of the statesman's variegated and inconsistent character: "for politicians have not one but a multitude of masters who buy them one from another, each waiting to take his turn in the succession, and those who are thrice sold, like bad servants change their masters, unable to endure their old lords due to fickleness, novelty-loving [φιλόκαινος], and unevenness [ἀνωμαλία] of their dispositions."¹¹ The statesman, though aware that the crowd holds the power over him, nonetheless denies this reality and regards himself as a free man. Philo attributes a lengthy speech to this typical statesman, who makes such claims as: "I am free of odious hypocrisy [ὑπόκρισις] ... fearing no menace, even if the threat is death, for hypocrisy is more painful to me than death ... I would rather lie dead than with some pleasant words conceal the truth and disregard real welfare."¹² Philo's statesman is much like an actor who masks reality with his words and plays the role of a character he is not.

Philo's exegesis of Joseph's role as dream interpreter, a role he ascribes to the statesman, reveals his epistemological instability and advances the notion of 'empty opinion.'¹³ The mode of apprehension of the embodied human

9. Philo uses the term ποικίλος in a two-fold manner. On the one hand, it describes sacred objects such as the woven gown of the high priest and other woven items adorning the tabernacle. On the other, it is used to describe features of the political life, namely, instability, fickleness, and the fabrication of falsehoods. See *Somm.* 1.216–21 where Philo clearly distinguishes the garments of the priest described as ποικίλος, from Joseph's coat. For the use of ποικίλος in the context of political criticism, see Plato, *Republic* 2.365c, 4.426a, esp. 8.559d.

10. *Ios.* 36. Though Philo often discusses ἡ κενὴ δόξα, he uses the term κενοδοξία elsewhere only twice. See *Mut.* 96, where Philo explains that Rachel died in childbirth, which is appropriate for the mother of κενοδοξία, whose conception and birth entails the death of the soul. For the other use of the term, see *Legat.* 114.

11. *Ios.* 36: οὐ γὰρ εἰς δεσπότης τῶν πολιτευομένων, ἀλλ' ὄχλος, ἐξ ἑτέρων ἑτεροὶ κατὰ τινὰς ἐφεδρείας καὶ διαδοχάς· οἱ δὲ τρίπρατοι κακῶν θεραπεύοντων τρόπον ἀλλάττουσι τοὺς κυρίους οὐχ ὑπομένοντες τοὺς προτέρους διὰ τὴν ἀψίκoron καὶ φιλόκαινον τῶν ἡθῶν ἀνωμαλίαν.

12. *Ios.* 67–77: καθαρῶς ἄνευ τῆς ἐχθρᾶς ὑποκρίσεως... φοβηθήσομαι δ' οὐδὲν ὧν ἂν ἐπανατείνηται, κἂν θάνατον ἀπειλῇ· θανάτου γὰρ ἐμοὶ κακὸν ἀργαλεώτερον ὑπόκρισις... τεθνᾶναι μᾶλλον ἂν ἐλοίμην ἢ πρὸς ἡδονὴν τι φθεγξάμενος ἐπικρύψαι τὴν ἀλήθειαν καὶ τοῦ συμφέροντος ἀμελῆσαι.

13. Plato frequently employs sleeping and dreaming as epistemological metaphors for imperfect or false modes of knowing. See *Apology* 31a; *Meno* 85c; *Republic* 7.520c where it is used in the context of political criticism. See Aristotle, *De Anima* 429a5 where the mind deceived by the imagination is likened to the mind of one who is asleep.

soul who has no recourse to reason is likened to that of a dreamer: “[dreams] are empty creations of *dianoia*, which without any basis of reality produces pictures and images of things which are not, as though they were, so too the visions and imaginations of our waking hours resemble dreams: they come, they go, they appear, they speed away, they fly off before we can securely grasp them.”¹⁴ The skillful dream interpreter acts as mediator when he makes predictions based on probabilities derived from events in the external world. However, these predictions lack certainty and, ultimately, are validated or invalidated *by chance*. Insofar as the interpreter views the images more objectively than the dreamer, he ranks epistemologically higher. Nonetheless, the dream interpreter ranks well below the fully rational soul, which as mediator and governor is represented by the figure of the king: “[the statesman] is greater than a private person but less than a king in absolute power since he has the people for his king and to serve that king with pure and guileless good faith is the task he has set before him.”¹⁵

Philo’s exegesis of the Joseph story develops the character of the statesman as one whose knowledge, virtue and power are only apparent and reveals that even the appearance having of such qualities entirely depends upon external factors. Insofar as the statesman is cognizant that his power is derived from that which he alleges to control, assuming the role of ruler is itself an act of hypocrisy. Political life is uneven, variegated, and mutable, and the statesman must constantly change according to these circumstances. The rule of the many over one is an inversion of the law of nature, which is the hierarchically ordered cosmos, wherein the simpler principles govern the diverse and invest them with their powers. Having thus outlined the essential attributes of Philo’s statesman, I shall now examine how these function in his criticism of contemporary politicians.

FLACCUS AND THE DEFEAT OF REASON

Because there are significant parallels between Philo’s treatment of Joseph’s Egypt and his treatment of contemporary Egypt, it is tempting to consider the character of Joseph the statesman as emblematic of provincial governors in the same way that Moses the Philosopher King espouses the role of the ideal emperor. This, however, is clearly not the case. Philo maintains that the Roman *imperium* set forth by Augustus and the Mosaic law recorded in the Pentateuch are two different manifestations of the same law of nature,

14. *Ios.* 126: τὸ παράπαν χρώμεθα – κενὰ δ’ εἶσι τῆς διανοίας πρὸς οὐδὲν ὑποκείμενον ἀληθείᾳ μόνον ἀναζωγραφοῦσης καὶ ἀνειδωλοποιούσης τὰ μὴ ὄντα ὡς ὄντα –, οὕτω καὶ τῶν παρ’ ἡμῖν ἐργηγορότων αἱ φαντασίαι τοῖς ἔνυπνιόις εἰκόσασιν· ἦλθον, ἀπῆλθον, ἐφάνησαν, ἀπεπήδησαν, πρὶν καταληφθῆναι βεβαίως ἀπέπτησαν.

15. *Ios.* 148: ἰδιώτου μὲν ὧν κρείττων, ἐλάττων δ’ εἰς ἀρχὴν αὐτεξούσιου βασιλέως, τῷ δήμῳ βασιλεῖ χρώμενος, ὑπὲρ οὐ πάντα πράττειν προήρηται καθαρὰ καὶ ἀδολωτάτη πίστι.

they are in full accordance with each other, and both seek universal ends: “[Augustus] delivered every city into freedom, he led disorder into order, and he socialized and harmonized uncivilized nations and all savagery.”¹⁶ As Philo sees it, Roman administration ideally reflects the hierarchical cosmos, each level a microcosm and image of the higher orders. Insofar as the statesman subverts this order, he belongs nowhere in the ideal scheme of political administration, Roman or otherwise.

In Flaccum begins with high praise for the Alexandrian prefect Flaccus with regard to his initial success in managing various administrative affairs, such as the collection of tribute. According to Philo, these matters are “indeed great and vital though they did not in any way indicate [that Flaccus possessed] a soul of a leader. But the qualities indicative of a more brilliant and kingly nature, these [Flaccus] showed more openly.”¹⁷ The nature of a leader is reflected in his subjects, and Flaccus’ king-like qualities were reflected in the order and peace he maintained in Alexandria. The disposition of a king is rational, but possessing reason does not preclude the possibility of backsliding. However, the change to a lower disposition by one possessed of reason entails grave consequences: “for to one who sins through ignorance of a better way, pardon may be given, but one who does wrong knowingly has no defense but stands already convicted at the bar of his conscience.”¹⁸ Flaccus possessed qualities of a soul endowed with reason and was cognizant that to be overcome by the variegated (ποικίλος) and shifting (πολύτροπος) ways of the Egyptians would be indefensible.¹⁹

In the year following Gaius’ accession, Flaccus began to lose control of himself and his subjects on account of his grief over the deaths of Tiberius and Macro and his fear of Gaius: “and when the ruler despairs of keeping control it is inevitable that the subjects at once become restive, particularly those who are naturally excited by quite small and ordinary occurrences. Among people such as these, the Egyptian nation holds first place, accustomed as it is to blow up the tiniest spark into the gravest seditions.”²⁰ Just like the statesman, Flaccus is dominated by his inferiors and made their captive. By

16. *Legat.* 147: οὗτος ὁ τὰς πόλεις ἀπάσας εἰς ἐλευθερίαν ἐξελόμενος, ὁ τὴν ἀταξίαν εἰς τάξιν ἀγαγών, ὁ τὰ ἀμικτα ἔθνη καὶ θηριώδη πάντα ἡμερώσας καὶ ἁρμολογούμενος.

17. *Flacc.* 4: εἰ καὶ μεγάλα καὶ ἀναγκαῖα ἦν, ἀλλ’ οὐδὲν γε δείγμα ψυχῆς ὑπέφαινευ ἡγεμονικῆς, ἃ δὲ λαμπρότεραν καὶ βασιλικὴν ἐδήλου φύσιν, μετὰ πλείονος παρρησίας ἐπεδεικνυτο.

18. *Flacc.* 7: τῷ μὲν γὰρ ἀγνοοῖα τοῦ κρείττονος διαμαρτάνοντι συγγνώμη δίδοται, ὁ δ’ ἐξ ἐπιστήμης ἀδικῶν ἀπολογίαν οὐκ ἔχει προσαλωκῶς ἐν τῷ τοῦ συνείδωτος δικαστηρίῳ.

19. *Flacc.* 3.

20. *Flacc.* 17: ὅταν δ’ ὁ ἄρχων ἀπογνῶ τὸ δύνασθαι κρατεῖν, ἀνάγκη τοὺς ὑπηκόους εὐθύς ἀφηνιάζειν καὶ μάλιστα τοὺς ἐκ μικρῶν καὶ τῶν τυχόντων πεφυκότας ἀνερεθίζεσθαι· ἐν οἷς τὸ Αἰγυπτιακὸν τὰ πρωτεῖα φέρεται διὰ βραχυτάτου σπινθήρος εἰώθως ἐκφυσᾶν στάσεις μεγάλας.

neglecting to reprimand their disorderly behaviour, Flaccus gave free reign to the mob. Philo writes: “having Flaccus purchased by the miserable price which he, crazy for fame and ever ready to be sold, took to the destruction of not only himself but of the public safety, and [the crowd] called out, by one agreement, for installing images in the meeting houses.”²¹ Like both Joseph and the statesman, Flaccus is ‘sold’ into bondage and becomes subject to the dangerous whims of the multitude.

The installation of statues proposed by the Alexandrian mob “[was] a breach of the law [παράνομημα] entirely novel [καινότατον] and unprecedented ... but since [Flaccus] worked hand in hand with them in all their misdeeds he did not scruple to use his superior power to fan the flames of sedition perpetually by still more novel additions [προσθήκη] of evil.”²² Like the ‘additional’ law codes discussed earlier, the ‘additions’ in *In Flaccum* serve only particular interests and are superfluities relative to the law of nature. However, here, Philo adds a new dimension to the notion of addition, which highlights the gravity of its consequences. Because the ‘additions’ actually serve to harm the interests of others, they stand in direct defiance of the law and thus are considered evil.

Philo employs the metaphor of the dreamer in his description of Flaccus’ downfall. Because Flaccus’ inherent nature is fundamentally rational, unlike Joseph, he is able to recognize the falsity of the opinions with which he deceived himself. Flaccus laments: “was I asleep and dreamt the light heartedness of those days, saw but spectres moving in a void, figments of a soul which recorded as we may suppose things which have no subsistence as if they existed?”²³ Indeed, Flaccus has woken up, so to speak, to the falsity of the opinions which lead him to permit (if not commit) acts of injustice against the Judeans. There is no comfort for Flaccus, who knows that his punishments are due to divine providence and that he must suffer further to counterbalance his misdeeds: “King of gods and men, you care for the nation of Judeans and they do not misreport your providence ... and I have a clear conviction that this is not the limit of my sufferings but there are others in reserve to complete the sum and counterbalance all that I did.”²⁴ Insofar as

21. *Flacc.* 41: Φλάκκον ἦδη τιμῶν ἀθλίων ἔωνημένοι, ἃς ὁ δοξομανῆς καὶ παλίμπατος ἐλάμβανε οὐ καθ’ αὐτοῦ μόνον ἀλλὰ καὶ τῆς κοινῆς ἀσφαλείας, ἀνεβόησαν ἀφ’ ἐνὸς συνθήματος εἰκόνας ἐν ταῖς προσευχαῖς ἀνατιθέναι.

22. *Flacc.* 42–44: καινότατον καὶ μηδέπω πραχθὲν εἰσηγούμενοι παράνομημα... ὁ δὲ – συνεχιροῦργει γὰρ ἕκαστα τῶν ἀμαρτανόμενων – καὶ ἀπὸ μείζονος ἐξουσίας ἀναρριπίζειν καινότεραις αἰὲ κακῶν προσθήκαις τὴν στάσιν ἤξει.

23. *Flacc.* 164: καὶ κοιμώμενος ὄναρ εἶδον τὴν τότε εὐθυμίαν, εἶδωλα κατὰ κενοῦ βαίνοντα, πλάσματα ψυχῆς ἴσως ἀναγραφούσης τὰ μὴ ὑπάρχοντα ὡς ὄντα;

24. *Flacc.* 170–74: βασιλεῦ θεῶν καὶ ἀνθρώπων, οὐκ ἄρα τοῦ τῶν Ἰουδαίων ἔθνους ἀμελῶς ἔχεις, οὐδ’ ἐπιψεύδονται τὴν ἐκ σοῦ πρόνοιαν... καὶ πείσμαι σαφῶς, ὅτι οὐκ ἔστιν ὅρος οὗτος τῶν ἐμῶν κακοπραγιῶν, ἀλλ’ ἐφεδρεύουσιν ἕτεραί πρὸς ἐκπλήρωσιν ἀντίτροπον ὧν εἰργασάμην.

Flaccus views his misdeeds and their punishments from the perspective of reason, he is no longer able to cling to the hope that his misfortunes will be reversed.

Philo criticizes Flaccus for allowing strong emotion to cloud his judgement causing his loss of control over, and his subjugation to, the rancorous crowd which committed acts of injustice and evil against the Judeans. When a capable ruler relinquishes his power and submits to the chaotic whims of the many, he knowingly opposes the incorporeal and rational ordering principle inherent in the cosmos. This is a far greater transgression than that of the best of all incapable rulers—Joseph—who considers his actions just and rational, but has no true concept of justice or reason. Accordingly, Flaccus' rationality heightened his suffering, as he was able to recognize the operation of providence, leaving him no hope for a change of fortune.

GAIUS AS DESPOTIC MASTER

In *Legatio ad Gaium*, many of the attributes ascribed to the statesman are used with reference to Gaius, and, like in *In Flaccum*, Philo explores a broader range of consequence than described in *De Iosepho*. According to Philo, Gaius acceded to the imperial seat through a series of misdeeds which did not result from a change in character as was the case with Flaccus, but “rather [Gaius was] revealing the brutality which he used to disguise under the mask of hypocrisy [ὑπόκρισις].”²⁵ The early concealment of his true character meant that many falsely thought him credible and fit to rule: “for his artificial and variegated [ποικίλος] disposition was not yet manifest.”²⁶ Emperor Tiberius, however, had discerned his true character and “doubted his fitness for an office of such magnitude, both because of his uncivilized [ἄμικτος] and unsociable [ἀκοινωνήτος] nature and because of his uneven [ἀνωμαλία] temperament, for he showed abnormal and crazy tendencies and maintained no consistency in word and deed.”²⁷ In *Legatio ad Gaium*, Philo ascribes terms denoting the attributes of inconsistency, variegation, and unsociability directly to the nature and character of Gaius.

Similar to the way *In Flaccum* expands the consequences of ‘additions’ to the law, in *Legatio ad Gaium* Philo develops the dangers of the hypocritical character. The hypocrisy Philo ascribes to the statesman is of a rather banal sort; though he does not intend to deceive his subjects, he nonetheless does not address them truthfully and fails to admit to his delusion concerning

25. *Legat.* 22: μάλλον δὲ ἢν συσεκίαζεν ἀγριότητα τῷ πλάσματι τῆς ὑποκρίσεως ἀναφήνας.

26. *Legat.* 59: οὐπω γὰρ ἦν τὸ πεπλασμένον αὐτοῦ καὶ ποικίλον τῶν ἡθῶν ἐμφανές.

27. *Legat.* 34: πρὸς δὲ ἀρχὴν καὶ τοσαύτην ἀνεπιτηδείως ἔχοντα διὰ τε τὸ τῆς φύσεως ἄμικτον καὶ ἀκοινωνήτου καὶ τῆν τῶν ἡθῶν ἀνωμαλίαν· ἀλλόκοτα γὰρ αὐτῷ καὶ ἐπιμαυῆ κατεφάνετο, μηδεμίᾳς σωζομένης ἀκολουθίας, μήτε ἐν λόγοις μήτε ἐν ἔργοις. See also 346 where Philo uses ἀνωμαλία in reference to Gaius' conduct.

his own shortcomings. Gaius' hypocrisy, however, is much more injurious as he disregards the welfare of his subjects and serves only his own erratic passions. Once he had secured the imperial seat, "[Gaius] no longer considered it worthy for him to abide within the bounds of human nature but overstepped them in his eagerness to be thought a god."²⁸ According to Philo, the Alexandrians are well suited to inflame Gaius' desire to be considered a god: "for the Alexandrians are adepts at flattery and cheating and hypocrisy."²⁹ An unstable soul such as Gaius becomes truly dangerous when he assumes a position of authority: "but passion, so it seems, is blind particularly when reinforced with both the susceptibility to empty opinions [κενοδοξία] and the love of strife, combined with the greatest authority, which laid waste to our [the Judeans'] former prosperity."³⁰ Again, Philo uses the analogy of slavery. Here, it functions to describe the utter helplessness of the subjects who must endure the ruler's madness: "and we [the Judeans] were ranked as not only slaves but the most degraded of slaves when the ruler turned into a despot."³¹ To expect justice from Gaius is, for Philo, an irrational and untenable hope: "to suppose that we might happen to take precedence with a despot of an alien race, a youth possessing absolute power, is this not nearly madness?"³² While Flaccus' transgressions stem from his lapse from reason into delusion, Gaius' misdeeds are the results of his fundamentally flawed disposition and are magnified due to the position of authority he holds.

CONCLUSION

By examining the ways in which key terms and concepts found in Philo's allegorical exegesis of the Joseph story function in *In Flaccum* and *Legatio ad Gaium*, I have shown how his philosophical understanding of scripture illumines his understanding of contemporary events. Moreover, in Philo's moral criticism of contemporary politicians, he articulates the dangerous consequences implicit in *De Iosepho*. By means of my consideration, it is clear that in *De Iosepho*, Philo presents the best possible scenario when the soul devoid of reason assumes a position of authority as the statesman. Although Joseph, the statesman, may have good intentions for the state and would not voluntarily subject it to evil, he is nonetheless powerless to effect a change

28. *Legat.* 75: οὐκέτι ἡξίου μένειν ἐν τοῖς τῆς ἀνθρωπίνης φύσεως ὅροις, ἀλλ' ὑπερέκυπτε σπουδάζων θεὸς νομίζεσθαι.

29. *Legat.* 162: δεινοὶ γὰρ εἰσι τὰς κολακείας καὶ γοητείας καὶ ὑποκρίσεις.

30. *Legat.* 114: τυφλὸν δέ, ὡς εἰκεν, ἢ ἐπιθυμία, καὶ μάλισθ' ὅταν προσλάβῃ κενοδοξίαν ὁμοῦ καὶ φιλονεικίαν μετὰ τῆς μεγίστης ἐξουσίας, ὑφ' ἧς ἡμεῖς οἱ πρότερον εὐτυχεῖς ἐπορθούμεθα.

31. *Legat.* 119: ἡμεῖς δὲ οὐ μόνον ἐν δούλοις ἀλλὰ καὶ δούλων τοῖς ἀτιμοτάτοις ἐγγραφομέθα τοῦ ἀρχοντος τρέποντος εἰς δεσπότην.

32. *Legat.* 183: τὸ δὲ διὰ καὶ προνομίας οἶεσθαι τυγχάνειν παρ' ἄλλοθεν καὶ νέω καὶ αὐτεξουσίᾳ δεσπότη μὴ καὶ μανίας ἐγγύς ἐστιν;

leading to the betterment of its people.³³ That the statesman even *appears* authoritative and supreme is contingent on the good fortune of the state. This is an inversion of the notion that a suitable ruler reflects his goodness in the order of the people over whom he presides.

Unlike Flaccus, who eventually recognizes his delusion, neither Gaius nor Joseph awakens to see the emptiness of the visions which they have mistaken as truths.³⁴ Redemption of the Joseph soul requires it to recognize its error which necessitates knowledge of a higher good. Since, for Joseph, all noble traits and good qualities exist in relation to the sensible realm, there is no motive to turn away from the external world in search of a higher truth. Without an external agent, the Joseph soul will remain alienated from itself, from the good, from immortality, as symbolized by his death in Egypt.

In *Legatio ad Gaium*, Philo describes the consequences which arise when a wholly irrational soul, entirely devoid of virtue and concern for the good of others, assumes the imperial seat. Unlike Flaccus, whose reason is eventually overcome by the erratic mob, Gaius' character is itself erratic, inconsistent, and variegated. In the case of Flaccus, Philo depicts a moral decline from proper human nature, which is rational. Gaius, however, transgresses the limits of human nature by supposing himself to be above them. Both Gaius and Flaccus fail to meet the standards of the Roman ideal, which is rule according to reason and the law of nature, epitomized in Philo's Moses the Philosopher-King. It should come as no surprise that in *Legatio ad Gaium* and *In Flaccum*, Philo employs the vocabulary of the statesman, or Joseph, who presides over bodily concerns, the land of Egypt. Philo's philosophy develops through his exegesis of scriptural images and terms, and these images and terms retain their philosophical significance when Philo employs them to understand and explain his own world.

33. See *Ios.* 80–88, where Philo relates how Joseph is imprisoned, yet assumes the office of prison guard in all respects save the title. This passage is rife with irony. At 88, Philo writes “[Joseph] hoped to raise, if possible, those under him [the prisoners] to the level of those innocent of offence” (εὐχόμενος ὅπως οἷός τε ἢ μηδὲν χείρους τῶν ἀνεπιλήπτων ἀπεργάσασθαι τοὺς ὑφ’ ἐαυτῶ). See Philo, *Quod Deus Immutabilis Sit* 111–15. Here, Philo explains that it is only the deluded, confusing the harmful with the beneficial, who think that the office of the prison guard, or any ‘benefit’ it bestows, is something to be desired. The overseer of the prisoners represents a compound of variegated (ποικίλος) evils woven into one form. At 115, Philo advises that it is better to be a prisoner than an overseer.

34. At the conclusion of *Legat.* (373), Philo indicates his intention to describe a recantation (παλινωδία). Although it is possible that Philo followed *Legat.* with an account wherein Gaius recognizes and repents his misdeeds, no such account survives and it is not attested to by later sources. In *Legat.*, Philo indicates that Gaius is not capable of full recognition and true repentance as his nature is irrational and unstable. See *Legat.* 373, note *a* for Colson's comments on the problematic use of the term παλινωδία, relative to Philo's use of the term elsewhere in his corpus.