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The Influence of the Greek Principle of God-Fittingness on 2nd-Century Christianity

Felix Maurice Granderath

PhD Thesis

Department of Theology and Religion

Durham University

2024

The Influence of the Greek Principle of God-Fittingness on 2nd-Century Christianity

Abstract

My thesis argues that the principle of god-fittingness played a major role in early Christian thought and exegesis. Originally a tool which had been developed and employed in Homeric critique and scholarship, it influenced not only Jewish thinkers like Philo of Alexandria but also second century Christian thinkers such as Marcion, Ptolemy, and Justin Martyr. The emerging theology of the second century had not only to account for problematic depictions of God in the Old Testament but had to also square common philosophical notions such as creation, evil, and providence with a Christian understanding of God's nature as revealed in the Old Testament and in Christ to whom the emerging New Testament testified. Thus, the reading of texts formed the basis for their theology and I argue that the reading of these texts was heavily influenced by the ancient and complex principle of god-fittingness. This is the first study to exclusively focus on the use of god-fittingness in the different reading strategies of Homer and its relevance in philosophical ethics and the impact of god-fittingness on a broad array of second century Christian writers.

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Declaration

This thesis is the product of my own work and does not include work that has been presented in any form for a degree at this or any other university. Chapter 6 develops upon parts of my MA Thesis submitted at Durham University (2018), supervised by Prof. Francis Watson. All quotation from, and references to, the work of persons other than myself have been properly acknowledged throughout.

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Durham, Easter 2024.

Introduction

The notion of fittingness, embodied in the term πρέπον, and its vital importance to the Greek mind was first highlighted by Max Pohlenz in his 1933 essay offered to the Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen. Outlining some important aspects of the term and its pervasiveness, Pohlenz asserted that "[i]n dem Worte πρέπον und seiner Entwicklung prägt sich ein Grundzug griechischen Wesens aus."[1]

The terms πρέπον and its opposite ἀπρεπής are relational terms which describe the relation between an object and something that befits or does not befit the object. Of course, the terms are themselves empty and only express the relational aspect between two entities. However, once certain criteria are generally acknowledged as characteristic of the object in question, describing something as fitting attains a normative element.[2] However, πρέπον was not the only word used by the Greeks to denote fittingness, but other words such as οἰκεῖος, ἐπιεικές, ἁρμόττον, θέμις, καλόν could also express this notion. Likewise, the corresponding negative terms would express the notion of unfittingness. However, as we shall see at times throughout this thesis, it is not strictly necessary for these terms to appear for the notion of fittingness or unfittingness to be conveyed.

However, the vital importance of the notion of fittingness in the development of the concept of god was not noted until 1936, when in his Gifford Lectures, Werner Jaeger noted that at the centre of Xenophanes' doctrine of god was a notion of fittingness which postulated that certain things did not befit god and that the later Greek language even developed a unique term to express the notion of god-fittingness: θεοπρεπής. Moreover, based on his stupendous knowledge of classical Greek, Roman, and Christian literature, Jaeger was aware that this concept passed into Christian thinking about God. Due to the influence of (god-)fittingness on philosophical and theological thinking, he expressed as desideratum that

> "[i]n the history of this basic category of the Greek spirit [sc. the concept of the appropriate; FG] a special chapter (and a particularly important one in the light of its enormous influence)

---

[1] Max Pohlenz, "*Τὸ πρέπον*: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des griechischen Geistes," 1933, 90. This sentiment is also reflected in Pohlenz giving his treatise the subtitle "Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des Griechischen Geistes".

[2] Cf. Pohlenz's remark: „Daß die ethische Bedeutung des πρέπον, die uns hier entgegentrat, im allgemeingriechischen Sprach- und Lebensgefühl gegeben war, haben wir bereits gesehen. Zum Ausdruck drängte sie da, wo man das charakteristische Verhalten einer Menschengruppe als so selbstverständlich und naturgemäß ansah, daß sich daraus eine Norm entwickelte." (Ibid., 71.).
By way of example, while it may be fitting for our dog Max to curl up when a thunderstorm rages outside, it may not be fitting for other dogs to do so. Hence, this behaviour befits Max, not for his being a dog but as Max. However, once certain criteria are established for what is characteristic of dogs as a kind, such as barking, then one can say that it is fitting for Max as well as any other dog to bark and not to meow.

should be devoted to its application to the problem of God – the problem of what things befit the divine nature and what things do not."[3]

Jaeger's suggestion was to be taken up by one of his later pupils, the German-American Harald Reiche, who in 1955 wrote a thesis entitled "A History of the Concepts θεοπρεπές and ἱεροπρεπές". Yet, this thesis, which to my knowledge is the only full study in English devoted to the concept of god-fittingness, was to remain unpublished and is quite problematic in parts.[4] However, shortly after Reiche, Oskar Dreyer wrote his Göttingen Greek philology dissertation of 1965/66 on the concept of god-fittingness. Subsequently published in 1970, Dreyer investigated in his work the concept of god-fittingness from Homer to Philo of Alexandria, remaining, to my knowledge, the only study of the concept of god-fittingness ever published. Thus, we are left with a rather underwhelming picture of the state of research, with there being no English-language study and only one half a century old German study on the concept of god-fittingness.[5] Hence, there is an urgent need for several further investigations of the history of the concept of god-fittingness. It is the intention of this thesis to contribute to this endeavour by filling a small part of this enormous void.

This thesis argues that the principle of god-fittingness played a major role in early Christian thought and exegesis. Originally a tool which had been developed and employed in Homeric critique and scholarship, it continued to play a role in philosophical thought and influenced not only Jewish thinkers like Philo of Alexandria but also second century Christian thinkers. In order to best present this argument, the thesis must spend a good deal of time considering non-Christian classical texts to fully explore the foundations of the principle of god-fittingness and its central role in the Greek tradition before turning to how it continued to play an influential role in the Christian world of the second century.

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[3] Werner Jaeger, *The Theology of the Early Greek Philosophers* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1947), 50.
[4] Reiche, H.A.T., A History of the Concepts θεοπρεπές and ἱεροπρεπές (Harvard, 1955). I thank the British library for making the microfilms of Reiche's dissertation available to me for consultation. Reiche's dissertation, which is at times difficult to read since written partially by type-writer and partially by hand, considers the concepts of θεοπρεπές and ἱεροπρεπές from Xenophanes all the way to Gregory of Nyssa. However, many parts of his dissertation are very difficult to follow and strike me at times as somewhat obscure, for the lack of a better word. While there seems to be no review of Reiche's dissertation, the verdict the great Plato scholar Friedrich Solmsen has offered in his review of Reiche's subsequent work on ancient scientific thought embodies my own sentiment regarding Reiche's dissertation to which it might equally well apply. Friedrich Solmsen, "Review of Harald A. T. Reiche, Empedocles' Mixture, Eudoxan Astronomy and Aristotle's Connate Pneuma, with an Appendix 'General Because First' a Presocratic Motif in Aristotle's Theology," *The American Journal of Philology* 84, no. 1 (1963): 94., after a largely negative review, concludes: "I am not sure that I have fully understood all that Reiche asserts. His argumentation moves fast; disparate subjects are brought together; new terms are introduced and, before we have time to become familiar with them, presented in conjunction with other newly coined terms and concepts. I believe that I have finally figured out some of the rather obscurely worded […] but I still do not see why matters had to be made so difficult for the reader." As a result of these difficulties and the fact that there is one other dissertation that considers the issue of god-fittingness in a much preferable manner (see below), I decided not to engage with Reiche's dissertation.
[5] Of course, this is not to say that there are no references to the concept of god-fittingness. Those aware of Dreyer's monograph refer to it and there are a few essays that build on Dreyer, which will be mentioned in the relevant sections.

Of course, a complete study of the influence of the principle of god-fittingness in either Greek or Christian thought is impossible due to its sheer scale. Therefore, **Part 1 (chaps. 1-4)** of the thesis is devoted to the long history of the concept of god-fittingness in Greek thought, focusing on select figures that I perceive to be the key figures in its development: Homer, Xenophanes, and Plato. I then turn to the prevalence of the principle of god-fittingness in the Hellenistic and Imperial periods, extending beyond the work of Dreyer, as the first study to exclusively focus on the principle of god-fittingness in the different reading strategies of Homer and its relevance in philosophical ethics. The results of this first part will then come to bear in **Part 2 (chaps. 5-8)** which examines Philo of Alexandria and three figures in the emerging Christian theology of the second century who retrospectively found themselves on different sides of the "heretical-orthodox" divide: Marcion, Ptolemy, and Justin Martyr. To the best of my knowledge, this is the first study devoted to the impact of the principle of god-fittingness on a broad array of second century Christian writers. I argue that the principle of god-fittingness allows us to better understand how these thinkers wrestled not only with the problematic depictions of God in the Old Testament but also in their squaring common philosophical topics such as creation, evil, and providence with the understanding of God's nature as revealed in the Jewish Scriptures and in Christ to whom the emerging New Testament testified.

The thesis will read as follows. **Chapter 1** will firstly consider Homer's depiction of the gods and the importance it had on the way the Greeks imagined their gods as immortal, super-human and anthropomorphic. The latter characteristic gave rise to various stories of the gods and their involvement in the whole range of human experiences, from grief and jealousy to committing adultery. Moreover, we shall explore how god-fittingness emerged from the general Greek concern for order and the presentation of the gods as in the likeness of a monarchical family. The chapter will then examine the role of the principle of god-fittingness in the criticism levelled by the Pre-Socratic Xenophanes of Colophon against the anthropomorphic depictions of the Greek gods, shaping the notion of god-fittingness into an evaluative tool by elevating the notion of god itself into a normative concept. **Chapter 2** studies Plato's struggle with the poetic depictions of the gods and his introduction of two typoi – god's goodness and immutability – as the guidelines on which any fitting portrayal of the gods has to be based and which continued to be the most influential account of what constitutes god-fittingness in subsequent Jewish and Christian periods. **Chapter 3** considers how the Stoics, Epicureans, Sceptics, and Platonists were concerned to maintain a fitting notion of god due to its vital importance in ethics. In particular, we analyse hermeneutical strategies which were developed by some of these schools to account for unfitting notions in Homeric poetry and which were later taken up by Jewish and Christian writers.

Moving on to the **second part** of the thesis, in **Chapter 4** we shall examine the strategies employed by Philo of Alexandria – some of which resembled Middle Platonic strategies – to account for the stories of the Jewish Scriptures which could be perceived as not befitting God, in that we shall see how Philo

attempted to square the Platonic notion of god-fittingness with the personal God of his Jewish faith. In **Chapter 5**, it will be argued that Marcion's denigration of the Jewish Scriptures is best understood against the background of god-fittingness, showing him to find the God depicted in the Jewish Scriptures wanting, ultimately assuming him to be an inferior God to the one revealed in Christ. **Chapter 6** will consider how Ptolemy reacted to the concerns Marcion had raised over the Jewish law and its lawgiver. Taking Marcion's concerns seriously, Ptolemy's response was equally based on an argument from fittingness, evaluating whether the nature of the law did indeed suggest an evil lawgiver. In **Chapter 7** we will examine how Justin Martyr utilised the principle of god-fittingness in his critique of the Greek myths and philosophy, ultimately demonstrating the Christian faith being uniquely god-fitting and hence the most excellent philosophy. **Lastly**, I will offer a few final remarks and conclude.

Part 1: The Greek Foundations of God-Fittingness

Chapter 1: Homer and Xenophanes - Archaic Beginnings of the Principle of Fittingness

Introduction

To begin our examination of god-fittingness, it seems right to begin with the fundamental literature that shaped the Greeks' conception of the world and its gods: the Homeric epics. At first the notion of fittingness was used loosely to describe the appropriate due honour to each god, as we shall see in section I. However, it was Xenophanes who transformed the notion of fittingness into an evaluative tool in his critique of the Homeric depictions of the gods, as we shall see in section II.

I. The "Poet" – Homer: His Epics and His Gods

In this section I will outline some general features of the Homeric gods since it is in *dialogue* with Homer's depiction of the gods that later critiques such as Xenophanes and Plato developed their own concepts of god. I will begin by a brief introduction to the Homeric epics and their immense influence on Greek thought and life. Secondly, I will examine the nature of the Homeric gods. Thirdly, I will investigate the principle of fittingness in Homer.

I.1 Homer's Epics[6]

The Homeric epics – the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* – stand in a long line of oral poetry. Already the 3rd millennium BC witnessed the existence of 'oral poetry' which was continued into the later Mycenaean period with its oral performance of various heroic epic tales by singing bards.[7] These so-called *aoidoi* sung epic tales of the heroic past at Mycenaean palaces and in so doing changed and adapted these tales, something that has been described as 'composition in performance'.[8] While the Mycenaean Linear B script, which was in existence between the 15th and 12th centuries, was never used to put these epic legends into writing and was subsequently lost during the following 'Greek Dark Ages', the introduction of the Phoenician alphabet around 800 BC heralded a change in the transmission of these legends. Among these legends were the Theban cycle, which included four epics dealing with the war over Thebes, as well as other legends concerning the Argonauts, Heracles, Theseus, and many more which

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[6] All English quotations are taken from Richmond Lattimore's translation: Homer, *The Iliad of Homer* (trans. Richmond Lattimore; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011); Homer, *The Odyssey of Homer* (trans. Richmond Lattimore; New York: Harper Perennial, 2007). The Greek follows T. W. Allen, ed., *Homeri Ilias, 3 Vols.* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1931); P. von der Mühll, ed., *Homeri Odyssea* (Basel: Helbing & Lichtenhahn, 1962).

[7] Bernhard Zimmermann, *Handbuch der griechischen Literatur der Antike: Band 1: Die Literatur der archaischen und klassischen Zeit* (Handbuch der Altertumswissenschaft 7.1; München: C.H. Beck, 2011), 7–8, 15.

[8] This was aided by the use of the Hexameter as well as formula and epithets. The phrase 'composition in performance' is from Albert Lord; on which see Ibid., 15.

were sung of in oral epics.[9] Moreover, there was the so-called (Trojan) "epic cycle" that dealt with legends concerning the Trojan war and its pre- and post-history. There were two epics that stood in close relation to the epic cycle which found their way into writing over a period of time.[10] The person associated with this task was Homer[11] and the two epics were the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.[12] The *Iliad*, written around the year 730, dealt with the anger of Achilles and is set during the last year of an already 9-year war of the Achaeans against Troy. Whereas, the *Odyssey*, written around 700, dealt with Odysseus' return to his home on the island of Ithaca after the end of the Trojan war.[13]

I.2 The Importance and Influence of Homer[14]

Homer's epics have often been called the Bible of the Greeks.[15] And truly, the importance of the Homeric epics for Greek culture cannot be overestimated. Homer's reputation was so eminent that various cities vied for the claim to be his birthplace.[16] And the repute of Homer was further expressed by the fact that he was often simply designated as "the Poet" and even thought of as not only divinely inspired by the Muses but as divine himself. This latter notion can already be found in the Pre-Socratic Democritus who is reported by Dio Chrysostom to have spoken of Homer as having "received as his share a nature that was divine".[17] Also the later works of subsequent figures such as Aristophanes, Plato, and Plutarch attest to the idea of the "divine Homer (θεῖος Ὅμηρος)".[18] This attitude can even be encountered in sculptural form, the marble relief of Archelaus of Priene depicting the apotheosis of

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[9] Ibid., 71–73. Epics that deal with these legends were ascribed to various people, including at times Homer. The legends of the Argonauts that were the subject of oral epic poetry should not be confused with the later *Argonautica* by Apollonius Rhodius.

[10] On the process of fixation from oral poetry to fixed edition see Ibid., 47–51. Both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* took on material of the Epic cycle.

[11] On the poet Homer see Ibid., 12–14.

[12] It took, however, a few centuries until an authoritative written version of these two epics was achieved. The 7th and 6th centuries likely saw a simultaneous transmission in written and oral form of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* by rhapsodes, especially by the gild of the Homeridae of Chios. In 522 Hipparchus then instituted the performance of the two epics at the Panathenaea every four years which probably led to the establishment of a common text of the epics. The ultimate recension of the text was then achieved in the second century BC by Aristarchus of Samothrace. See on this Ibid., 49–51.

[13] The dating of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* are debated and scholars such as Burkert and West prefer to date these texts to around the beginning of the 7th century. See Walter Burkert, *Griechische Religion der archaischen und klassischen Epoche* (2nd ed.; Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 2011), 192. Also, the possibility of Hesiod being prior to Homer has been considered by West. Moreover, it is often – but not unanimously – assumed by modern scholarship that the two epics have not been written by the same author.

[14] Due to the constraints of this thesis, we cannot deal here with Hesiod's *Theogony*, the other very important text for the Greek understanding of the gods. For the same reason, we will have to exclude the *Homeric Hymns* from our examination.

[15] See on this and Homer's role in education especially W. J. Verdenius, *Homer, the Educator of the Greeks* (Amsterdam: The North-Holland Publishing Company, 1970).

[16] More than 20 cities claimed to be the birthplace of Homer, with Chios and Smyrna being the most likely contenders. See on this Zimmermann, *Handbuch der griechischen Literatur der Antike Bd. 1*, 12.

[17] Democritus 68 DK B21 (= Loeb, D221 = Dio of Prusa, *Discourse* 53). The translation is that found in André Laks and Glenn W. Most, eds., *Early Greek Philosophy, Volume VII: Later Ionian and Athenian Thinkers, Part 2* (LCL 530; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016).

[18] Aristophanes, *Frogs* 1034 (θεῖος Ὅμηρος); Plato, *Phaedo* 95a (Ὁμήρῳ θείῳ ποιητῇ); *Ion* 530b9-10 (ἐν Ὁμήρῳ, τῷ ἀρίστῳ καὶ θειοτάτῳ τῶν ποιητῶν); Plutarch, *Consolatio ad Apollonium* 104d9 (θεῖος Ὅμηρος).

Homer.[19] This avid devotion of Homer probably found its ultimate expression in the institution of a temple to Homer in Alexandria: the Homereion. Established by Ptolemy IV Philopator, the Homereion is described by Aelius in his *Varia Historia* (Ποικίλη ἱστορία):

> "Ptolemy Philopator built a temple to Homer. He set up a fine statue of the poet, and around it in a circle all the cities which claim Homer as theirs. The painter Galaton depicted Homer being sick, with the other poets drawing upon his vomit." (Aelian, *Varia Historia* 13.22)[20]

That Homer was the literary standard which influenced and inspired other writers was also expressed – yet in other terms – by Pseudo-Longinus in his *On the Sublime* 13.3-14.2. But how and why was Homer so pervasive and influential in Greek (and then later in Roman[21]) culture?

The Greeks were exposed to Homer's poems in all areas of life. The rhapsodes who recited and explained Homer as well as other poets when travelling through all of Greece and competing for prizes at the various festivals certainly played a key role in the public dissemination of Homer.[22] Around the year 566 BC rhapsodic competitions and thus the recital of Homeric and Cyclic epics were introduced to the Great Panathenaea festival at Athens.[23] A little while later Hipparchus of Philaidae, the son of Pisistratus, is said to have been the first who "brought the works of Homer to this land, and compelled the rhapsodes at the Panathenaea to recite them in relays – one following another" (Plato, *Hippar.* 228b).[24] Moreover, these undertakings by Hipparchus – which included bringing the poet Simonides of Ceos to Athens – are said to have happened with the intent of "educating the citizens" (*Hippar*. 228c). And indeed, the even greater reason for Homer's influence was his dominant position in Greek education.[25] The Pre-Socratic Xenophanes, whom we shall shortly consider in more detail, attests to Homer's influence on the education of the young in his statement that "from the beginning (ἐξ ἀρχῆς)

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[19] The relief can now be seen in the British Museum.

[20] Translation is that of Nigel G. Wilson, *Aelian. Historical Miscellany* (LCL 486; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997).

[21] We cannot discuss Homer's reception in the Roman Republic and Empire here. It may suffice to note that with his *Odusia* Livius Andronicus had already created a Latin translation of the *Odyssey* around 240BC and at the end of the 1st century BC Virgil famously continued Homer's epics in his writing of the *Aeneid*. Lastly, we may hint at the tremendous influence of Greek culture on Rome with the words of Horace that "*Graecia capta ferum victorem cepit et artis intulit agresti Latio*" (Greece, the captive, made her savage victor captive, and brought the arts into rustic Latium) (Horace, *Epistles* 2.1). Translation is that of H. Rushton Fairclough, *Horace: Satires. Epistles. The Art of Poetry.* (LCL 194; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1926).

[22] An account of this can be found in Plato's *Ion*. We shall consider this early dialogue below.

[23] The possible candidates for this introduction of rhapsodic contest are Pisistratus, the family of the Philaidae, and Lycurgus. See on the issues Christos Tsagalis, "Panathenaia," in *The Cambridge Guide to Homer* (ed. Corinne Ondine Pache et al.; Cambridge University Press, 2020), 187–89 and ; Burkert, *Griechische Religion*, 352–53.

[24] How exactly these lines have to be understood is a matter of debate, but it seems that the whole of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* were performed, and it was done in an organised and thus sequential manner. Cf. Tsagalis, "Panathenaia."

[25] The classic work on education in antiquity is Henri-Irénée Marrou, *A History of Education in Antiquity* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1956). There are, of course, newer works on this area, see e.g. Teresa Morgan, *Literate Education in the Hellenistic and Roman Worlds* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Raffaella Cribiore, *Gymnastics of the Mind: Greek Education in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001).

all ha[d] learned (μεμαθήκασι) according to Homer" (B10) – a sentiment of whose detrimental impact Plato was only too keenly aware (cf. *Rep*. 377a-386a).[26] Nonetheless, Plato was very much aware of the fact that many people understood Homer as "the poet who educated Greece (τὴν Ἑλλάδα πεπαίδευκεν οὗτος ὁ ποιητής)" (*Rep.* 606e2-3) and thought it "worth taking up his [sc. Homer's; FG] works in order to learn how to manage and educate people, and that one should arrange one's whole life in accordance with his teachings" (*Rep*. 606e).

Truly, the Homeric epics were the dominant force in Greek education. "Homer" was the fundamental text that was learned, copied, and recited and seen as an encyclopaedic reservoir of knowledge since he had "written about practically everything pertaining to man (πεποίηκε σχεδὸν περὶ πάντων τῶν ἀνθρωπίνων)" (Xenophon, *Symp.* 4.6).[27] Following Plato, we can distinguish two areas in which Homer educated humankind: the technical and the ethical (*Leg.* 1.643a-644a).[28] The former was about learning the skills needed for a profession such as farming and carpentry, whereas the latter was an "education from childhood in *virtue* (τὴν δὲ πρὸς ἀρετὴν ἐκ παίδων παιδείαν), a training which produces a keen desire to become a perfect citizen who knows how to rule and be ruled as justice demands" (*Leg.* 1.643e). And it was this latter understanding of Homer as an educator in ethics, as Marrou rightly reminds, that was the predominant reason for studying Homer.[29] This attitude towards Homer is evident in various sources. Xenophon has Niceratus proclaim that it was due to his father's wish for him to "develop into a good man (ἀνὴρ ἀγαθός)" that he was made "to memorize all of Homer; and so even now I can repeat the whole *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* by heart" (Xenophon, *Symp*. 3.5). Equally, Plato was aware of the common idea that "in order to educate young people properly we have to cram their heads full of this stuff; we have to organize recitations of it so that they never stop listening to it and acquire a vast repertoire, getting whole poets off by heart. […] to produce a sound and sensible citizen, the extracts must be committed to memory and learned by rote" (*Leg.* 7.810e-811a). Indeed, Homer's influence was so pervasive that we can note with Marrou that "every cultivated Greek had a copy of Homer's works at his bedside (as Alexander did during his campaigns)".[30]

Furthermore, and of most importance to our investigation, that the Homeric epics proved to be the most influential texts on the Greek understanding of the gods is suggested by statements such as Herodotus' that "Hesiod and Homer […] were the ones who created the gods' family trees for the Greek world,

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[26] Xenophanes openly acknowledges the influence Homer and Hesiod had on Greek education in his critique of their concept of god (DK 21 B10; cf. B11, B12).
[27] This is Niceratus' statement in Xenophon's *Symposium*, stating that "the sage Homer has written about practically everything pertaining to man (περὶ πάντων τῶν ἀνθρωπίνων)" (*Symp*. 4.6). Translation is from E. C. Marchant and O. J. Todd, trans., *Xenophon: Memorabilia. Oeconomicus. Symposium. Apology* (LCL 168; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1923).
[28] Marrou, *Education*, 8.
[29] Ibid., 10. "It was not primarily as a literary masterpiece that the epic was studied, but because its content was ethical, a treatise on the ideal".
[30] Ibid., 9.

gave them their names, assigned them their honours and areas of expertise, and told us what they looked like" (2.53).[31] As we shall soon observe, this extensive influence of Homer (and Hesiod) on the Greek notion of the divine is recognised by his later critics such as Xenophanes and Plato. But what was it that Homer taught the Greeks about the gods?

I.3 The Gods and their characteristics

It is well-known that by their fusion of local traditions – religious or otherwise – the Homeric epics helped forge the idea of a common Hellenic identity, which soon found its full expression during the Persian wars.[32] The same is true for the way the gods were depicted in the epics since we have to understand the epic gods as Homeric "constructs that both resembled and diverged from the gods that they [sc. the Greeks; FG] celebrated in their public and private worship in the different *poleis* in the Greek world, where each of the Greek city-states had its own pantheon, festivals, and ritual practices."[33] Indeed, this problem of diversity is a further reason why an investigation of Homer's depiction of the gods for a Pan-Hellenic audience, even though constructed, probably yields the best starting point for an investigation of the Greek gods.

The epics told of a time that was already in the distant past for Homer's audience: a heroic age when humans were almost godlike and found themselves in close contact with the gods.[34] But what were these gods like and what was their nature?[35] In his later critique of Homer, the unknown first century AD writer referred to as Pseudo-Longinus accused the poet of having "done his best to make the men of the Trojan war gods, and the gods men (Ὅμηρος […] ἀνθρώπους […] θεοὺς πεοιηκέναι, τοὺς θεοὺς δὲ ἀνθρώπους)" (*Subl.* 9.7).[36] As we will see, there is certainly something to Longinus' judgement. Before we start our investigation, it should be noted, however, that we are not intending an overview of each particular god that appears in the Homeric epics but rather an attempt to look at the gods more generally: to examine what their nature is like. In regard to the even more general question of "what is a Greek god?" Albert Henrichs suggested three characteristics that define the Greek gods: immortality, power, and anthropomorphism.[37] As we shall see, these three characteristics also hold true for the Homeric

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[31] The English translation used is Herodotus, *The Histories* (trans. Robin Waterfield; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).
[32] Cf. Joel P. Christensen, "Panhellenism," in *The Cambridge Guide to Homer* (ed. Corinne Ondine Pache; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 190–92; Jenny Strauss Clay, "Homeric Religion," in *The Cambridge Guide to Homer* (ed. Corinne Ondine Pache; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 249.
[33] Strauss Clay, "Homeric Religion," 249 (italics in original).
[34] Homer speaks of the heroes as a "race of the half-god mortals (ἡμιθέων γένος ἀνδρῶν)" (*Il.* 12.23).
[35] It should be noted that this section does not deal with Homeric religion and ritual and what is included under these terms such as hero-cults, local cults, the pre-history of the various gods and goddesses, etc. It also does not focus on – but when it does only for specific purposes that will become clear –the literary intentions of the poet(s).
[36] Translation is that of D. A. Russell, "Longinus, On Sublimity," in *Ancient Literary Criticism* (ed. D. A. Russell and M. Winterbottom; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972), 460–503.
[37] Albert Henrichs, "What Is a Greek God?," in *The Gods of Ancient Greece: Identities and Transformations* (ed. Jan N. Bremmer and Andrew Erskine; Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), 29.

gods, and we will use them as governing principles for this section. However, we will take anthropomorphism more broadly and include anthropopathism. Furthermore, will be able to observe that all three of these characteristics are connected to human thinking and experience.

a) Anthropomorphism

The first thing we note is that the Homeric gods are not transcendent. While they live in their own realm on Mount Olympus, they are ultimately part of this world. This world as well as the humans within it have not been created by the gods. When looking at the human and the divine realms in Homer, we notice that the latter mirrors the former in many ways. In its configuration, the realm of the gods mirrored the Mycenaean monarchical society in that it was structured in both a patriarchal as well as monarchical way.[38] The gods are depicted as a large family at the head of which stands Zeus, the "father of gods and men" (*Il.* 1.544; *Od.* 1.28). Since he was the oldest and "strongest of all the immortals (θεῶν κάρτιστος ἁπάντων)" (*Il.* 8.17, 27) he was placed at the very top of this order, as the ruler of the gods.[39] Most of the gods live on Mount Olympus, except for some who live in their own realm, such as Poseidon or some lesser gods.[40] Nevertheless, all gods come together on Mount Olympus for their gatherings.

The gods are depicted in strongly anthropomorphic terms. They have bodies whose features are mentioned, such as Zeus observing things with his *eyes* at *Il.* 22.169. Yet, unlike their human counterparts, the gods possess bodies that are "always in strength and beauty, […] a super-body: a body made entirely and forever of beauty and glory."[41] The gods mostly appear to humans in human form – at times they even take on the disguise of another human (cf. Athena appearing in the guise of Laodocus

[38] Martin P. Nilsson, *Geschichte der griechischen Religion: Erster Band: Die Religion Griechenlands bis auf die griechische Weltherrschaft* (2nd ed.; München: C.H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1955), 345, 351–54, 417–18. Furthermore, Nilsson observed the discrepancy between the earthly republic and the heavenly monarchy and mentions how Hesiod's attempt to adapt the latter to the former by having the gods vote for Zeus as king (*Theogony*, 881ff.) failed due to the idea of Zeus as king being too ingrained in the people's minds (*ibid.*, p. 351).
[39] While this position of Zeus has often been described with the term "king" and the phrase "king of the gods", it should be noted that neither the term βασιλεύς, nor the phrase "king of the gods" is used for Zeus in either the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey*, but then appears in Hesiod's *Theogony* (886.923) and the Homeric *Hymns* (*h.Dem.* 358). (see the remarks by Martin West in: Hesiod, *Theogony, with Prolegomena and Commentary* (ed. Martin L. West; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), 399, 403.). It was especially Nilsson who emphasized the relationship between human kingship and Zeus (see the references in the preceding footnote). Cf. George Miller Calhoun, "Zeus the Father in Homer," *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 66 (1935): 1–17.
[40] The focus of the Homeric epics is on the Olympian gods, but many lower deities such as the river-god Xanthus/Scamander appear as well (*Il.* 21.74; 22.146; cf. 18.37-49; 20.4-9). Striking is, however, the absence from the narrative of two of the Olympian gods, Demeter and Dionysus**,** who both had influential cults. While we find references to them (e.g. *Il.* 14.325-326), the reason for their absence from the narrative may well consist in the fact that these gods "were benefactors of humanity in general, rather than partisans of one group or the other. To show them favouring Achaeans or Trojans would involve too radical a shift in their essential nature, so they can have no part in the story." (Emily Kearns, "The Gods in the Homeric Epics," in *The Cambridge Companion to Homer* (ed. Robert Fowler; Cambridge University Press, 2004), 61.
Similarly, other well-known gods such as Hades and Persephone (mentioned at e.g. *Il.* 9.457, 569; 15.188), do not play a role in the narrative since "they are effectively confined to their own sphere, the Underworld." (*ibid.*).
[41] Jean-Pierre Vernant, "Mortals and Immortals: The Body of the Divine," in *Mortals and Immortals: Collected Essays* (ed. Froma I. Zeitlin; Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991), 41.

in *Il.* 4.86-87).[42] When they appear, they can decide to whom they are visible and to whom they are not. For instance, in *Od.* 16.160-163 Athena is only perceived by Odysseus and some dogs but not by Telemachus. Just like their human counterparts the gods require light, sleep, and food.[43] But whereas humans consume bread and wine, the gods eat "ambrosia" (*Od.* 5.93) and drink "nectar" (*Il.* 1.598, 4.3; *Od.* 5.93).[44] As a result, the gods have "blood immortal (ἄμβροτον αἷμα)", called "ichor (ἰχώρ)" (*Il.* 5.339-340), which is unlike human blood, as the gods "have no blood (ἀναίμονές)" like humans (*Il.* 5.342), but a divine equivalent.[45]

Moreover, the gods also deceive each other and lie, just as they do to humans. Athena, for instance, deceives the Trojan Pandarus with false promises to shoot Menelaus (*Il.* 4.88-140) and tricks Hector in the guise of his brother Deïphobus to face Achilles (*Il.* 22.185-303).[46] Also, Hera deceives Zeus "with false lying purpose (δολοφρονέουσα)" (*Il.* 14.300, 329), seducing and making him fall asleep, thus preventing his involvement in the Trojan war for some time (*Il.* 14.153-353). When Zeus finally wakes up and realises that he had been deceived (*Il.* 15.31-33), he is furious, "scowling terribly at Hera (δεινὰ δ' ὑπόδρα ἰδὼν Ἥρην)" (*Il.* 15.13) and threatens her with punishment by lashing (*Il.* 15.17), reminding her of the past when he had her

> "hung from high and on your feet I slung two anvils, and about your hands drove a golden chain, unbreakable. You among the clouds and the bright sky hung, nor could the gods about tall Olympos endure it and stood about, but could not set you free." (*Il.* 15.18-22)[47]

Indeed, any of the gods who had tried to help Hera had been thrown downwards by Zeus "until he landed stunned on the earth" (*Il.* 15.23-24). Strikingly, the gods can experience suffering and can also be hurt by each other as well as by humankind. Zeus not only threatens to whip and throw down to Tartaros any god or goddess that tries to help the Trojans (*Il.* 8.10-16) but had also in the past almost killed Hephaestus for helping his mother Hera (*Il.* 1.590-594). Moreover, we read that the god Ares, after being wounded by Athena via the human Diomedes, experiences pain (*Il.* 5.886, 895), bleeds (*Il.* 5.855-870) and needs to be healed (*Il.* 5.899-904).[48] But also humans can wound the gods of their own

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[42] See on this Georgia Petridou, "Divine Epiphany in Homer," in *The Cambridge Guide to Homer* (ed. Corinne Ondine Pache; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 325–28.
[43] Carl Friedrich von Nägelsbach, *Homerische Theologie* (ed. Georg Autenrieth; 3rd ed.; Nürnberg: Verlag von Conrad Geiger, 1884), 21.
[44] On the often wrongly conceived relationship between ambrosia, nectar, and immortality see the comments below.
[45] The full passage reads: "and blood immortal flowed from the goddess, ichor, that which runs in the veins of the blessed divinities; since these eat no food, nor do they drink of the shining wine, and therefore they have no blood and are called immortal (ῥέε δ' ἄμβροτον αἷμα θεοῖο ἰχώρ, οἷός πέρ τε ῥέει μακάρεσσι θεοῖσιν· οὐ γὰρ σῖτον ἔδουσ', οὐ πίνουσ' αἴθοπα οἶνον, τοὔνεκ' ἀναίμονές εἰσι καὶ ἀθάνατοι καλέονται)" (*Il.* 5.339-342).
[46] Ernst Heitsch, "Die Welt als Schauspiel. Bemerkungen zu einer Theologie der Ilias," in *Gesammelte Schriften I: Zum frühgriechischen Epos* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2001), 98–105 for Pandaros and 105-116 for Hector.
[47] We must imagine Hera as somehow suspended, floating in the air.
[48] While one could see this as an over-determined action, it becomes clear in the ensuing conversation between Ares and Zeus that Ares accuses Athena as the real agent behind his injury. See *Il.* 5.875, 879-884.

accord and cause them suffering: Diomedes injures Aphrodite who "departed in pain, hurt badly" (*Il.* 15.352), with "her lovely skin blood-darkened, wounded and suffering" (*Il.* 5. 354). Indeed, Hera presents us with an entire list of the many times when the gods had to "endure things from men" (*Il.* 5. 383, cf. 5. 382-400).

Indeed, the gods are fully portrayed in anthropopathic terms. Just like humankind, the gods laugh (*Il.* 1.599), quarrel (*Il.* 1.539-594) and display various passions. The *Odyssey*, for instance, begins with Poseidon being "relentlessly *angry* (ἀσπερχὲς μενέαινεν)" (*Od.* 1.20) towards Odysseus. And in the Iliad, we are told that Zeus "was minded to *anger* Hera (ἐρεθιζέμεν Ἥρην)" (*Il.* 4.5); as a result of which, Athena "*sulked* (σκυζομένη) at Zeus her father, and *savage anger* took hold of her (χόλος δέ μιν ἄγριος ᾕρει)" (*Il.* 4.23). When at this point Hera cannot contain her *anger* (*Il.* 4.24; cf. 5.892) and has a frank speech with her brother and husband, we find Zeus to be "deeply *troubled* (μέγ᾽ ὀχθήσας)" by her speech (*Il.* 4.30).

Moreover, Demeter is described as "yielding to her *desire* (ᾧ θυμῷ εἴξασα)" (*Od.* 5.126) and we read that "sweet passion has taken hold of (γλυκὺς ἵμερος αἱρεῖ)" Zeus (*Il.* 14.328). Indeed, the extra-marital affairs of Zeus are well-known, and he even lists them to Hera (*Il.* 14.317-327). However, Zeus is not the only one of the gods to engage in adultery, and we hear in Demodocus' song of the story of Ares and Aphrodite being caught in adultery by Hephaestus (*Od.* 8.266-366).[49] Nonetheless, Calypso protests that the gods are "*jealous* beyond all creatures" (*Od.* 5.118 ζηλήμονες ἔξοχον ἄλλων) in the case of goddesses having an affair with humans (*Od.* 121-132).[50] Yet, besides these emotions, we also find that the gods can display pity (*Il.* 15.12; *Od.* 1.19; 5.191) and we not only hear of Zeus' heartache (*Il.* 16.450, 22.169), but even witness him crying tears of blood over his son Sarpedon's impending death (*Il.* 16.459).[51]

All of this results in instances where, when the gods get into heated arguments about human matters, they need to be reminded that "to quarrel thus for the sake of mortals and bring brawling among the gods" (*Il.* 1.574-575) is not worth ruining their feasting over. Likewise, when the gods fight each other – known as *theomachy* (cf. *Il.* 5 and especially *Il.* 20-21) – Apollo has to put the divine reality back into perspective by declaring that he will not fight Poseidon "for the sake of insignificant mortals, who are as leaves are, and now flourish and grow warm with life, and feed on what the ground gives, but then again fade away and are dead" (*Il.* 21.463-466). However, at times this essential difference between gods and mortals needs to be stressed and the heroes need to be reminded of their place. For instance, when Diomedes attacks Apollo, who is in turn protecting Aeneas, and charges against the god for a

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[49] Note that Charis is the wife of Hephaestus in the *Iliad* (Burkert, *Griechische Religion*, 259.).
[50] Nägelsbach, *Homerische Theologie*, 36–37.
[51] Cf. also *Od.* 1.19, 5.191.

fourth time, Apollo has to shout out a stark warning to Diomedes, commanding him to cease his onslaught:

> "Take care, give back, son of Tydeus, and strive no longer to make yourself like the gods in mind, since never the same is the breed of gods; who are immortal, and men who walk groundling." (*Il.* 5.440-442)

Indeed, despite all their anthropomorphic features, the central difference between gods and humans is the gods' immortality.

b) Immortality

Regarding the characteristic of immortality, it has been widely observed that the Greeks most likely arrived at the gods' immortality by experiencing their very own mortality. Clay puts it most aptly in her remark that the "thinking about mortality, the human condition, precedes and accompanies reflection on its negation, immortality. The epic gods, then, are constructed as a counterpart to the Homeric understanding of humanity".[52]

Although the gods are "immortal (ἀθάνατοι)" (e.g. *Il.* 1.503, 2.68, 19.2; *Od.* 1.31, 5.80) and "always being (αἰὲν ἐόντες)" (*Il.* 1.290, 2.400, 24.99; *Od.* 5.7, 12.377), it is important to note that the gods are not eternal.[53] The gods have a beginning, which Hesiod will tell us about later in great detail in his *Theogony*. Closely related to the gods' immortality and often mentioned alongside is their agelessness (e.g. *Il.* 8.539; 12.323; *Od.* 5.136, 7.95). Whereas Nägelsbach saw agelessness as a necessary part of immortality and nectar and ambrosia as the cause of both[54], Clay has rightly argued that whilst the two are related, "agelessness and immortality are not simply synonymous"[55] and ambrosia and nectar do not effect the gods' immortality but their agelessness as they are preservatives which "prevent them from aging and exempt them from the natural cycle of growth and decay."[56] Moreover, as we have already

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[52] Strauss Clay, "Homeric Religion," 250. See also Vernant, "Mortals and Immortals," 34, who also acknowledges that "the required reference or point of departure for the Greeks is this defective body – this mortal life, which they themselves experienced each day." Cf. Nägelsbach, *Homerische Theologie*, 18–19, 41–42.

[53] The entire phrase addressing Zeus as Ζεῦ πάτερ ἠδ' ἄλλοι μάκαρες θεοὶ αἰὲν ἐόντες can be found repeated in *Od.* 5.7, 8.306, 12.371, 12.377. The related epithet "ἀειγενέτης", often translated as "everlasting" but more accurately rendered as "always born" can be found in *Il.* 2.400, 3.296. Likewise in Hesiod, the Gods – while immortal – have a beginning but no end.

[54] Nägelsbach, *Homerische Theologie*, 42–47. Nägelsbach mentions that the gods' "Unsterblichkeit nur als zeitliche Fortdauer einer unzerstörbaren, unverwüstlichen Leiblichkeit gefasst werden [kann; FG], und erfordert *zu ihrer vollkommenen Verwirklichung notwendig* ewige Jugendlichkeit" (p. 43; italics mine), which he rightly sees as effected and sustained by ambrosia, but then wrongly asserts – based on his first assumption of the necessity of eternal youth – that "Ambrosia bewirkt Unsterblichkeit" (p. 46; letterspacing removed).

[55] Jenny Strauss Clay, "Immortal and Ageless Forever," *The Classical Journal* 77, no. 2 (1981): 112. Yet, as Ibid., 115, with n. 8, points out, this distinction becomes blurred in some later texts.

[56] Strauss Clay, "Immortal and Ageless," 115.

observed above, even though the gods are immortal, they can be wounded and are able to suffer pain (*Il*. 5.383-404, 5.886, 895). Thus, only the gods' "immortality is absolute."[57]

The gods' immortality is therefore the key feature which serves as the – as Henrichs calls it – "ultimate benchmark" for the gods' divinity.[58] Immortality is the characteristic that ultimately establishes the gods' "worth and honour" and it is closely linked to and ultimately the foundation of the other characteristic of divinity: divine power.[59] Indeed, Nägelsbach rightly observed that divine power is ultimately grounded in the gods' immortality – a *power* over death – which gave rise to the notion of divine powers which surpass human capabilities.[60]

c) (Super-human) Power

Even though the gods are thought to be omniscient and omnipotent by mankind as can be seen in statements such as "for the gods know everything (θεοὶ δέ τε πάντα ἴσασιν)" (*Od*. 4.379, 468) and "but the gods have power to do all things (θεοὶ δέ τε πάντα δύνανται)" (*Od*. 10.306), there are various instances that suggest that there are some restrictions to these supposed characteristics.[61] Hera, for instance, does not know the plans of Zeus (*Il*. 1.536-546) and Zeus does not know that Hera is about to trick him by the means of seduction (*Il*. 14.153-353). Likewise, the gods can only plan the return of Odysseus to Ithaca since "Poseidon was gone now to visit the far Aithiopians" (*Od*. 1.22) and is therefore apparently unaware of the gods' plan which is made in his absence (*Od*. 1.76-77).

On the other hand, the gods' power manifests itself in their own personal power as well as power over nature and humans. Truly, the gods are shown to be powerful in purely physical strength, such as when Apollo "wrecked the bastions of the Achaians easily, as when a little boy piles sand by the sea-shore when in his innocent play he makes sand towers to amuse him and then, still playing, with hands and feet ruins them and wrecks them" (*Il.* 15.361-363). Moreover, the gods have power over nature and humans.[62] Since the gods form a unit with their sphere of influence (*Il*. 14.389-392), we can, for instance, observe that Poseidon has power over his sphere, the sea, and therefore "drove on a great wave, that was terrible and rough, and it curled over and broke down upon" Odysseus (*Od*. 5.366-367).

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[57] Strauss Clay, "Homeric Religion," 250. On statements of divine "near-death" experiences, such as the possibility of Ares being able to "have perished" (*Il*. 5.388) see Andersen Øivind, "A Note on the 'Mortality' of Gods in Homer," *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies* 22, no. 4 (1981): 323–27.
[58] Henrichs, "Greek God," 29.
[59] Nägelsbach, *Homerische Theologie*, 48. See the quote in the next footnote.
[60] Ibid., 48 (italics are mine; letterspacing has been removed). "In der Unsterblichkeit des Gottes liegt sein Wert und seine Würde; mit der Vorstellung von dieser ist unmittelbar auch die der Macht verknüpft, die ihm das Endliche, dem Tode Verfallene, [sc. humankind; FG] sich gegenüber eingeräumt denkt. Dieses Bewusstsein, dass *der Gott eben kraft seiner Unsterblichkeit ein das menschliche weit übertreffendes Können und Vermögen besitzt*, findet sich bei dem Dichter auch deutlich ausgesprochen." Along similar lines remarks Henrichs, "Greek God," 29: "If gods were subject to death, their power would be finite and limited by their mortality.".
[61] Nägelsbach, *Homerische Theologie*, 26–29 and the references given there. See also my remarks on the issue of *moira* below.
[62] Ibid., 48–75.

Besides, the gods also exert power over humans in direct ways such as when Apollo "dashed the shining whip from his [sc. Diomedes'; FG] hands" and Athena "gave him back his whip" (Il. 23.384, 390) as well as indirect ways such as swaying people through dreams, such as Zeus telling Agamemnon in a dream to take up again the fight against the Trojans (*Il*. 2.5-40). Furthermore, we can witness Athena exert power directly on humans when she transforms Odysseus (*Od*. 13.396-403).

As these and other examples demonstrate, the power of the Homeric gods is itself an *amplification of human features*, for the gods are characterised as "stronger, larger, heavier, and generally more powerful than human beings; they can shout louder, move faster, and see farther".[63] This again speaks to the anthropomorphic grounding of the Homeric conception of the gods. However, the gods' powers are also limited by their respective spheres of influence which ought not to be violated; which brings us to the concept of god-fittingness.

I.4 God-fittingness in Homer

As we had noted earlier, it was the word πρέπον which later became particularly associated with the concept of fittingness. However, while it does appear in Homer, it did not yet comprise this notion of fittingness but – as Max Pohlenz observed – generally denotes "die in die Augen fallende äußere Erscheinung"[64] and is also rendered in this sense by the *LSJ* as "on the eye, to be clearly seen, to be conspicuous among a number".[65] Rather, we encounter the usage of other words to convey fittingness in Homer: among these we find: ἔοικεν, ἐπιεικές ἐστιν, χρή, καλόν ἐστιν, αἴσιμόν ἐστιν, κατὰ κόσμον ἐστίν, θέμις ἐστιν, δίκη ἐστιν, κατὰ μοῖραν, κατ´ αἶσάν ἐστιν.[66] Some of these terms – particularly noteworthy are θέμις, δίκη, and μοῖρα – have issued forth much discussion about their precise meaning and relationship to wider themes in Homer. Intriguingly, all three of these terms are connected insofar that at their most basic level they all convey a notion of "order". And indeed, the notion of fittingness is rooted in a notion of order itself in that something befitting or not befitting something or someone is grounded in the notion of order and its violation. Hence, order provides the prerequisite for there to be fittingness. The concept of order was, as we will occasionally be able to observe throughout this thesis, of particular importance to the whole of Greek (philosophical) – or even more generally – human thought.

We had already observed that the "society" of the gods mirrored Mycenaean monarchical and hierarchical societal structures. Zeus was the "father of gods and men" (*Il*. 1.544; *Od*. 1.28) and since he was the oldest and "strongest of all the immortals (θεῶν κάρτιστος ἁπάντων)" (*Il*. 8.17,27) he was

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[63] Strauss Clay, "Homeric Religion," 250.
[64] Pohlenz, "*Τὸ πρέπον*," 53.
[65] LSJ, s.v. "πρέπον" (Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, and Henry Stuart Jones, *Greek-English Lexicon, Ninth Edition with Revised Supplement* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996).
[66] Oskar Dreyer, *Untersuchungen zum Begriff des Gottgeziemenden in der Antike* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1970), 11.

positioned at the very top of this order, as the ruler of the gods. In this position he was due the highest honour (τιμή). When Zeus enters his house, it is fitting for all the other gods to arise and walk towards him (*Il.* 1.533-535).[67] Moreover, all the gods have to ultimately obey Zeus (*Il.* 1.565; 8.7-9; 15.211)[68] and although Hera is not pleased with this, even she must acknowledge that it is only fitting – "ἐπιεικές" (*Il.* 8.431) – for Zeus to ultimately decide the outcome of the Trojan war. While all the gods are standing below Zeus in rank – something that had been the case since Mycenaean times – they all have their specific positions of honour within the divine family which in turn demand behaviour befitting these positions.[69] As we will see, it was thus the position and the honour, prerogatives, and sphere of influence that were connected with each particular position that was held by every god which stipulated a fitting behaviour or acknowledgment on the part of others, whether they were gods or humans. Moreover, there was also the wider order of the universe – Moira and Themis – which had to be respected. Consequently, anything that infringed on the gods' position, their honour, or their sphere of influence elicited a response which warned or demanded the transgressor to uphold the prescribed boundaries and order.

Whereas in most cases we encounter philosophers and poets discussing god-fittingness, we find that in Homer the gods themselves address what befits themselves as well as others.[70] Since Hera and Poseidon stand very close to but just below the highest position, Zeus, as well as above the other gods, they make for prime examples to illustrate the concept of fittingness in Homer.

Firstly, we shall consider Hera's relation to Zeus and inferior gods. Hera, who has observed Zeus in conversation with Thetis, demands to hear Zeus' plan. Zeus, however, refuses her wish, even though she is his wife (*Il.* 1.545-456; ἀλόχῳ περ ἐούσῃ) but instead concedes to her that "[a]ny thought that it is right (ἐπιεικές) for you to listen to, no one neither man nor any immortal shall hear it before you" (*Il.* 1.547-548). While this passage illustrates that Zeus has the right *not* to reveal his plan, it particularly demonstrates that Hera enjoys certain prerogatives that are only befitting her since she is his wife. Nevertheless, there are further factors that determine the gods' standing within their family and their corresponding fitting behaviour. When Hera concedes to Zeus, she nonetheless reminds Zeus that it ought not be the case – ἀλλὰ χρή – that he should nullify her labours (*Il.* 4.57). In support of her claim,

[67] Ibid., 15.
[68] Ibid., 15.
[69] See Nilsson, *Griechische Religion I*, 354. who points out that all the gods had already been subjected to Zeus since Mycenaean times, since (most of) them had been removed from their respective dominions to heaven/Mount Olympus, which is the dominion of the weather god Zeus. Thus, Zeus is also the only god who is called Olympiad as an individual.
[70] Dreyer, *Untersuchungen*, 9. Dreyer notes Philo of Alexandria as the other exception next to Homer.

she lists the factors which establish her standing and in accordance with which she can demand fitting behaviour towards her:[71]

> "I am likewise a god (θεός), and my race (γένος) is even what yours is,
>
> and I am first (πρεσβυτάτην) of the daughters of devious-devising Kronos,
>
> both ways, since I am eldest born (γενεῇ) and am called your consort (παράκοιτις),
>
> yours, and you in turn are lord (ἀνάσσεις) over all the immortals."
>
> (*Il*. 4.58-61)

And indeed, we hear that after Hera's speech Zeus neither rebuked her, "nor did the father of gods and men disobey her (ἀπίθησε)" (*Il*. 4.68). The four factors Hera had produced to receive conduct befitting her standing are her divinity (θεός), her pedigree (γένος; γενεῇ), her age (πρεσβυτάτην), and her rank as Zeus' wife (παράκοιτις).[72] These four characteristics are the factors which determine the fitting behaviour among the gods and thus the order of the divine world. Hence, inferior gods such as Aphrodite acknowledge Hera's request with the words: "I cannot, and I must not (οὐδὲ ἔοικε) deny […] you, who lie in the arms of Zeus, since he is our greatest (τοῦ ἀρίστου)" (*Il*. 14.212-213). Again, we can note the language of fittingness: it is not fitting – οὐδὲ ἔοικε – for Aphrodite to deny Hera's wish. And we are also given the reason for it: Hera's standing, that is, her close relation with Zeus, the greatest of the gods.[73]

Similarly, when considering Zeus's brother Poseidon, we encounter analogous instances of fittingness. In the *Theomachy* of Book 21 in the *Iliad*, Poseidon points out to Apollo that the two of them should engage in the current *Theomachy* since "[i]t does not suit (οὐδὲ ἔοικεν) when the others have begun, and it were too shameful (αἴσχιον) if without fighting" they were to return to Mount Olympus (*Il*. 21.436-438) and so commands Apollo to commence the fight since "it is not well (οὐ […] καλόν) for" him to start as he is older and has more knowledge (*Il*. 21.439-440).[74] Apollo replies with the well-known passage we had examined earlier, in which he declares that he will not fight Poseidon "for the sake of insignificant mortals" (*Il*. 21.463-464), thus putting divine reality back into perspective. Homer's immediate comment is that Apollo concedes "for he was too modest (αἴδετο) to […] fight […] with his father's brother (πατροκασιγνήτοιο)" (*Il*. 21.468-469). Again, we observe the concept of fittingness at work. Poseidon is owed fitting behaviour due to his seniority, but Apollo declines the battle since it would not be fitting for gods to fight each other over humankind and he, moreover,

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[71] Ibid., 14. Moreover, it is interesting to note that Hera implies there to be at least one more daughter of Kronos, which must be either Demeter or Hestia. But only the former is very briefly mentioned in the *Odyssey* (*Od*. 5.125).
[72] Ibid.
[73] Ibid.
[74] Ibid., 16.

displays αἰδώς – respect – towards the senior Poseidon.[75] Similarly, although reluctant at first, Hephaestus agrees to Poseidon's offer to act as guarantor for Ares' reparation for committing adultery with Aphrodite with the words: "It cannot be, and it is not right (οὐδὲ ἔοικε), that I should deny you." (*Od*. 8.358) While not explicitly mentioned, it is likely that Hephaestus yields to Poseidon since he is the superior god.

On the other hand, we also encounter instances where there is a clash of realms amongst the gods themselves, arising from a differing perspective of fittingness. In Book 15 of the *Iliad*, Poseidon is commanded and threatened by Zeus – via the messenger Iris – to cease fighting on behalf of the Achaeans or else Zeus would restrain him. Poseidon feels slighted and responds to Zeus that he is "his equal in rank (ὁμότιμον)" (*Il*. 15.186) for both of them are descendant from Kronos and Rheia (*Il*. 15.187-188). Additionally, Poseidon proclaims that he and his brothers, Zeus and Hades, had "each received their share of honour (ἕκαστος δ' ἔμμορε τιμῆς)" (*Il*. 15.189)[76] when they divided up the universe into their respective domains, with the result that earth and Mount Olympus remained *communal* areas (*Il*. 15.190-193). Thus, by evoking the fact that he and Zeus shared an identical descent and had each been allocated their respective spheres of influence – their shares of the universe – in the past, Poseidon suggests being "his [sc. Zeus'; FG] equal in rank (ὁμότιμον)" (*Il*. 15.186) and insists that Zeus holds no sway over him in this communal part of the universe and should therefore remain in his third (μενέτω τριτάτῃ ἐνὶ μοίρῃ)" (*Il*. 15.195), the sky, and not interfere with Poseidon's actions conducted within the communal sphere, the earthly realm, suggesting that the only ones for Zeus to scold are his own children as they must indeed obey him (*Il*. 15.197-199). Yet, in response to Poseidon's avowal, the messenger Iris reminds Poseidon that the furies "forever side with the elder (πρεσβυτέροισιν)" (*Il*. 15.204). In turn, Poseidon appears to acknowledge that the age of Zeus demands of him a fitting behaviour towards the elder Zeus and praises Iris for both reminding him of this in her speech, which was "quite properly (κατὰ μοῖραν) spoken", as well as for knowing what is right (αἴσιμα εἰδῇ)[77] (*Il*. 15.206-207). The two Greek terms used to describe fittingness here are μοῖρα and αἶσα. Together with the term θέμις they make for some of the most difficult Homeric terms discussed in the scholarly literature, and we can only touch on them briefly. Generally speaking, these terms signify a universal order of the universe in which the concept of fittingness is ultimately grounded.

[75] Ibid., 17.
[76] My translation, which concurs with that of Wolfgang Schadewaldt, *Homer: Ilias* (Frankfurt am Main: Insel Verlag, 1975). The whole of *Il*. 15.189 reads τριχθὰ δὲ πάντα δέδασται, ἕκαστος δ' ἔμμορε τιμῆς and is rendered as "All was divided among us three ways, each given his domain" by Lattimore, thereby somewhat obfuscating the notion of honour (τιμή) as well as of "obtaining one's share (μείρομαι)". Compare this to Schadewaldt's rendition – "Dreifach ist alles geteilt, und jeder erhielt seinen Teil an Ehre" – which brings out both these elements.
[77] Lattimore translates the phrase as "conscious of justice".

I.5 The Order of Fittingness: Moira and Themis

Moira (μοῖρα) and aisa (αἶσα) mean at the most basic level "share" and relate to the order of the universe.[78] The way in which shares are allotted is according to an order, a convention, of what is fitting.[79] In relation to the gods, moira therefore refers to the gods' rightful "share of cosmic prerogatives or spheres of influence", whereas for humans "moira has a temporal dimension, above all, one's share of life, hence one's death."[80] In this sense, moira is ultimately the "universal law of proper distribution".[81] Since humans have a share in life but death is the only thing that is certain for them, moira became quickly associated with fate and started to become personified; a process that is already visible in Homer.[82]

While the co-existence of the gods with their power and will and Moira was not yet seen as a (logical) problem, a conflict between the two started to already emerge in the *Iliad*.[83] It is in particular the relationship between Moira and Zeus which has been at the forefront of the scholarly debate. Probably one of the most discussed examples is found in Book 16 of the *Iliad* where Zeus considers saving his beloved son Sarpedon from looming death in battle at the hands of Patroclus (16.433-438). Reacting to this deliberation Hera points out that Sarpedon had been "long since doomed by his destiny (αἴσῃ)" (*Il.* 16.451) and Zeus saving him would "waken grim resentment among" the other gods (*Il.* 16.449). And indeed, Zeus did not "disobey her; yet he wept tears of blood that fell to the ground, for the sake of his beloved son" (*Il.* 16.458-460). The ensuing debate from this scene and others is the question of whether moira – or aisa in this case – represents an entity that is superior or inferior to Zeus and his will. In my opinion, the best way forward in this question appears to be along a suggestion made by Clay which assumes an equivalence between Zeus' will and moira, conceiving their relation as a cognitive one.[84] Interestingly, a similar connection seems to be suggested by the Derveni Papyrus which speaks of moira in relation to Zeus as "being the contemplative reason of god, eternally and ubiquitously".[85] Thus, while

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[78] Burkert, *Griechische Religion*, 204; Walter Pötscher, "Moira, Themis und τιμή im homerischen Denken," *Wiener Studien* 73 (1960): 11; Nilsson, *Griechische Religion I*, 361–63.
[79] Nilsson, *Griechische Religion I*, 363: "Das Ordnungsmäßige gehört jedoch zum Wesen der Vorstellung von der Moira – der häufige Ausdruck κατὰ μοῖραν bedeutet „geziemend", „richtig" –, und das Sicherste in der Ordnung des Menschenlebens ist, daß alles, was geboren ist, sterben muss".
[80] Strauss Clay, "Homeric Religion," 253. See also Burkert, *Griechische Religion*, 203–4, p. 374, with p. 203, n. 36 for further references; Nilsson, *Griechische Religion I*, 362–63. And the quote in the preceding footnote.
[81] Thomas A. Szlezák, *Homer oder Die Geburt der abendländischen Dichtung* (München: C.H. Beck, 2012), 125. Szlezák writes: "Die <Moira> oder <Aisa> steht für ein allgemeines Gesetz der richtigen <Verteilung>.".
[82] Nilsson, *Griechische Religion I*, 363–64. Nilsson points to the plural in *Il.* 24.49 which only here has the meaning "destines" or "goddesses of destiny. See on this also Pötscher, "Moira," 13, 26. See also *Il.* 19.87, 410.
[83] Burkert, *Griechische Religion*, 204; Nilsson, *Griechische Religion I*, 365.
[84] Strauss Clay, "Homeric Religion," 253: "this suggests that the relation of Zeus to fate is not hierarchical but cognitive." For a different view see Pötscher, "Moira," 28–29.
[85] Burkert, *Griechische Religion*, 477, quoting *Pap. Derv.* XVIII 9f. ("Ehe nämlich die Bezeichnung ‚Zeus' entstand, war ‚Moira', die denkende Vernunft des Gottes, immer und durchwegs"; translation mine). Also, the Byzantine bishop Eustathios assumed an equivalence between moira and Zeus' will. See on this Pötscher, "Moira," 22.

Zeus, who knows the moira of Sarpedon (*Il*. 15.65-67), could theoretically alter it, he does not do so since it would violate the universal cosmic order that underlines it.[86]

Another, closely related entity is themis (θέμις) which denotes custom, law, and order. We encounter the concept of themis as well as the Goddess in Homer. The two, the Goddess and her sphere of influence, go hand in hand which is best observed in the scene when upon Hera's return to Mount Olympus all the other gods – Zeus is at Mount Ida – "rose (ἀνήϊξαν)" to greet her and lift their cups (*Il*. 15.84-86), but "Hera passed by the others and accepted a cup from Themis of the fair cheeks, since she had first (πρώτη γάρ) come running to greet her" (*Il*. 15.87-88). As we had observed earlier in the case of Zeus entering his house, it was fitting for inferior gods to rise and walk towards higher gods (*Il*. 1.533-535). Since in our scene Hera is the highest god present all the other gods rise up. However, the first one to do so was Themis, the goddess of Order – or shall we say fittingness – herself since it was right – themis – to do so.[87] Thus, terms such as moira,aisa, themis – and one could name others such as dike – all denote the notion of order. An order that prescribes what is fitting and what is not. While this order can theoretically be broken by the gods, it never is since the gods are ultimately the guarantors of this order.

II. "The Angry Bard" – Xenophanes and A New Notion of God

While the epics of Homer and Hesiod were both the chief sources for the Greek conception of the gods, and also offered "proto-philosophical" antecedents which soon became starting points for further philosophical exploration among the Presocratics, the epics' depiction of the gods soon found their first major critique in the thought of the Pre-Socratic Xenophanes of Colophon.[88] In conjunction with his

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[86] Strauss Clay, "Homeric Religion," 253–54.

[87] Pötscher, "Moira," 32, who also lists further examples for the relationship between the goddess Themis and her realm, which is custom, convention, fittingness, law.

[88] For the question of the beginning and origin of philosophy see the incisive account by Dieter Bremer, "Der Ursprung der Philosophie bei den Griechen," in *Frühgriechische Philosophie* (ed. Dieter Bremer and Georg Rechenauer; Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie. Die Philosophie der Antike 1; Basel: Schwabe Verlag, 2013), 61–96. See in particular the section on "poetry and philosophy" on pp. 71-80 for "proto-philosophical" notions in poetry. To name just two: "proto-philosophical" notions can be found in the descriptions of the river-god Okeanos as well as the plant Moly. The river-god Okeanos is described as "Okeanos, whence the gods have risen (θεῶν γένεσιν)" (*Il*. 14.201) and a few lines later we even read of Okeanos "whence all has risen (γένεσις πάντεσσι)" (*Il*. 14.245-246). As is well-known, water was assumed to be the origin and first principle of everything by Thales. Moreover, Homer's remark that Okeanos stays in his place when Zeus calls for a gathering of all the gods, which would include Okeanos (*Il*. 20.4-9), appears to indicate that Okeanos plays a stabilising and hence fundamental role in the universe (cf. also the description of the shield of Achilles in *Il*. 18.478-608, where the fifth and final circle that encloses all the other circles on the shield, which depicts a microcosm of the cosmos, is the "Ocean River which ran around the uttermost rim of the shield's strong structure" (*Il*. 18.607-608)). (See Ibid., 72–73. For the influence of Egyptian and Babylonian traditions on Okeanos see G.S. Kirk, J.E. Raven, and M. Schofield, *The Presocratic Philosophers* (2nd ed.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 10–17, and especially pp. 11-12.). Precursors to later philosophical notions of "being" and "becoming" can be detected when Odysseus is shown the plant Moly by Hermes, who "explained the nature (φύσιν) of it to" Odysseus, describing it as "black at the root, but with a milky flower" (*Od*. 10.303-304) and which contains the special *power* to act as medicine (see on this Bremer, "Ursprung," 74.).

critique, Xenophanes was to advance a new conception of the nature of god and employed the concept of god-fittingness in a new way: as a hermeneutical tool for reading texts. It is likely that his fierce critique of the Homeric epics prompted the emerging allegorical reading of the Homeric epics by his near contemporaries, such as Theagenes of Rhegium. Moreover, his new conception of the nature of god was to prove highly influential on later figures ranging from Parmenides and Plato to Clement of Alexandria.

In this section, I will argue that Xenophanes derived his new understanding of god's nature by subjecting the Homeric epics to a critical re-evaluation which applied the principle of god-fittingness to the epic stories, thereby making the very nature of god into a hermeneutical tool with which one had to read and assess the truth of the epic texts. Xenophanes therefore presents a very important step within the development in the understanding of the nature of god as well as the use of the principle of god-fittingness as a hermeneutical tool. Both of which became foundational in future philosophical and theological thought and the reading of texts as we shall observe in the later parts of this essay.

I will begin by examining Xenophanes' new positive account of god's nature. Secondly, I will show how his new understanding of god resulted in his critique of the Homeric and Hesiodic epics. In both of these examinations I will highlight the influence of the principle of god-fittingness and will show that despite his fierce critique of Homeric and Hesiodic ideas, Xenophanes was still very much influenced by these two writers in his thinking.

II.1 Xenophanes - Life and Work

Xenophanes[89] was a philosophical poet[90] and polymath who lived between the late 6th and early 5th century, possibly between the years 570 and 475 BC (DK 21 B8, B22, A1; DK 22 B40).[91] He was born

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Moreover, it should be noted that the late 19th century label "Pre-Socratic" carries its own problems. For discussion of it as well as the beginnings of philosophy see especially André Laks, *The Concept of Presocratic Philosophy: Its Origin, Development, and Significance* (trans. Glenn W. Most; Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018). Cf. also the recent account of the history of research by Dieter Bremer, "Forschungsgeschichte und Darstellungsprinzipien," in *Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie. Die Philosophie der Antike 1* (ed. Dieter Bremer and Georg Rechenauer; Basel: Schwabe Verlag, 2013), 3–60.

[89] A translation of the fragments and testimonia as well as an extensive commentary can conveniently be accessed in J. H. Lesher, *Xenophanes of Colophon: Fragments: A Text and Translation with Commentary* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992). While I follow Lesher's translation, a recent new edition and translation can be found in André Laks and Glenn W. Most, eds., *Early Greek Philosophy, Volume III: Early Ionian Thinkers, Part 2* (LCL 526; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016). For good general accounts on Xenophanes see among others: W. K. C. Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy: Vol. 1: The Earlier Presocratics and the Pythagoreans* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962), 360–402; Jonathan Barnes, *The Presocratic Philosophers* (London: Routledge, 1982), 82–99; Kirk, Raven, and Schofield, *Presocratic Philosophers*, 163–80; Thomas Schirrer, "Xenophanes," in *Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie. Die Philosophie der Antike 1* (ed. Hellmut Flashar, Dieter Bremer, and Georg Rechenauer; Basel: Schwabe Verlag, 2013), 339–74.

[90] See Guthrie, *Greek Philosophy 1*, 361, who remarks that "[p]oetic form is no bar to philosophy", rightly reminding us of the "artificiality of the barriers" between poetry and philosophy.

[91] M. Laura Gemelli Marciano, "Xenophanes: Antike Interpretation und kultureller Kontext. Die Kritik an den Dichtern und der sogenannte ›Monismus‹," in *Frühgriechisches Denken* (ed. Georg Rechenauer; Göttingen:

in the Ionian city of Colophon in Asia Minor and probably left his hometown at the age of 25 due to the expanding Achaemenid Empire (B22), travelling between various Greek cities of *Magna Graecia* for 67 years (B8, B45, A1).[92] Being not only a rhapsode but also a polymath and poet in his own right, Xenophanes likely found himself in competition with other rhapsodes who retold episodes of the Homeric and Hesiodic epics instead of delivering poetic texts of their own making.[93] One particular issue Xenophanes took with the epics was their amoral and anthropomorphic depiction of the gods. This portrayal differed so sharply from his own understanding of the nature of god that it caused him to voice a stark critique of these views and promote his new notion of the nature of god.

II.2 Xenophanes' New Conception of the Nature of God

Xenophanes' encounter with the expanding Achaemenid Empire (B22) may have been – as Marciano Gemelli suggests – an incident which deeply influenced Xenophanes: for the Persians lacked any images of their gods.[94] Indeed, the Persians' rejection of anthropomorphic images also made a lasting impression on Herodotus only a little while later, reporting this feature in his *Histories*:

> "As to the usages of the Persians, I know them to be these. It is not their custom to make and set up statues (ἀγάλματα) and temples and altars, but those who make such they deem foolish (μωρίην ἐπιφέρουσι), as I suppose, because they never believed the gods (τοὺς θεούς), as do the Greeks, to be in the likeness of men (οὐκ ἀνθρωποφυέας)" (*Hdt*. I 131).

Indeed, it could have been this encounter with the Persian non-anthropomorphic understanding of the divine which may have led Xenophanes to further reflect on the depiction of the gods in his own tradition, the Homeric and Hesiodic epics. Yet, it was certainly a critical engagement with these epics that caused Xenophanes to conclude that the Homeric gods were described in unfitting (B26; B12) as well as inconsequential ways (B14; B23): the epic stories had made the gods human, all too human; for Homer and Hesiod had attributed unseemly elements such as immorality (B11; B12) and anthropomorphism (B14; B15; B16; B23) to the gods, thereby reducing them to characters for whom the label "divine" was no longer fitting. Thus, Xenophanes came to reject any epic story and worldview which propagated an unfitting view of the gods and the world, juxtaposing them with his own fitting view of the nature of the gods (B23-27) and the world (B 27; B32), and calling upon his environment

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Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005), 121–25. See Kirk, et al., p. 164, who evaluate the various reports about Xenophanes' life, asserting that they could be combined if Xenophanes lived from circa 570 to circa 475 B.C.

[92] Kirk, Raven, and Schofield, *Presocratic Philosophers*, 164; M. Laura Gemelli Marciano, *Die Vorsokratiker 1: Band 1. Griechisch - Deutsch* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2011), 254; Ernst Heitsch, ed., *Xenophanes: Die Fragmente* (München: Artemis Verlag, 1983), 7. Later tradition portrays Xenophanes as the teacher of Parmenides (A2, A30) and connects him with Elea to the extent of being the founder of the Eleatic "school" (A8, A29, cf. A30).

[93] Gemelli Marciano, "Xenophanes," 121–22. Gemelli focuses on the fact that Xenophanes was seen as a polymath by Heraclitus (DK 22 B40) as well as the doxographic tradition (DK 21 A1). This placed him in an *agon*-situation in which he competed with the views contained in the Homeric and Hesiodic poetry delivered by rhapsodes, causing him to compose a poetic critique of these views.

[94] Ibid., 128–33.

to likewise only speak of the gods in fitting ways (B1). The new concept of divine nature that Xenophanes proposed assumed that:

> "One god (εἷς θεός) is greatest among gods and men (ἔν τε θεοῖσι καὶ ἀνθρώποισι μέγιστος),
>
> not at all (οὔτι) like (ὁμοίιος) mortals in body (δέμας) or thought (νόημα)"
>
> (B23 = D16 (Loeb) = CLEM. Strom. V 109)[95]

As we had seen earlier, in the Homeric and Hesiodic epics the gods appeared in anthropomorphic guise, and it was this element that Xenophanes rejected, emphasising the complete dissimilarity – "not at all (οὔτι) like (ὁμοίιος) mortals" – between humankind and god. Despite this rejection of a key feature of the epic gods, the epithet μέγιστος in the first verse of fragment B23 evidently betrays the influence of Homeric language as μέγιστος is a term used in the *Iliad* to address Zeus (e.g. *Il*. 2.412; 3.278)[96] and we will see throughout our examination of Xenophanes that despite, or perhaps rather by, critiquing as well as drawing out the consequences of the stories and terminology contained in the Homeric and Hesiodic epics, Xenophanes' thought was deeply shaped by the epics with whose milk he and every other Greek had been nurtured (B10).

The first verse of B23 poses one of the most debated problems in scholarship on Xenophanes. Here, Xenophanes states that "One god (εἷς θεός) is greatest (μέγιστος) among gods and men (ἔν τε θεοῖσι καὶ ἀνθρώποισι)" and commentators have read this passage as advocating exclusive and inclusive monotheism, henotheism as well as – in combination with further texts – pantheism.

The highly detailed and complex debate surrounding the interpretation of this sentence cannot be discussed here and it will have to suffice to say that the statement is usually read in either a henotheistic sense – asserting the existence of one highest god among other gods – or in an inclusive as well as exclusive monotheistic sense – claiming there to be only one god. Proponents of this latter monotheistic reading resolve the apparent incompatibility of the mentioning of "gods" in the plural by taking the phrase "among gods and humans" as a so-called "polar expression". Common to various Greek writers such as Homer, Euripides, and Sophocles, a "polar expression" articulates a fact by the juxtaposition of two terms without necessarily implying the existence of these two terms.[97] Hence, the expression "among gods and humans" is understood as a way of speaking of "reality as a whole", since, as

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[95] εἷς θεός, ἔν τε θεοῖσι καὶ ἀνθρώποισι μέγιστος,
οὔτι δέμας θνητοῖσιν ὁμοίιος οὐδὲ νόημα.

[96] Note also that Gemelli Marciano, *Vorsokratiker*, 132, with n. 49. has pointed out that the Persian god Ahura Mazda is called "[t]he great Auramazdā, the greatest of the gods" in two inscriptions which may indicate Zoroastrian influence on the Xenophanes' thought. While this may well be the case, it does not take away from the fact that the epics of Homer and Hesiod proved to be the major point of departure for Xenophanes' thought and critique as will become evident throughout our subsequent discussion.

[97] Kirk, Raven, and Schofield, *Presocratic Philosophers*, 170; Jens Halfwassen, "Der Gott des Xenophanes: Überlegungen über Ursprung und Struktur eines philosophischen Monotheismus," *ARG* 10 (2008): 285.

Halfwassen notes, Xenophanes did not yet have terms such as τὸ πᾶν or ὁ κόσμος at his disposal to convey such meaning.[98] Additionally, further references to "gods" in the fragments are subsequently explained as a "concession, perhaps not a fully conscious one, to popular religious terminology."[99] However, any such attempts to account for the plural "gods" have been critiqued by scholars who usually propagate a henotheistic reading. Ultimately, the debate is still ongoing, with further complexity deriving from the difficulty of interpretating B23 in the overall context of the rest of the fragments as well as the complicated doxographical tradition which could support an inclusive monotheism or pantheism (see esp. A31, A32). It appears to me that it is at least plausible that Xenophanes exhibited monotheistic tendencies (in combination with the other fragments and the overall gist of the arguments).

So, what was his god like? Again, Xenophanes seems to have orientated himself on his own tradition while excluding any anthropomorphic features from his understanding of divine nature.

As we had observed earlier, due to the omnipresence of the epic gods, they are able to hear and see everything (cf. *Il*. 2.485; *Od*. 4.379, 20.75).[100] Likewise, in Hesiod, it is through the "eye of Zeus" that Zeus can be aware of any injustice committed by humankind if he so wishes (Hesiod, *Op*. 267). And it is, especially, the epics' usage of human sensory categories, such as seeing and hearing, to represent divine omniscience that Xenophanes objected to since these traits were ultimately connected to particular human perceptive organs such as eyes and ears. But a belief that maintained divine omniscience to ultimately be based on human organs would not only imply the god's dependence on these human organs – and thus a limitation to his omniscience and greatness – but would also be unfitting for Xenophanes' understanding of god, whom he imagined as utterly distinct from humankind, which included human organs (B23).[101] Restricted by the limits of human language, Xenophanes attempted to convey 's unlimited and non-anthropomorphic perception of all things by asserting that as

> "…whole (οὖλος) he sees, whole (οὖλος) he thinks (νοεῖ), and whole (οὖλος) he hears." (B24 = D17 (Loeb) = SEXT. adv. math. IX 144)[102]

Thus, in order to retain the idea of god's omniscience but without importing the anthropomorphising and limiting elements common to the epic depiction, Xenophanes purged the concept of divine omniscience from these elements and professed that god sees and hears as a whole (οὖλος), thus perceiving (νοεῖ) everything as a whole.[103] God's nature is depicted as a holistic unity, which does not contain any parts. So, unlike humankind, god did not have many different perceptive organs to

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[98] Halfwassen, "Der Gott des Xenophanes," 285, with n. 41-43.
[99] Kirk, Raven, and Schofield, *Presocratic Philosophers*, 170.
[100] This is an obvious prerequisite for the idea of prayer.
[101] Lesher, *Xenophanes*, 105–6; Heitsch, *Xenophanes*, 153.
[102] οὖλος ὁρᾶι, οὖλος δὲ νοεῖ, οὖλος δέ τ' ἀκούει.
[103] Kirk, Raven, and Schofield, *Presocratic Philosophers*, 170 translate οὖλος as "all of him" and "all". See also Lesher, *Xenophanes*, 103; Heitsch, *Xenophanes*, 153.

accomplish any of these tasks but his whole being was understood as one perceptive entity. While at first the statement's use of anthropomorphic language – hearing and seeing – appears to betray the unavoidable influence of anthropomorphic language, the outcome was quite the reverse because "this statement does not result in an image, for here god is addressed as something that is no longer imaginable in any way".[104] To conclude with Halfwassen's apt assessment: "His [sc. god's; FG] holistic unity precisely expresses his unimaginable otherness."[105]

That it was the principle of god-fittingness that stood in the overall background of Xenophanes' drastic revision and critique of the epics' portrayal of the gods, ultimately leading him to his new articulation of divine nature is most evident in fragment B26 in which Xenophanes mentions that god

> "always (αἰεὶ) stays in the same place (ἐν ταὐτῶι μίμνει),
>
> not moving at all (κινούμενος οὐδέν),
>
> And it is not fitting that he travels (οὐδὲ μετέρχεσθαί μιν ἐπιπρέπει) now to one place, now to another.
>
> (B26 = D19 (Loeb) = SIMPL. Phys. 23, 10)[106]

In contrast to the other fragments, we are for the first and only time provided with an explicit argument for the particular assessment of an element of god's nature, which in this case is god's motionlessness. Given in support for why god should be thought of as motionless, Xenophanes appeals to the principle of god-fittingness. He contends that the reason for god's motionless abiding in one place or remaining an absolute is that "it is not (οὐδὲ) fitting (ἐπιπρέπει) that he (sc. god; FG) travels now to one place, now to another". Thus, Xenophanes undergirds his statement about god's nature by an argument that appeals to an external principle, the principle of god-fittingness, according to which it would not be fitting (ἐπιπρέπει) for god to travel about, since such movement would be inappropriate "to the dignity, honour, or power of the divine".[107]

While we had already seen the principle of fittingness at work in Homer, Dreyer rightly notes the striking difference of its usage in Xenophanes: whereas Homer was able to depict the gods as acting in ways that were actually unfitting for their divinity, a poetic world in which "zwar das (Gott-

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[104] Heitsch, *Xenophanes*, 153. "diese Aussage ergibt kein Bild, denn in ihr wird Gott angesprochen als etwas, das in keiner Weise mehr vorstellbar ist.".

[105] Halfwassen, "Der Gott des Xenophanes," 288. See also p. 289. "Seine Ganzheitlichkeit bringt somit gerade seine unvorstellbare Andersheit auf den Begriff".

[106] αἰεὶ δ' ἐν ταὐτῶι μίμνει κινούμενος οὐδέν
οὐδὲ μετέρχεσθαί μιν ἐπιπρέπει ἄλλοτε ἄλληι.

[107] Lesher, *Xenophanes*, 112. As I will argue below, there is good reason to understand the fragment as more broadly asserting the absence of change from god's nature.

)Geziemende erstrebt wird, eine Norm darstellt, aber nicht immer erreicht wird”[108], the principle of god-fittingness has become an ideal norm for Xenophanes, a norm which, if infringed upon or not reached by the gods, negated their divinity and thus their existence.[109] Hence, in Xenophanes the principle of god-fittingness had – and this further aspect needs to be added and emphasised – transformed into a hermeneutical tool which was applied externally to texts, such as the Homeric and Hesiodic epics, in order to evaluate the truth contained in them.

That this is indeed what transpired, can be witnessed in fragment B26, where it is once again very plausible to assume the Homeric epics acting as the foil for the critique and inspiration for Xenophanes' claim of god's motionlessness. As we had observed earlier, the epic gods often moved swiftly from one place to another in order to engage in local events. Even the Homeric Zeus who usually remains on Mount Olympus and acts via different means such as signs and messengers, does leave Mount Olympus on occasion.[110] In contrast to this view, Xenophanes, argued that such locomotion had to be excluded from the nature of the greatest god, since it did not befit his nature to "pursue a person or a task" – as Heitsch argued μετέρχεσθαί should be translated.[111]

It is, however, also plausible to understand fragment B26 in a wider sense that excludes *any form of change* from god. The first sentence is then read as a statement of absolute identity, which would obviously include motionlessness – god always remaining the same, which is himself (αἰεὶ δ' ἐν ταὐτῶι μίμνει) – whereby any form of motion (κινούμενος οὐδέν) is excluded, since it would not befit such a god to change (οὐδὲ μετέρχεσθαί μιν ἐπιπρέπει ἄλλοτε ἄλληι); change again including locomotion or any form of exertion. As we shall see, this reading finds further support in fragment B14 (see below).[112] Either way, as a result of the argument in B26 we have to imagine this god to neither move, exert himself, nor change in any way, since he is motionless, remaining always the same, and thus we would have to understand him achieve his objectives in an "instant and complete accomplishment of divine wishes and intentions across enormous expanse of space and time".[113] That this was indeed the case how Xenophanes imagined the nature of god to be, can be discovered in fragment B25 to which we shall now turn.

Possibly taking his reference again from Homer, where Zeus is famously described as shaking Mount Olympus by nodding his brows and his head (*Il.* 1.5247-530) and when sitting down (*Il.* 8.442-443),

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[108] Dreyer, *Untersuchungen*, 22. While Dreyer is generally right in this assessment, it should be emphasised that the features Xenophanes rejects, such anthropomorphism and amorality, are not seen as unfitting traits of the Gods by Homer but rather constitute a hallmark of the gods' divinity.
[109] Ibid., 22–23.
[110] Heitsch, *Xenophanes*, 157–58; Lesher, *Xenophanes*, 112–13.
[111] Heitsch, *Xenophanes*, 158.
[112] For such a reading see Halfwassen, "Der Gott des Xenophanes," 289.
[113] Lesher, *Xenophanes*, 113.

Xenophanes appears to have magnified this idea, purging it of its anthropomorphic features, assuming that it would not be fitting for god to rely on physical effort to shake Mount Olympus

> "…but completely without toil (ἀπάνευθε πόνοιο) he shakes all things (πάντα κραδαίνει) by the thought of his mind (νόου φρενί)."
>
> (B25 = D18 (Loeb) = SIMPL. Phys. 23, 19)[114]

The fragment would therefore imply a magnification of Homeric statements as well as an eradication of unfitting elements. Magnifying and surpassing the Homeric idea of Zeus shaking Mount Olympus, Xenophanes' god shakes "all things (πάντα)", unlike Zeus who only shakes Mount Olympus.

And while the Homeric gods had at times to experience strenuous physical tasks, as we saw earlier, Xenophanes rejected this anthropomorphic idea as unfitting, emphasising instead that god's act of shaking all things happened "completely without toil (ἀπάνευθε πόνοιο)" and without the need of any physical activity, like nodding his head, since it was by the sheer "thought of his mind (νόου φρενί)" that Xenophanes' god interacted with the world. In combination with B25 we can therefore detect a god who is an unmoved mover; an idea – which as has been noted often – is not far from Aristotle's concept of an unmoved mover.[115]

Finally, I shall summarise what we have extracted so far from fragments B23-26 regarding Xenophanes' understanding of the nature of god as well as his method of reasoning. It seems plausible that it was the encounter with the expanding Persian empire and their lack of divine images that caused Xenophanes to reflect on the nature of the gods of his own tradition. Nonetheless it was certainly a critical reflection on the way the Homeric and Hesiodic epics depicted the gods that influenced Xenophanes in his new understanding of divine nature and his simultaneous critique of the epic stories (see below). In his reimagination of the nature of god, Xenophanes both broke with some key features of the epic tradition – such as its anthropomorphic depiction of the gods – while radicalising others – such as the greatness and superiority of Zeus – ultimately purging any notion of divine nature from unfitting elements such as anthropomorphic depictions or notions limiting the power of god. It was therefore the external principle of god-fittingness to which Xenophanes subjected any and all notions of divine nature. Only what befitted his perfect god could be accepted. Thus, Xenophanes conceived a whole new understanding of divine nature, postulating one god who was the greatest – I leave it open for now whether this should be understood as henotheism or a form of monotheism – who was completely unlike

[114] ἀλλ' ἀπάνευθε πόνοιο νόου φρενὶ πάντα κραδαίνει.

[115] Jaeger, *Theology*, 45; Lesher, *Xenophanes*, 109; Christian Schäfer, *Xenophanes von Kolophon: Ein Vorsokratiker zwischen Mythos und Philosophie* (Stuttgart: B. G. Teubner, 1996), 258–64; Halfwassen, "Der Gott des Xenophanes," 289–90.

humankind (B23), remaining motionless (B26), being one perceptive entity (B24), that moved everything by the thought of his mind (B25).

II.3 Critiquing Homer and Hesiod

Having arrived at his new understanding of divine nature by applying the principle of god-fittingness to the stories of Homer and Hesiod and drawing out its consequences, Xenophanes did not hold back in his critique of the image the epic stories had painted of the gods.

Xenophanes had encountered these stories in rhapsodic competitions and knew that especially Homer had an immense influence on the Greek mind and thus the people's understanding of the gods and the world, "[s]ince from the beginning (ἐξ ἀρχῆς) all ha[d] learned (μεμαθήκασι) according to Homer" (B10). Indeed, every Greek man, woman, and child had been nurtured with the milk of the epics from early childhood as is conveyed by the phrase "ἐξ ἀρχῆς", most likely referring to the "earliest stage of an individual's life, the critical formative period for values and attitudes toward others".[116] Hence, the Greek mind had been corrupted by epic stories about the nature of the gods and the world which were in truth false. And as we shall see, Xenophanes had to wage a battle over the Greek mind and fight against "the extent of Homer's influence on customary thought and conduct as well as about his status as authority on the behaviour, epithets, and other attributes of the gods."[117] Taking on this battle, Xenophanes' critique can be roughly divided into a critique of the gods' amorality (B11-12) and their anthropomorphic portrayal (B14-16; 23), as well as other ideas about the world that had been shaped by epic thought (B27; B32).

In Sextus Empiricus we find two quotes which credit Xenophanes with saying that "Homer and Hesiod have attributed to the gods all sorts of things which are matters of reproach and censure among men (παρ' ἀνθρώποισιν ὀνείδεα καὶ ψόγος ἐστίν): theft, adultery, and mutual deceit" (B11 = *AM.* 9.193) and – repeating the last part of the fragment verbatim – that Homer and Hesiod "sang of numerous illicit divine deeds: theft, adultery, and mutual deceit" (B12 = Sext. Emp. *AM.* 1.289). While the two fragments do not tell us which particular passages of the epics Xenophanes might have envisaged, it is not hard to imagine which they may have been. For "theft (κλέπτειν)", commentators such as Heitsch and Marciano Gemelli point to Hesiod's tale of Prometheus' theft of fire from Zeus (*Theog*. 566-567; *Op*. 51) and Hermes' theft of the cattle of Apollo in the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes*.[118] Next, the "adultery (μοιχεύειν)" of Ares and Aphrodite (*Od*. 267-366) and Zeus' entire catalogue of adulteries (Il. 14.315-328) are some prominent examples for adultery in the Homeric epics. For "mutual deceit (ἀλλήλους ἀπατεύειν)", the *Iliad's* famous deception of Zeus by Hera (14.153-353; cf. 15.14) is probably the most prominent example. But one could additionally think of Zeus' deception by Prometheus at the sacrifice

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[116] Lesher, *Xenophanes*, 82. Cf. also the discussion on μεμαθήκασι *ibid.*
[117] Ibid.
[118] Heitsch, *Xenophanes*, 125; Gemelli Marciano, *Vorsokratiker*, 282.

at Mecone (*Theog*. 535-544).[119] Indeed, it was likely stories such as these that Xenophanes had in mind when he characterised them as "numerous illicit divine deeds (θεῶν ἀθεμίστια ἔργα)" (B12). Deeds (ἔργα) committed by the gods that were ἀθεμίστια, against θέμις, thus violating what was right, lawful, and fitting. While such deeds were even disapproved of among humankind (B11), they would even more so not befit the honour of the gods.[120] Thus, we can once more observe how the idea of fittingness has become a principle which can be applied to judge whether statements about the gods are valid and true.

Besides the amorality that the Homeric and Hesiodic epics ascribed to the gods, it was their anthropomorphic portrayal of the gods which had influenced the peoples' understanding of the gods' nature that Xenophanes took an issue with. In fragment B14 he states:

> "But (ἀλλ') mortals (οἱ βροτοὶ) suppose that gods are born (γεννᾶσθαι),
>
> wear their own (τὴν σφετέρην) clothes (ἐσθῆτα) and have a voice (φωνήν) and a body (δέμας)."
> (B14 = D12 (Loeb) = CLEM. Str. V 109)

When taken at face value, the fragment does itself obviously not critique anything and merely states some common beliefs people held about the gods, but the apocopic ἀλλ' at the beginning of the fragment indicates that the mentioned beliefs most likely stood in contrast to a positive statement in their original context which specified the real nature of the god or gods and which preceded fragment B14.[121] Indeed, Clement of Alexandria, who is the source of this fragment, had placed it right after fragment B23 which asserts the dissimilarity between god and humankind, excluding any and all anthropomorphic ideas from the nature of god. Hence, it is very probable that the view that the gods had their "own (τὴν σφετέρην) clothes (ἐσθῆτα) and have a voice (φωνήν) and a body (δέμας)" was critiqued by Xenophanes for its application of anthropomorphic features to the gods, which thereby "reduce[d] them to humankind", which was obviously not befitting for divine nature.[122]

However, two possible reasons for the god-unfittingness of the opinion that "gods are born (γεννᾶσθαι)" come into view. The obvious one is its anthropomorphic nature, but since Xenophanes was deeply versed in and influenced by the epic tradition, it is quite possible that he had discovered a further one: a logical contradiction among the epics' various characterisations of the gods. While the Greek gods were defined by Homer and Hesiod as "always being (αἰὲν ἐόντες)", Homer's epics also contained passages that spoke of the birth of the gods and Hesiod's *Theogony* was the most famous narration of

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[119] Gemelli Marciano, *Vorsokratiker*, 282.
[120] Dreyer, *Untersuchungen*, 21.
[121] Heitsch, *Xenophanes*, 128; Lesher, *Xenophanes*, 86.
[122] Lesher, *Xenophanes*, 89.

the gods' births.[123] Retaining both notions – assuming the gods as "always being" and having had a birth – contained an obvious logical contradiction, since the latter assumed a time when the "always being" gods were not.[124] Moreover, a birth of the gods would imply a notion of motion and thus change: a coming from non-existence into existence, a notion of "divine invariability".[125] Both views – a time of the gods' non-existence as well as their being subject to change – Xenophanes will have dismissed as unfitting for the nature of his perfect god who never 'became' but always 'was' – "always (αἰεὶ) remaining (μίμνει)" a "motionless (κινούμενος οὐδέν)" entity (B26). Such a reading is further supported by a comment in Aristotle who stated that "Xenophanes used to say that 'those who say that the gods are born are as impious (ἀσεβοῦσιν) as those who say that they die'; for it follows on both views that there is a time when the gods do not exist" (A12 = Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1399a).[126] Employing empirical observation, Xenophanes noted that the "Ethiopians say that their gods are snub-nosed and black; Thracians that theirs are blue-eyed and red-haired" (B16 = D13 (Loeb) = Clem. *Str*. VII 22). The straightforward observation that different people had different gods was obviously nothing new as is evident from the observations of the slightly later Herodotus.[127] However, the exposure and universalising of the fact that it was an anthropomorphic self-projection that underlaid every human conception of the gods was new.[128] Moreover, the mention of the Ethiopians and the Thracians reveals another likely influence of Homer. For Graziosi has pointed out that it was these two people that were visited by Zeus in the *Iliad*, hence "it made sense to ask what these distant people made of Zeus and whether he resembled them."[129] The result attested both to the anthropomorphic self-projection as well as the relativity inherent in any human understanding of the nature of the gods.

In order to further demonstrate the universal relativity inherent to any concept of the divine that had been reached by self-projection, Xenophanes assumed a hypothetical scenario of theriomorphic self-projection, in which horses – if they could draw like humans – "would draw figures of the gods as similar to horses, and the oxen as similar to oxen and they would make the bodies (δέμας) of the sort

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[123] See for references above. Xenophanes does not actually mention poets as the ones supposing these things but "mortals (οἱ βροτοὶ)", which may imply that he is concerned with "popular beliefs about the gods" (Ibid., 86.). Nevertheless, even these popular beliefs will have been heavily influenced by Homer and Hesiod (cf. B10). Heitsch, *Xenophanes*, 128. notes that Hesiod might well have been aware of this contradiction and nevertheless tried to express the eternity of the gods (cf. *Theogn*. 32.38).
[124] Heitsch, *Xenophanes*, 128. This reading is, moreover, supported by a remark in Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1399a (A12). On this see Lesher, *Xenophanes*, 87.
[125] Lesher, *Xenophanes*, 88.
[126] While Lesher concedes that the statement of Aristotle may well be considered as "entirely accurate", he remains sceptical towards accepting "the mere accusation of impiety as constituting a persuasive *argument* against the idea of divine births" (Ibid., 87, italics in original.) Here we have to disagree with Lesher. As will become obvious throughout this essay, the concept of piety/impiety and fittingness/unfittingness are closely linked: To be pious towards a god requires one to have a fitting view of his nature.
[127] Heitsch, *Xenophanes*, 131. Cf. Herodotus I.131; II.3.2.
[128] Ibid.
[129] Barbara Graziosi, *The Gods of Olympus: A History* (London: Profile Books, 2013).

which each of them had" (B15 = D14 (Loeb) = Clem. *Str*. V 110).[130] The implicit ridicule of this hypothetical scenario reinforced the rejection of any concept of the divine that comprised a characteristic common to its believer for it indicated that it had been reached via self-projection. So, while Xenophanes did not reject the notion of divinity as such, his exposure of the self-projected character of the epic gods meant that they did not exist but were mere illusions of their believers.[131] Thus, as we already analysed earlier, Xenophanes new notion of god's nature excluded any human self-projection, that is its anthropomorphism, and the complete dissimilarity between gods and humankind was stressed in his concept of god's nature.[132] In light of our investigation into Xenophanes' critique of the epic gods and his new account of the nature of god, we can thus conclude with Halfwassen's statement that "the consequence Xenophanes drew from his insight into the projective character of the mythical gods was not atheism but monotheism."[133]

We can imagine that Xenophanes presented his critique of the epics as well as his new concept of the nature of god at rhapsodic competitions or at *symposia*. And we have indeed a sympotic poem (B1) of Xenophanes. In this poem Xenophanes remarks that a speech given at a symposium should deal

> "neither with the battles of Titans nor Giants
>
> nor Centaurs, fictions of old (πλάσματα τῶν προτέρων),
>
> nor furious conflicts (ἢ στάσιας σφεδανάς) – for there is no use in these (τοῖσ' οὐδὲν χρηστὸν ἔνεστι)" (B1, 21-23).

The battles of Titans, Giants, and Centaurs which Xenophanes here dismisses as fictions of old (πλάσματα τῶν προτέρων) probably refer to Hesiod's stories about the wars between the Titans and the later Olympian gods, whereas the reference to "furious conflicts" could either be to the *theomachies* in Homer (cf. *Il*. 5; 20; 21) or as Lesher suggested, "the kind of civil strife recounted by Alcaeus in his *stasiōtika*."[134]

Xenophanes informs us that the reason for why these stories should not be told lies in the fact that "there is no use in these (τοῖσ' οὐδὲν χρηστὸν ἔνεστι)" (B1). As has been noted, the word χρηστόν "reveals Xenophanes' concern for what is 'useful,' that is, beneficial to the city or community at large."[135] Since these false stories were effectively "bad paradigms for moral education and civic training"[136], they could damage the common good of the city by subverting morality, a thought we shall encounter again in

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[130] Heitsch, *Xenophanes*, 133.
[131] Halfwassen, "Der Gott des Xenophanes," 283–84.
[132] Lesher, *Xenophanes*, 94.
[133] Halfwassen, "Der Gott des Xenophanes," 284.
[134] Lesher, *Xenophanes*, 54; Heitsch, *Xenophanes*, 97.
[135] Lesher, *Xenophanes*, 54. Cf. also Dreyer, *Untersuchungen*, 23–24.
[136] Lesher, *Xenophanes*, 53.

Plato. Accordingly, in contrast to these stories Xenophanes proposed that "men must (χρὴ) hymn the god (θεὸν ὑμνεῖν) with reverent words (εὐφήμοις μύθοις) and pure speech (καθαροῖσι λόγοις)" and concluded his poem with the statement that "it is good (ἀγαθόν) always to hold the gods in high regard" (B1). But how then should one conceive of the gods or rather god? It was in answering questions such as this one where Xenophanes saw a significant beneficence of philosophically inclined poets like him for the wider community in contrast to other esteemed figures such as athletes (B2).[137]

Similarly, the question of usefulness and beneficence to the wider community was also on the mind of Plato when he considered how the gods could and could not be described in his imagined state, an issue to which we shall turn in the next chapter.

Conclusion

In this section we have argued that the principle of fittingness already existed in Homer's epics as an element which guaranteed both order in the realm of the gods itself as well as the wider universe. It was, however, with Xenophanes that a fundamental change occurred since he developed both a radically new concept of the nature of god and employed the notion of fittingness as a hermeneutical tool to advance his concept against the Homeric portrayal of the gods. While we observed that in his thought Xenophanes was deeply influenced by the Homeric epics, he postulated a fundamentally new concept of the nature of god which radicalised and perfected certain elements of the Homeric gods. Yet, other elements were rejected. Chief among them was one of the key characteristics of the Homeric gods, namely their anthropomorphic depiction. Of course, Xenophanes was himself restricted in the formulation of his critique by the use of anthropomorphic terminology due to the constraints of a philosophical conceptual language at the time. Nevertheless, he shaped the notion of fittingness into an evaluative tool by elevating the notion of god itself into a normative concept. The principle of fittingness was no longer concerned with the fitting relation of one god to another as in the Homeric epics, but with the fittingness of a god qua being god, that is what should befit a god due to being a god. As a result, a "god" could fall short of being a god, if he violated the norm of what was considered to befit a god. This was, of course, the inevitable fate of the Homeric gods in Xenophanes' critique. As we shall argue in the next section, the notion of what was considered god-fitting became heavily influenced by Plato and fittingness was used in the Homeric and philosophical critique of differing concepts of the divine.

[137] Cf. "For our expertise is better than the strength of men and horses.
But this practice makes no sense nor is it right
To prefer strength to this good expertise." (B2.12-14)

Chapter 2: Plato - The Classical Age and Its Concern with God-Fittingness

Introduction

Another important landmark in the history of god-fittingness was reached with Plato for he introduced a new and ever-lasting conception of god. Plato was himself deeply steeped in the poetry of the past and present.[138] Indeed, he is said to have composed poetry himself. Yet, so the doxography tells the story, upon meeting his later teacher Socrates, Plato burnt all his poetry.[139] Nonetheless, poetry, and especially Homer, were to continue to play a major role in Plato's thought. At times, he quoted poetry in support of his philosophy. At again other times, he vehemently attacked poetry and portrayed this as an ancient struggle between philosophy and poetry.

It was Homer in particular who bore the brunt of Plato's dealings with poetry. This was, of course, not surprising, as Homer was after all hailed as the educator of the Greeks. As we had seen earlier, Homer not only helped to forge a Pan-Hellenic identity, but it was from him that all Greeks had learned (cf. DK 21 B10), as he featured in the education of children, the communal festivals, and was seen as an overall ingenious repertoire for all aspects of life.[140] Hence, while Plato could "praise many things in Homer" (*Rep*. 385a) and had great "respect for Homer" (391a; cf. 385a), his particular quarrel with Homer was particularly with the educational influence Homer's poetry exerted on the Greek mind and thus their views of the gods and morality (cf. *Euthyphro*, *Rep*. 376e-398b).[141] Consequently, Plato proposed, in the context of his ideal state, to reconfigure and censor poetry by "supervis[ing] the storytellers" (377b-c), prescribing two guidelines which they had to adhere to in their composition of poetry in order to ensure a fitting portrayal of the gods. Yet, these two τύποι περὶ θεολογίας were not only supposed to be observed by poetry but also by anyone within Plato's ideal state. These guidelines stated that god was good and unchangeable. From Plato onward these new axioms were considered the two chief characteristics of a god-fitting conception of god, a conception which was to revolutionize the Greek conception of the divine as well as influence all theological thinking ever since.[142]

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[138] Thomas A. Szlezák, *Platon: Meisterdenker der Antike* (München: C.H. Beck, 2021), 127.
[139] See DL 3.6.
[140] Szlezák, *Platon*, 127–28. Szlezák notes that "[d]ie Häufigkeit der Homerzitate ist allein durch das Faktum, daß in griechischen Schulen die Knaben das Lesen anhand des Homertextes lernten, nicht zu erklären. Homer ist, als der eigentliche Schöpfer und bleibende Inspirator der tragischen Dichtung, die seiner Konzeption von Erziehung ein Dorn im Auge ist, für Platon ein ständiger innerer Gesprächspartner." (*ibid*., p. 127).
[141] The English translations used for Plato are, unless otherwise indicated, the ones found in John M. Cooper, *Plato: Complete Works* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1997). The translation of the *Republic* is by G. M. A. Grube and rev. C. D. C. Reeve, "Republic," in *Plato: Complete Works* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1997), 971–1223. The translation of *Euthyphro* is that of G. M. A. Grube, "Euthyphro," in *Plato: Complete Works* (ed. John M. Cooper; Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1997), 1–16.
[142] See also the remark by Burkert: "Es gibt seit Platon keine Theologie, die nicht in seinem Schatten stünde. Für viele Jahrhunderte war Platonismus die Art schlechthin, in der über Gott gedacht und gesprochen wurde, im Abendland wie im islamischen Orient." (Burkert, *Griechische Religion*, 478.).

In this chapter, I will argue that the principle of god-fittingness played an important role in Plato's thought, in particular in his dealings with poetry. I will begin with a brief look at some of Plato's earliest dialogues, namely the *Euthyphro* and the *Ion*, demonstrating that the notion of fittingness played a role in Plato's earliest dealings with the poets and the religious populace. Secondly, this will be followed by an examination of Plato's struggle with poetry in his *Republic*, arguing that his new conception of what is considered fitting for god's nature is situated within an educational context and has severe ramifications for Plato's view of poetry. Thirdly, I will briefly explore how the concept of god-fittingness is utilized in Plato.

I. Plato's Early Concerns with Poetry

I.1 Euthyphro - The Dangerous Effects of Poetry

The second half of the 5th century was a period of turmoil and moral uncertainty in Athens.[143] The Peloponnesian war had come to an end and interactions with foreign cultures increased. It was in this age of uncertainty that Socrates had, in various conversations, challenged the traditional beliefs and ideas held dear by Athenians and was subsequently charged for misleading the youth (*Euth*. 2c; cf. 3a9) and indicted with ἀσέβεια – impiety (5c7, 12e3; cf. *Apol*. 35d1) – for allegedly introducing new gods and not believing in the traditional gods of old (3b2-3).[144] Already before his execution, Socrates' unique character had provoked ridicule and mockery, such as the one found in Aristophanes' *The Clouds*. To restore the public image of his teacher, Plato set out to depict Socrates as a truly pious man whose execution had been the greatest injustice and mistake committed by Athens.[145] Hence, in one of his earliest dialogues, the *Euthyphro*, Plato challenged both the old traditional – almost antiquated[146] – understanding of piety, embodied in the character of Euthyphro, as well as the supposedly more advanced piety of Socrates' persecutors.[147] It is in this context that we encounter Plato's disapproval of the picture which the myths convey about the gods.

"[W]hat kind of thing (ποῖόν τι) do you say that godliness (τὸ εὐσεβὲς) and ungodliness (τὸ ἀσεβές) are" (5c9; cf. 5c8-d5; 5d7) is the question Euthyphro, who is in the midst of persecuting his own father

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[143] Maximilian Forschner, *Platon: Euthyphron: Übersetzung und Kommentar* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013), 75, with note 155 and the references there.
[144] "he says that I am a maker of gods, and on the ground that I create new gods while not believing in the old gods, he has indicted me for their sake" (3b). "he knows how our young men are corrupted and who corrupts them. He is likely to be wise, and when he sees my ignorance corrupting his contemporaries" (2c). = Meletus.
[145] Forschner, *Euthyphron*, 38, with n. 21, and p. 53.
[146] See on this W. K. C. Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy: Vol. 4: Plato, the Man and His Dialogues, Earlier Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 110 who says of Euthyphro's conservative understanding of piety: "By the end of the fifth century there must have been few such fundamentalists left among thinking people".
[147] See on this Forschner, *Euthyphron*, 38–39, 75–77.

for (carelessly) causing a servant's death, is asked by Socrates, who has just been indicted of impiety. Answering with the example of a pious action, Euthyphro states that it is pious to "prosecute the wrongdoer, […] whether the wrongdoer is your father or your mother or anyone else; not to prosecute is impious" (5d8-e2). This answer is, notably, the very act Euthyphro is currently engaged in, indicating that Euthyphro wishes to have his persecution of his own father understood as a pious act.[148] In support of his claim of this persecution being a pious deed, Euthyphro presents the Hesiodic story of the conflict between Zeus and his father Cronos, asserting that the general populace believes that Zeus, "the best and most just of the gods (τῶν θεῶν ἄριστον καὶ δικαιότατον)" (5e6-6a1), to have bound and castrated his own father.[149] However, the fact that some people appear to be "angry" at him for persecuting his father irritates Euthyphro and is brushed aside by him with the remark that these people must simply "contradict themselves in what they say about the gods and about [him]" (6a5).[150] From these comments we can observe that Euthyphro, unlike the general populace, perceives the myths literally and as moral exemplars. And it is on this understanding of the myths that he rests his conviction of acting piously in the persecution of his father.

Markedly, Socrates replies to Euthyphro's comments that he takes issue with poetry conveying such stories as he "find[s] it hard to accept things like that being said about the gods, and it is likely to be the reason why" he is being indicted (6a). Surprised about Euthyphro's literal as well as morally prescriptive understanding of these stories, Socrates enquires whether Euthyphro "truly (ἀληθής)" (6c4) believes the stories of "war among the gods, and terrible enmities and battles, and other such things as are told by the poets (ὑπὸ τῶν ποιητῶν), and other sacred stories such as are embroidered by good writers and by representations of which the robe of the goddess is adorned when it is carried up to the Acropolis" (6b7-c3).[151] The truth of these stories Socrates inquires after is, as Forschner rightly notes, both a historical as well as moral truth.[152] Euthyphro affirms that he does and that he could tell Socrates "many other things about the gods" (6c6).

Thus, in the person of Euthyphro we encounter the embodiment of the conservative religious thinker who holds to the traditional beliefs which are based on a literal reading of poetry. Yet, those beliefs were already perceived as antiquated by the wider public at the time of the dialogue as is also evident from

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148 Note Ibid., 90, that it is not that Euthyphro "hielte einzig und allein das gerichtliche Verfolgen religiöser Vergehen für frommes Verhalten. Er möchte sein Verhalten als Fall einer frommen Handlungsweise verstanden wissen, die in einer Liste anderer frommer Handlungsweisen steht."

149 "the pious is to do what I am doing now, to prosecute the wrongdoer, be it about murder or temple robbery or anything else, whether the wrongdoer is your father or your mother or anyone else; not to prosecute is impious" (5d8).

150 As Forschner, *Euthyphron*, 96, notes: "Er [sc. Euthyphro; FG] unterstellt, dass auch die Menge sie [i.e. the stories about the gods; FG] noch (weitgehend) wörtlich versteht."

151 The goddess mentioned here is of course Athena, the patron-goddess of Athens, and her robe, the peplos.

152 Forschner, *Euthyphron*, 100: "Mit 'wahr (alēthēs)' dürfte zuallererst die Antwort auf die Frage gemeint sein, ob sie als historische Tatsachen zu nehmen sind. Doch der Ausdruck „wahr" umfasst hier auch und vor allem den Aspekt, den man „praktische Wahrheit" im Sinne sittlicher Rechtheit der Geschichten nennen mag".

Euthyphro's being laughed at for "speak[ing] of divine matters (περὶ τῶν θείων) in the assembly and foretell[ing] the future (προλέγων […] τὰ μέλλοντα) […] as if [he] were crazy (ὡς μαινομένου)" (3c1-2).[153] However, as we had noticed, it was not only the crowd that found Euthyphro's beliefs to be outdated but the same was assumed by Socrates. He, on the other hand, had been indicted with impiety for doing so. While the critique of traditional religious beliefs was not uncommon at the time, Socrates had taken a fall for his critique.[154] And it is this double-standard that Plato tried to highlight in his *Euthyphro*.

I.2 Ion – Negating Homer's Claim to Knowledge

Already in one of Plato's earliest dialogues, the *Ion*, we can discern the perennial issue of the relationship between philosophy and poetry which was to play a major and recurrent theme in Plato's thought. In the *Ion*, we are privy to a conversation between the rhapsode Ion and Socrates, in which the topic of both the rhapsode's as well as the poet's relationship to knowledge is discussed.

The dialogue begins with Socrates meeting the rhapsode Ion and voicing his envy of the rhapsodic profession. In particular, the fact that the rhapsodes did not merely have to recite poetry but also had to explain it, is envisaged by Socrates, who points out that in their role the rhapsodes especially get to deal with "Homer above all, who's the best poet and the most divine" and "have to learn his thought (τὴν τούτου διάνοιαν ἐκμανθάνειν), not just his verses (μὴ μόνον τὰ ἔπη)" (530c).[155] The task of rhapsodic interpretation is further stressed by Socrates, asserting that a good rhapsode (ἀγαθὸς ῥαψῳδός) would "understand what is meant by the poet (συνείη τὰ λεγόμενα ὑπὸ τοῦ ποιητοῦ)" (530c), for he "must come to present the poet's thought to his audience" (ἑρμηνέα δεῖ τοῦ ποιητοῦ τῆς διανοίας γίγνεσθαι τοῖς ἀκούουσι)" (530c).[156] Ion agrees with Socrates and mentions that it was this aspect of his "profession that took the most work (τοῦτο πλεῖστον ἔργον παρέσχεν τῆς τέχνης)" (530c). As a result, Ion claims that he now "speak[s] more beautifully (κάλλιστα) than anyone else about Homer; neither Metrodorus of Lampsacus nor Stesimbrotus of Thasos nor Glaucon nor anyone else past or present could offer as many beautiful thoughts (οὕτω πολλὰς καὶ καλὰς διανοίας) about Homer as" he could (530c-d). While the identity of Glaucon is uncertain[157], we know that Metrodorus of Lampsacus – a

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[153] "Whenever I speak of divine matters in the assembly and foretell the future, they laugh me down as if I were crazy" (3c1-2).
[154] The reason may be that with his critique of the stories conveyed by poetry, Socrates also challenged the fundamental core of Athens' religious and political cohesion, namely the very stories that formed the foundation of Athens' worship of her patron goddess Athena. Cf. Forschner, *Euthyphron*, 101–2. Forschner notes: "so stellt Sokrates doch mit seinem offenen skeptischen Vorbehalt und Zweifel gegen den historischen und sittlichen Gehalt der Geschichten die traditionalen Fundamente der städtischen Kultgemeinschaft in Frage bzw. setzt ihre bereits vorhandene latente Brüchigkeit ins helle Licht" (p. 102).
[155] For some helpful remarks on the rhapsodes and Homeridae see Guthrie, *Greek Philosophy 4*, 200–201; Penelope Murray, ed., *Plato on Poetry: Ion; Republic 376e-398b9; Republic 595-608b10* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 19–20, 96–98.
[156] τὸν γὰρ ῥαψῳδὸν ἑρμηνέα δεῖ τοῦ ποιητοῦ τῆς διανοίας γίγνεσθαι τοῖς ἀκούουσι
[157] See Murray, *Plato on Poetry*, 103.

pupil of Anaxagoras[158] – interpreted Homer allegorically (in a physical manner). In the case of Stesimbrotus of Thasos it cannot be assumed from his mention here together with Metrodorus that he also advanced an allegorical interpretation of Homer[159], yet there are some indications that he concerned himself with the "hyponoia" of the Homeric text.[160] Overall, by comparing himself to his predecessors, Ion establishes his exegetical superiority in Homeric poetry. However, Ion's claim that his explanation of poetry is restricted to Homer's poetry and this being due to the superior quality of Homer's poetry (531d), leads Socrates to argue that Ion would have to be an expert of poetry as a whole to make such a judgment. This then leads to a discussion about the skill and area of expertise (τέχνη) of the rhapsode as well as the nature of poetry.

In the subsequent discussion of the rhapsode's expertise, Socrates purports that the poet's writing as well as the rhapsode's interpretation of the poet's poetry both depend on divine inspiration, rather than rational skill. Socrates maintains that "none of the epic poets, if they're good, are masters of their subject; they are inspired, possessed, and that is how they utter beautiful poems" (533e).[161] Consequently, "the god himself is the one who speaks, and he gives voice through them [sc. poets] to us" (534d), thus making the poets "nothing but representatives of the gods" (534e). Turning to the rhapsodes, Socrates notes that since they "in turn present what the poets say" (535a), they are ultimately "representatives of representatives" (535a). Moreover, they too are possessed by the divine during their performance (535d) and equally have this effect on their audience (535d-e).[162] As Guthrie has pointed out, Plato's conception of divine inspiration is possibly a novel one since whilst in the past "[t]he poet receive[d] supernatural aid in his story, […] there is no question of possession, ecstasy or frenzy. The Muse is not *in* the poet".[163] This new understanding of the relationship between the muse and the poet therefore amounts to a full attack on the cultural and educational legitimacy of Homer, since it undermines the common understanding of Homer as the expert on all areas of life, as the educator of Greece.[164] By asserting the divine inspiration and possession of the poets as well as the rhapsodes, Socrates has demonstrated that their "success [had been] achieved without personal merit or understanding".[165]

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[158] On Anaxagoras' explanation of Homeric poetry see Rudolph Pfeiffer, *History of Classical Scholarship: From the Beginnings to the End of the Hellenistic Age* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), 35, n. 3.
[159] As correctly pointed out by Ibid., 35.
[160] Xenophon, *Symp*. 3.6. Yet, also this does not have to imply any allegorical interpretation. See Murray, *Plato on Poetry*, 103.
[161] "For a poet is an airy thing, winged and holy, and he is not able to make poetry until he becomes inspired and goes out of his mind and his intellect is no longer in him." (534b).
[162] Socrates uses the image of a magnet to describe this relation: muses – poets – rhapsodes – audience. This is further evidenced by Ion and the audience displaying emotions like crying.
"it's not mastering the subject, but a divine gift, that makes you a wonderful singer of Homer's praises." (536d)
[163] Guthrie, *Greek Philosophy 4*, 207. (italics his).
[164] Ibid., 208–9. See also our earlier remarks on the overall importance of Homer.
[165] Ibid., 210. Socrates' attack is directed against Homer as well as his propagators, such as rhapsodes like Ion. See Guthrie (209, n. 1).

Not too keen on this assessment, Ion declares that his interpretation of Homer is, however, of a rational nature. This claim to rational knowledge is examined and refuted by Socrates, arguing that there are several instances in Homer which can be better evaluated and explained by the area's respective experts rather than by a rhapsode such as Ion.[166] Dismissing these instances as "exceptions" (540a), Ion asserts his area of expertise as a rhapsode is to "know what is fitting for a man or a woman to say (ἃ πρέπει […] ἀνδρὶ εἰπεῖν καὶ ὁποῖα γυναικί] – or for a slave or a freeman, or for a follower or a leader" (540b).[167] This notion of fittingness, as Murray rightly notes, "shows some awareness that knowledge of poetry might be something other than knowledge about its factual content."[168] And indeed, the notion of fittingness mentioned here is the rhetorical and formal one that had been prominent with the Sophist Gorgias and will again attain further prominence with Aristotle.[169] Interestingly, both Ion's introduction of the term πρέπον as well as many further instances in Plato's work, demonstrate that Plato is notably aware of this use of πρέπον in regard to the form and style of poetic speech.[170] Hence, as Flashar observes, "with the term πρέπον Ion introduces the relevant, factually accurate point of view for the evaluation of poetry".[171] Yet, Socrates reconfigures the term from its traditional understanding, taking it instead to refer to the content of speech.[172] This reconfiguration further indicates that Plato is seemingly more interested in reflecting on the epistemological claim poetry makes in regard to its content rather than its formal style. Consequently, Socrates continues to question whether he would know what – content-wise – would be fitting for a cowherd, a yarn spinning woman or a general to say (540c-d). While Ion denies the former two, he ultimately claims to know what would be fitting for general to say (Γνοίην γοῦν ἂν ἔγωγε οἷα στρατηγὸν πρέπει εἰπεῖν – 540d), eventually going so far as to assert that there is no difference between rhapsodes and generals since there is "one profession for rhapsodes and generals (μίαν […] τέχνην εἶναι τὴν ῥαψῳδικὴν καὶ τὴν στρατηγικὴν)" (541a).[173] In the end, Socrates is able to expose the absurdity of Ion's claim and drive him to submit that as a rhapsode he should be thought of "as someone divine, and not as master of a profession" (542b). Thus, Socrates has critiqued the influence of Homeric poetry – both the poet as well as one of his means of influence, the rhapsodes – by rejecting its claim as educational reservoir.

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[166] Socrates asks Ion "on which of Homer's subjects do you speak well?" (536e).
Mentioned are the professions of a charioteer, a doctor, a fisherman, and a diviner (537a-539d).

[167] ἃ πρέπει, οἶμαι ἔγωγε, ἀνδρὶ εἰπεῖν καὶ ὁποῖα γυναικί, καὶ ὁποῖα δούλῳ καὶ ὁποῖα ἐλευθέρῳ, καὶ ὁποῖα ἀρχομένῳ καὶ ὁποῖα ἄρχοντι.

[168] Murray, *Plato on Poetry*, 130.

[169] Michael Erler, *Platon* (Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie. Die Philosophie der Antike 2/2; Basel: Schwabe Verlag, 2007), 149. Pohlenz had already noted that πρέπον was a term used in rhetoric prior to Plato, in particular by Gorgias. See Pohlenz, "*Tὸ πρέπον*," 54–55.

[170] In particular *Phaedrus* 268d should be noted (cf. Hellmut Flashar, *Der Dialog Ion als Zeugnis Platonischer Philosophie* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1958), 83; Pohlenz, "*Tὸ πρέπον*," 54; Erler, *Platon*, 151.

[171] Flashar, *Ion*, 82. Translation is mine.

[172] Ibid., 83. Flashar comments that "Sokrates deutet den πρέπον-Begriff in handgreiflicher Weise um, indem er ihn nicht auf den Stil und die Zusammenstellung, sondern auf den Inhalt der Rede bezogen sein läßt." (p. 83).

[173] Socrates asks μίαν λέγεις τέχνην εἶναι τὴν ῥαψῳδικὴν καὶ τὴν στρατηγικὴν ἢ δύο; to which Ion replies μία ἔμοιγε δοκεῖ. (541a).

II. Republic – Censorship, Guidelines, and Expulsion of the Poets[174]

It is, however, especially in Books II, III, and X of the *Republic* that we encounter Plato's criticism of poetry, notably that of Homer. After the surrender of the Sophist Thrasymachus to Socrates' inquiry (336b-354c), the theme of the *Republic*, the question of the nature of justice and whether it is a virtue, is taken up by Plato's brothers Glaucon and Adeimantos in Book II.[175] In the context of the ensuing discourse we encounter a critique of some commonly held perceptions of the gods. The discussion further reveals that many people are influenced in their understanding of both justice as well as of the gods by traditional poetry. Adeimantos, for instance, informs us that many people who "don't praise justice itself, [but] only the high reputations it leads to" (363a), for these entail various rewards, are further encouraged in their behaviour by the *do ut des*-principle propagated by poets such as Homer and Hesiod when they speak in their poetry of "the abundant good things […] the gods give to the pious" (363a; cf. 363a-d).[176] Indeed, Adeimantos acknowledges the influence poetry has on the general perception of the gods, noting that "we've learned all we know about them [sc. the gods; FG] from the laws and the poets who give their genealogies—nowhere else" (365e). This has led some people, Adeimantos tells us, to invoke the poets as witnesses to their conviction that "the gods can be persuaded by and influenced by sacrifices, gentle prayers, and offerings" (365e; cf. 364c-e).[177] The result of such belief is that these people assume that one could perfectly well profit from unjust actions and then "afterwards persuade the gods by prayer and escape without punishment" (366a). Consequently, Adeimantus contemplates what impact the constant exposure to views such as these, propagated by the poets, might "have on the souls of young people" (365a) and wearily notes that "[n]o one, whether in poetry or in private conversations, has adequately argued that injustice is the worst thing a soul can have in it and that justice is the greatest good" (366e). Thus he asks Socrates to carry out an investigation into the nature and effect of justice and injustice (367b-e).

Agreeing to this request, Socrates decides to first discuss justice on a greater scale, within the emergence of a city-state, before returning to justice in the individual (368d-369a).[178] During the course of the subsequent discussion of the composition of the ideal city-state, guardians are introduced for its protection (374c-e), whose character is required to be "gentle to their own people and harsh to the enemy" at the same time (375c).[179] To attain these two traits, a guardian needs to be "a lover of wisdom

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[174] For a brief overview of the Republic see Erler, *Platon*, 202–15.
[175] Before Socrates discusses Thrasymachus' understanding of justice, he discusses the proposals brought forth by Cephalus (328b-331d) and Polemarchus (331e-336a).
[176] Erler, *Platon*, 468.
[177] Adeimantos quotes Homer *Il*. IX, 497, 499-501 as an example at 364d-e.
[178] "let's first find out what sort of thing justice is in a city and afterwards look for it in the individual, observing the ways in which the smaller is similar to the larger" (368e-369a).
[179] Socrates compares their nature to that of a guard dog (373d-376c).

and learning from nature (φύσει φιλόσοφον καὶ φιλομαθῆ)" (376c).[180] This leads on to the major topic of the guardians' education; an area in which Socrates detects and criticises the detrimental influence of poetry (376c-412b).[181]

II.1 The Detrimental Impact of False Stories

Socrates proposes the traditional curriculum of "physical training (γυμναστική) for bodies and music and poetry (μουσική) for the soul" (376e5-6).[182] The latter two generally communicate stories (λόγοι), and Socrates distinguishes "two kinds of stories, one true and the other fictional (Λόγων δὲ διττὸν εἶδος, τὸ μὲν ἀληθές, ψεῦδος δ' ἕτερον)" (376e10) and suggests that the guardians are to "be educated in both, but first in fictional ones (πρότερον δ' ἐν τοῖς ψευδέσιν)" (377a1).[183] These fictional stories – now labelled μύθοι instead of λόγοι – "are fictional, on the whole, though they have some truth in them" and are intended to be conveyed to the guardians when they are growing up (377a3-5).[184] As will become clear in the course of the discussion, Socrates is envisioning that a myth, despite being fictional, "should be true in the deeper sense of not misrepresenting the divine or heroic character."[185] These types of myths are, however, completely different to the myths of the poets which are not only fictional but also completely untrue.[186]

Since during the early stage of growing up, the minds of children are utterly impressionable and hence "most malleable (πλάττεται) and tak[ing] on any pattern (τύπος) one wishes to impress on (ἐνσημήνασθαι)" them (377b1-2), Socrates is aware of the acute risk that some myths could instil "beliefs into their souls that are for the most part opposite to the ones" that they should hold as part of the education envisaged in his ideal city-state (377b4-8). Therefore, Socrates suggests to "supervise the storytellers (ἐπιστατητέον τοῖς μυθοποιοῖς)" and to "select their stories whenever they are fine or beautiful (καλὸν) and reject them when they aren't" (377c1-3). Murray rightly notes that "καλόν refers primarily to the suitability of the content of stories, rather than to their aesthetic qualities".[187] As a result,

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[180] My translation (Grube does not translate φύσει and switches the order). Besides "[p]hilosophy, spirit, speed, and strength" need to be part of the guardian's nature (376c).
[181] "What will their education be? (Τίς οὖν ἡ παιδεία;)" (376e).
[182] As Murray notes, μουσική covers the wider arts which includes poetry besides music, song, and dance (Murray, *Plato on Poetry*, 134.).
[183] Grube translates ψεῦδος as "false". This, however, leads in my view to avoidable misunderstandings since we usually understand "false" to mean "untrue". Plato, however, does not understand ψεῦδος to mean "untrue", but rather as "invented" or "fictional". Hence, I have modified Grube's translation from here on. See also the helpful remarks by Guthrie, *Greek Philosophy 4*, 457–59. Cf. Murray, *Plato on Poetry*, 135–36.
[184] "[…] πρῶτον τοῖς παιδίοις μύθους λέγομεν; τοῦτο δέ που ὡς τὸ ὅλον εἰπεῖν ψεῦδος, ἔνι δὲ καὶ ἀληθῆ." (377a3-5). The change from λόγοι to μύθοι is not indicated in Grube's translation ("Don't you understand that we first tell stories to children?").
[185] Guthrie, *Greek Philosophy 4*, 457.
[186] Cf. Murray, *Plato on Poetry*, 135, 138.
[187] Ibid., 136. Cf. Grube's translation which renders καλὸν twice – as "fine or beautiful" – leaving open the possibility for either interpretation.

many of the poets' stories "must be thrown out (ἐκβλητέον)" due to their unfittingness (377c5-6).[188] While Socrates' critique is directed against poetry more generally, he only mentions Homer and Hesiod by name (377d3-5), who, besides other unnamed poets, "composed fictional stories (μύθους […] ψευδεῖς)" (377d4). The following inquiry into the nature of the stories' fictionality reveals that the issue Socrates takes with these μύθοι is not that they are fictional but that their "fiction isn't well told (μὴ καλῶς ψεύδηται)" (377d). Hence, these kinds of μύθοι represent a further type of μύθοι: While all μύθοι are fictional in that they have been invented, some of them also contain no truth.[189] And it is not so much the general fictionality of the myths that Plato is concerned with here, but with their truthfulness, particularly in relation to their "value as a means of conveying ethical or religious truths."[190]

This aspect is, just as by the adjective καλὸν in 377c1, indicated by the use of the adverb καλῶς: the fiction is "not well told (μὴ καλῶς ψεύδηται)", that is, the fiction is not executed in a way which would befit its object. To illustrate his point, Socrates compares a story which "gives a bad image of what the gods and heroes are like (οἷοί εἰσιν)" to "the way a painter does whose picture is not at all like (μηδὲν ἐοικότα) the things he's trying to paint" (377e).[191] Thus, Socrates' concern is whether a representation of an object truly befits the object or not. As Jaeger, followed by Dreyer, had rightly noted, the phrase used to express that something, such as a story or painting, "is not at all like (μηδὲν ἐοικότα)" the object it aims to represent, denotes both dissimilarity as well as unfittingness.[192] Indeed, Dreyer further observed that for Plato representing an object in a way dissimilar to its nature is analogous to representing it in a way not befitting its nature, noting the correspondence between the phrases "represent […] in so unlikely a fashion (οὕτως ἀνομοίως μιμήσασθαι)" (388c) and "suitably imitate (πρεπόντως […] μιμήσαιτο)" (399a).[193] Thus, certain stories and deeds do not befit the gods as they do not correctly describe the nature of the divine. Furthermore, we can also discover that Socrates claims to know what the divine is really like.[194]

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188 Additionally, besides controlling the stories of the "mythopoets" by selection, the direct means of their communication, the children's mothers and nurses, also needs to be overseen (377c3-5).

189 It is important to differentiate two types of false stories here. There are μύθοι which, besides being fictional, contain some truth and which are *distinct* from the poets' myths which Socrates criticises from 377d5, which are, besides being fictional, also untrue (See Murray, *Plato on Poetry*, 135. Cf. Michael Bordt, *Platons Theologie* (Symposium 126; Freiburg: Karl Alber, 2006), 44.).

190 Murray, *Plato on Poetry*, 135, cf. pp. 135-136, 139.

191 Ὅταν εἰκάζῃ τις κακῶς τῷ λόγῳ, περὶ θεῶν τε καὶ ἡρώων οἷοί εἰσιν, ὥσπερ γραφεὺς μηδὲν ἐοικότα γράφων οἷς ἂν ὅμοια βουληθῇ γράψαι. (377e1-3).

192 Dreyer, *Untersuchungen*, 29. Dreyer follows the observation by Jaeger made in Werner Jaeger, *Paideia: The Ideals of Greek Culture Vol. 2: In Search of the Divine Centre* (trans. Gilbert Highet; Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1947), 402–3, n. 71.

193 Dreyer, *Untersuchungen*, 29. Dreyer draws attention to the correspondence between οὕτως ἀνομοίως μιμήσασθαι at 388 c3 and πρεπόντως ἂν μιμήσαιτο at 399a7 in support of his observation that "die Eigenschaft des "Nichtähnlichsein" und die der „Unziemlichkeit" als Prädikate für eine Darstellungsweise das gleiche besagen" (*ibid.*). On the absence of the term μιμεῖσθαι in this section see the remarks by Murray, *Plato on Poetry*, 138.

194 Cf. Murray, *Plato on Poetry*, 142.

Among these untrue stories, Socrates lists narratives from Hesiod's *Theogony*, such as the ones where "Hesiod [is] telling us about how Uranus behaved, how Cronus punished him for it, and how he was in turn punished by his own son" (378a), as well as from Homer's *Iliad*, where we hear about Hera "being chained by her son, […] Hephaestus being hurled from heaven by his father when he tried to help his mother, who was being beaten, […] [and] about the battle of the gods" (378d).[195] The reason why Socrates labels these stories "dangerous stuff"[196] (λόγοι χαλεποί) (378a) lies in the fact that they wrongly portray the nature of the gods as well as that "all the[se] various stories of the gods hating their families or friends" would ultimately subvert the cohesion of the state since people would have been brought up accustomed to thinking of this type of behaviour as legitimate and worthy of imitation, leading them to commit the same acts as the gods, thinking of themselves as "only doing the same as the first and greatest of the gods" (378b).[197] That some people did indeed justify their immoral behaviour with recourse to poetic depictions of the gods' behaviour can, as we had observed earlier, be seen in Plato's *Euthyphro*, where Euthyphro justified the persecution of his own father with reference to the Hesiodic story of the conflict between Chronos and Zeus.[198] Adeimantus agrees that such "stories are not fit (ἐπιτήδεια) to be told" (378b6-7) and Socrates consequently decrees that his ideal state "mustn't allow *any* stories about gods warring, fighting, or plotting against one another, for they aren't true (οὐδὲ γὰρ ἀληθῆ)" (378c) and could "produce in the youth a strong inclination to do bad things" (392a).[199] Thus, we can conclude that Socrates' critique of poetry is, at this point, governed by two aspects: the detrimental influence of poetry on the education of young people and therefore on the social cohesion of the state as well as the untruth of the stories.[200]

However, it is important to note that Socrates was clearly aware of the fact that some people – one may think of Theagenes of Rhegium – read these stories allegorically. Yet, he does not allow them in his ideal state, "whether they ha[d] been composed with a deeper meaning to them, or not (οὔτ' ἐν ὑπονοίαις πεποιημένας οὔτε ἄνευ ὑπονοιῶν)"[201] (378d6), since young people are not able to "distinguish what is allegorical from what isn't (τε ὑπόνοια καὶ ὃ μή) (378d7)", with the ensuing result that many false convictions derived from these stories would have been irreversibly engrained in them (378e). Rather, Socrates emphasises that "the first stories they hear [have to be] […] the finest tales possible to encourage their sense of virtue (ἃ πρῶτα ἀκούουσιν ὅτι κάλλιστα μεμυθολογημένα πρὸς ἀρετὴν

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[195] See Hesiod, *Theogony* 154–210, 453–506, Homer, *Iliad* 20.1-74, 21.358-513.
[196] This is the Loeb translation: Paul Shorey, trans., *Plato: The Republic: Books I-V* (LCL 237; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1937).
[197] cf. *Euthyp*. 5e-6a.
[198] For further examples from Aeschylus, Euripides, and Aristophanes see Murray, *Plato on Poetry*, 139.
[199] Cf. "if he inflicts every kind of punishment on an unjust father, he's only doing the same as the first and greatest of the gods." (378b) and cf. *Euthyp*. 5e-6a.
[200] Cf. Bordt, *Platons Theologie*, 45.
[201] This is the Loeb translation.

ἀκούειν)" (378e).[202] To ensure that this is the case, Socrates sets up two guidelines for theology – οἱ τύποι περὶ θεολογίας – which the poets will have to conform to when writing stories about the gods (379a).[203] Indeed, Socrates does not compose any poetic content since he acknowledges that neither he nor Adeimantus are in fact poets, but instead he prescribes two "patterns" which delineate two essential features of what Plato thinks the nature of god to be and thereby determines which assumptions about god would be appropriate and which would not. In response to Adeimantus' inquiry about these guidelines, Socrates replies that they show what god is really like (οἷος τυγχάνει ὁ θεὸς ὤν, ἀεὶ δήπου ἀποδοτέον) (379a7-8), "[w]hether in epic, lyric, or tragedy" (379a8-9)".[204] This shows that god's being is independent from the way he is depicted in poetry.[205] But what *is* a god like? The answer to this is provided in the form of two τύποι περὶ θεολογίας which we shall now consider.

II.2 The First Typos – The Goodness of God[206]

The first typos asserted by Socrates is that god really is good (ἀγαθὸς ὅ γε θεὸς τῷ ὄντι) (379b1) and is unquestioningly accepted by Adeimantus.[207] Indeed, the typos is simply axiomatically stated and we are not provided with an elaborate argument for why this should be the case.[208] This is even more striking when we consider that by having Socrates introduce the axiom that god is good, Plato presents a completely new characteristic of god which in this way had not been previously asserted in the Greek tradition.[209] In a subsequent syllogism additional statements are deducted from god's goodness (379b3-

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[202] This is the Loeb translation. Cf. also: "guardians of our city [need] to think that it's shameful to be easily provoked into hating one another" (378c).

[203] This is the first occurrence of the word θεολογία in the Greek language. For its discussion see Irmgard Männlein-Robert, "Umrisse des Göttlichen: Zur Typologie des idealen Gottes in Platons Politeia II," in *Platon und das Göttliche* (ed. Dietmar Koch, Irmgard Männlein-Robert, and Niels Weidtmann; Tübinger phänomenologische Bibliothek Bd. 1; Tübingen: Attempto-Verlag, 2010), 118–24; Bordt, *Platons Theologie*, 43–54. That the τύποι are treated as laws can be seen in Adeimantus' reply: "I like your law (τούτου τοῦ νόμου) […]. This, then, is one of the laws or patterns concerning the gods (εἷς ἂν εἴη τῶν περὶ θεοὺς νόμων τε καὶ τύπων) to which speakers and poets must conform" (380c). See also 383c7.

[204] "Whether in epic, lyric, or tragedy, a god must always be represented as he is" (379a7-9).

[205] Männlein-Robert, "Umrisse des Göttlichen," 115: "Der Gott ist ein seiender, er ist unabhängig von Präsentations- oder Darstellungsformen.".

[206] On the first typos see especially Bordt, *Platons Theologie*, 95–135; Männlein-Robert, "Umrisse des Göttlichen," 125–28.

[207] Cf. the Loeb translation: "A god is, of course, good in reality and must be spoken of as such? (Οὐκοῦν ἀγαθὸς ὅ γε θεὸς τῷ ὄντι τε καὶ λεκτέον οὕτω;)" (379b).

[208] For possible reasons see Bordt, *Platons Theologie*, 125–27. Murray, *Plato on Poetry*, 142 speaks of "self-evident truth." And indeed, Proclus' commentary calls it an axiomatic statement (see Dreyer, *Untersuchungen*, 30, n. 95.).

[209] That god's goodness is a completely new proposition – in both poetry as well as philosophy – is argued for by Bordt, *Platons Theologie*, 96–120. Bordt concludes, especially against Solmsen, that "kein Autor vor Platon das Gutsein als Eigenschaft Gottes oder der Götter behauptet hat" (Bordt, p. 120). To avoid the mistake of assuming otherwise, it is, according to Bordt, important to differentiate between the exclusion of negative attributes from the gods, the justice of the gods, and – what Bordt labels as "das Spezifikum Platonischer Theologie" – the goodness of god (*ibid.*). Bordt also dismisses Vlastos' view which understands this typos not as Platonic but as specific to Socrates' moral theology (see Bordt, pp. 119-120, 126, 135).

Cf. also Männlein-Robert's remarks, who, while acknowledging the originality of this typos in regard to philosophy – yet mentioning the possibility that Plato's near-contemporary Euclid of Megara may have identified Being with the Good and labelled it god, seems to disagree in regard to poetry, referencing the lyric poet

c7) – such as god being neither "harmful (βλαβερός)", nor "harming" (βλάπτειν), nor doing anything "bad (κακός)", nor being the "cause of anything bad (κακοῦ αἴτιον)", but being "beneficial (ὠφέλιμος)" (379b11)[210] – at last culminating in the conclusion that "[t]he good isn't the cause of all things, then, but only of good ones; it isn't the cause of bad ones" (379b15-16).[211] The careful reader of the syllogism will have noted that "the Good (τὸ ἀγαθόν)" has been introduced (at 379b11 and b15) and is, most strikingly, after being individualised (379b15)[212], substituted by the term god (379c2-7) in order to argue that god is the cause of all good things.[213] This sudden shift is usually understood as a reference to Plato's later discussion of "the Good" in book VI.[214] The outcome of the syllogism is that "[t]herefore, since the god is good (ὁ θεός, ἐπειδὴ ἀγαθός), he is not—as most people claim—the cause of everything that happens to human beings but of only a few things […]. He alone is responsible for the good things (καὶ τῶν μὲν ἀγαθῶν οὐδένα ἄλλον αἰτιατέον)" (379c2-6).[215] Thus, from the typos that god is good, Socrates has further demonstrated that god is solely the cause of good things,[216] amounting to "a radical departure from the traditional belief, often expressed in poetry, that the gods are responsible for both good and evil".[217]

The ramification for poetry in Socrates' state lies in a strict adherence to this new notion of god. And so, after citing conflicting examples from the poetry of Homer and Aeschylus, Socrates declares that the poets would either have to denounce such stories as "not the work of a god" (380a; cf. 379d-380a) or "look for the kind of account" which concurs with the state's new objective and affirms "that the actions of the gods are good and just, and that those they punish are benefited thereby (ὡς ὁ μὲν θεὸς δίκαιά τε καὶ ἀγαθὰ ἠργάζετο, οἱ δὲ ὠνίναντο κολαζόμενοι)" (380a-b).[218]

Bacchylides (Männlein-Robert, "Umrisse des Göttlichen," 126, with n. 43 and p. 127, n. 44.). However, Bacchylides only speaks of Zeus not being the cause of sorrows and does not label god as good.

[210] Cf. Bordt, *Platons Theologie*, 128–30, for the invalidity of some of these deductions.

[211] "Οὐκ ἄρα πάντων γε αἴτιον τὸ ἀγαθόν, ἀλλὰ τῶν μὲν εὖ ἐχόντων αἴτιον, τῶν δὲ κακῶν ἀναίτιον." (379b15-16). For a good assessment of the syllogism see Ibid., 127–30.

[212] See Bordt who argues that the first appearance of "the Good (τὸ ἀγαθόν)" at 379b11 has a general sense, whereas its second occurrence at 379b15 denotes an "individual entity" (Ibid., 129.). Cf. Männlein-Robert, "Umrisse des Göttlichen," 125.

[213] See on this Bordt, *Platons Theologie*, 129–30, who speaks of "Synonymität" between the terms "the Good" and "god."

Cf. Männlein-Robert, "Umrisse des Göttlichen," 125, 128, who labels the good god as "Analogon" to the idea of the Good (p. 125) and sees in the description of the god as good a "semantische Analogie" to the idea of the Good (p. 128).

[214] Männlein-Robert, "Umrisse des Göttlichen," 126–28. Bordt, *Platons Theologie*, 134–35.

[215] Modified.

[216] Bordt, *Platons Theologie*, 95, n. 148. This is in opposition to the traditional view that the gods cause good as well as bad things and hence one "must find some other cause for the bad ones, not a god (τῶν δὲ κακῶν ἄλλ' ἄττα δεῖ ζητεῖν τὰ αἴτια, ἀλλ' οὐ τὸν θεόν)" (379c6-7). Männlein-Robert rightly notes that a dualism of good and evil is indicated by the mentioning of another cause for evil. (p. 126)

Cf. "ἐπεδείξαμεν γάρ που ὅτι ἐκ θεῶν κακὰ γίγνεσθαι ἀδύνατον." (391e1-2)

[217] Murray, *Plato on Poetry*, 143. See for the traditional view of the gods as causing good as well as bad things also Bordt, *Platons Theologie*, 131–32, with note 291.

[218] See also: "Then we won't accept from anyone the foolish mistake Homer makes about the gods" (379d) and "we must require him [i.e. the poet] to say that these things are not the work of a god" (380a).

Moreover, not only are the poets forbidden from voicing the opposite notion in the ideal city – describing the gods as the cause of bad things – "if it's [sc. the city] to be well governed (εὐνομήσεσθαι)", but also is the prohibition extended from the realm of the education of young people to include the general public: everyone is barred from either saying or hearing anything contrary to the new notion of god, "whether young or old (μήτε νεώτερον μήτε πρεσβύτερον), whether in verse or prose (μήτ' ἐν μέτρῳ μήτε ἄνευ μέτρου μυθολογοῦντα)" (380b7-c2).[219] At the end of the discussion of the first typos, Plato notes the three criteria he uses to evaluate the fittingness of myths: a myth needs to be "pious (ὅσιος)", "advantageous (σύμφορος)", and "consistent (σύμφωνος)" (380c).[220] The first is achieved by portraying god the way he is, that is according to the guidelines Plato introduces here, the second by the myths being useful in the education of the citizens, and the third by ensuring that any statements made cohere with each other and Plato's guidelines.[221]

II.3 The Second Typos – The Unchangeability of God[222]

The second τύπος asserts that god does not change, but "is simple and true in word and deed (ὁ θεὸς ἁπλοῦν καὶ ἀληθὲς ἔν τε ἔργῳ καὶ λόγῳ)" (382e8-9; cf. 382e8-383a6).[223]

Socrates arrives at this conclusion by presenting three options to Adeimantus on how one could think about god in relation to change, dismissing the first two, settling on the last one. The first option is that one could assume god to either be "a sorcerer (γόητα), able to appear (φαντάζεσθαι) in different forms (ἐν ἄλλαις ἰδέαις) at different times, sometimes changing (ἀλλάττοντα) himself from his own form (εἶδος) into many shapes (μορφάς)" or as, secondly, "sometimes deceiving (ἀπατῶντα) us by making us think (δοκεῖν) that he has done it [sc. changed]", despite not having done so (380d1-5). Or, finally, one could assume that god is "simple (ἁπλοῦν) and least of all likely to step out of his own form (πάντων ἥκιστα τῆς ἑαυτοῦ ἰδέας ἐκβαίνειν)" (380d5-6).

As we shall see, the subsequent argument reveals what at first appears to be a discussion about the gods' superficial altering of their shape, their metamorphosis, well-known to the Greeks from their poetry, to be a deeper argument about the unchangeability of the gods' nature.

Arguing against the first option – in its more differentiated form – that god could either change himself or be changed by external factors, Socrates begins by introducing the rule that "the best things (τὰ

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[219] Männlein-Robert, "Umrisse des Göttlichen," 125.
[220] Dreyer, *Untersuchungen*, 30. *Rep.* 380c: "These stories are not pious (οὔτε ὅσια), not advantageous (οὔτε σύμφορα) to us, and not consistent (οὔτε σύμφωνα) with one another".
[221] Ibid.
[222] On the second typos see especially Bordt, *Platons Theologie*, 135–43; Männlein-Robert, "Umrisse des Göttlichen," 129–31.
[223] "A god, then, is simple and true in word and deed. He doesn't change himself or deceive others by images, words, or signs, whether in visions or in dreams. That's what I thought as soon as I heard you say it. You agree, then, that this is our second pattern for speaking or composing poems about the gods: They are not sorcerers who change" (382e8-383a6).

ἄριστα ἔχοντα) are least liable to alteration (ἀλλοιοῦταί) or change (κινεῖται)" (380e).[224] From this assertion, Socrates reasons that since "god and what belongs to him are in every way in the best position (ἄριστα ἔχει)" (381b), he cannot be changed or moved.[225]

Moreover, the possibility that god would change himself is ruled out on the basis that the best – qua being the best – could change only for the worse and that no one, "whether god or human, would deliberately make himself worse in any way" (381c3-5).[226] Consequently, Socrates reasons that if god were to change, it "would have to be (Ἀνάγκη) into something worse (ἐπὶ τὸ χεῖρον), if he's changed (ἀλλοιοῦται) at all, for surely we won't say that a God is deficient in either beauty (κάλλους) or virtue (ἀρετῆς)." (381b12-c1). The mention of these essential features – beauty and virtue – indicates that the type of change envisaged here by Socrates is therefore not merely a superficial change of the god's appearance – a metamorphosis – but a more substantial change, a change of being.[227] Thus, it is impossible for god to want to change himself (Ἀδύνατον […] θεῷ ἐθέλειν αὑτὸν ἀλλοιοῦν)[228], since due to the gods being "the most beautiful (κάλλιστος) and best possible (ἄριστος), it seems that each [of them; FG] (ἕκαστος αὐτῶν) always and unconditionally retains his own shape (μορφῇ)" (381c8-9).[229] Consequently, stories which speak of the "gods wandering at night in the shapes (παντοδαποῖς) of strangers" (381e) only "blaspheme the gods (εἰς θεοὺς βλασφημῶσιν)" (381e) and will not be allowed in the ideal city.

Having successfully argued that gods does not change, Socrates argues in a second step, that the gods also do not "make us believe that they appear in all sorts of ways (παντοδαποὺς φαίνεσθαι)" (381e), since this type of "falsehood" would in no way be "useful to a god" (382d).[230] Thus, the poets are the ones who "deceive us with their tales of the gods changing shape, not god himself."[231] Ultimately, Socrates arrives at the conclusion that "god, then, is simple (ἁπλοῦν) and true (ἀληθὲς) in word and

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[224] Hence, "[w]hatever is in good condition (τὸ καλῶς ἔχον), then, whether by nature (φύσει) or craft (τέχνῃ) or both, admits least of being changed (μεταβολὴν) by anything else" (381b).
[225] To what extent this argument is derived from the first typos, see Dreyer, *Untersuchungen*, 31.
[226] The Greek has the plural "gods or humans". Probably envisaging the Homeric gods. See on this below.
[227] Männlein-Robert, "Umrisse des Göttlichen," 130. See also Bordt, *Platons Theologie*, 142. who notes that the usage of broad terms to describe change indicates that any type of change – not just superficial change – is envisaged.
[228] The Grube translation here already translates the plural that is found in the latter part of the sentence. This obscures the change from singular to plural.
[229] Ἀδύνατον ἄρα, ἔφην, καὶ θεῷ ἐθέλειν αὑτὸν ἀλλοιοῦν, ἀλλ᾽ ὡς ἔοικε, κάλλιστος καὶ ἄριστος ὢν εἰς τὸ δυνατὸν ἕκαστος αὐτῶν μένει ἀεὶ ἁπλῶς ἐν τῇ αὑτοῦ μορφῇ.
Socrates' shift to the plural "gods" both here at 381c9 (αὐτῶν) as well as just before at 381c5 (θεῶν) is probably imagining the gods of poetry, thereby stressing the difference between their traditional perception and the new notion he just argued for (see Murray, *Plato on Poetry*, 148.)
[230] Plato actually distinguishes two types of falsehood here which, with Bordt, we can label "falsehood in reality" and "falsehood in word". The former entails mankind being deceived unintentionally due to the gods' unconscious self-deception, whereas the latter is an intentional lie by the gods. See on this Bordt, *Platons Theologie*, 137–39.
[231] Murray, *Plato on Poetry*, 153. Socrates' statement that "there is nothing of the false poet in a god"(382d) is possibly "a play on the word ἔνθεος: so far from god (inspiration) being in the poet, there is no poet in god." (*ibid*.).

deed. He doesn't change himself or deceive others by images (φαντασίας), words (λόγους), or signs (σημείων), whether in visions (ὕπαρ) or dreams (ὄναρ)" (382e) and declares as "our second pattern (δεύτερον τύπον) for speaking or composing poems about the gods (ἐν ᾧ δεῖ περὶ θεῶν καὶ λέγειν καὶ ποιεῖν): They are not sorcerers (γόητας) who change (μεταβάλλειν) themselves, nor do they mislead us by falsehoods in words or deeds" (383a). As before, Socrates ends his discussion by mentioning a poetic example that violates this guideline. Here he mentions the Homeric episode of Zeus sending a deceptive dream to Agamemnon in *Iliad* 2.1-34 and concludes that any poetry making similar statements cannot "be used in the education of the young, so that our guardians will be god-fearing and godlike as human beings can be (θεοσεβεῖς τε καὶ θεῖοι γίγνεσθαι, καθ' ὅσον ἀνθρώπῳ ἐπὶ πλεῖστον οἷόν τε)" (383c).[232]

II.4 The Content and Form of Fitting and Unfitting Stories

Having established the guidelines for poetry in his city-state, Socrates peruses Homer's epics to list various instances that do not conform to the newly established τύποι περὶ θεολογίας and which therefore the children "should not hear about the gods from childhood on, if they are to honor the gods and their parents and not take their friendship with one another lightly" (386a1-4). He thus suggests that "we must supervise such stories and those who tell them" (386b8-9) and ask them not to tell any stories that would be bad paradigms for children to imitate in their education, resulting in the loss of social cohesion and subversion of the city-state. Among these, Socrates mentions stories that could inspire fear of death for they would not prove "beneficial to future warriors" (386c1). Hence, various passages that instil fear of Hades as well as "lamentations and pitiful speeches of famous men" on account of death (387d1-2) or even "represent[ing] the greatest of the gods as behaving in so unlikely a fashion" (388c1-2) – that is Zeus lamenting the imminent deaths of Hector and Sarpedon (388c) – must all be removed (386a-338e). Also, stories that tell of the gods' laughter will have to be eliminated as laughter could imply change (388e-389b), "for whenever anyone indulges in violent laughter, a violent change of mood is likely to follow" (388e5-7).[233] Lastly, since the fostering of moderation – σωφροσύνη – in young people is another major educational goal (389d)[234], various passages in the poets – first and foremost in Homer – that provide examples of immoral behaviour need to be censored (389d-391e). These include instances that speak of insubordination against superiors, gods seducing each other (389b-d), love of money (390d), disobedience towards the gods, and various other deeds said by the poets to have been committed by gods as well as heroes such as Achilles (391a-c). Since such stories are not "suitable (ἐπιτήδεια) for young people to hear [...] with a view to making them moderate (σωφροσύνην)" (390a4)

[232] This declaration that the guardians should become as "god-fearing and godlike as human beings can be" recalls the notion of ὁμοίωσις θεῷ, most prominently found in the *Theaetetus* 176a-c.
[233] 388e-389a: "Then, if someone represents worthwhile people as overcome by laughter, we won't approve, and we'll approve even less if they represent gods that way." Laughter is associated with the lowest part of the soul, see Murray, *Plato on Poetry*, 162.
[234] Listed examples of moderation include "to obey the rulers and to rule the pleasures of drink, sex, and food" (389d-e). The virtue of moderation is more thoroughly discussed in Book IV of the *Republic*.

and are “harmful to people who hear them, for everyone will be ready to excuse himself when he’s bad, if he is persuaded that similar things both are being done and have been done in the past” by the gods (391e4-5). Indeed, such stories “are both impious and untrue (οὔθ’ ὅσια ταῦτα οὔτε ἀληθῆ)” (391e1), since, as Socrates had demonstrated earlier, “it is impossible for the gods to produce bad things (ὅτι ἐκ θεῶν κακὰ γίγνεσθαι ἀδύνατον)” (391e1-2). Thus, an end needs to be put to “such stories, lest they produce in the youth a strong inclination to do bad things” (391e11-392a1).

After this discussion of the content of poetry, Socrates next discusses the form (ὡς λεκτέον, 392c8) poetry can take, its style (392c6-398b8). Distinguishing between διήγησις (narrative) and μίμησις (imitation)[235] as possible forms of poetry, Socrates perceives several issues with the mimetic form. The central issue of contention lies in the fact that in the practice of mimesis one strongly identifies emotionally with the person imitated (393c5-6)[236], with the ensuing effect “that imitations (αἱ μιμήσεις) practiced from youth become part of nature (φύσιν) and settle into habits (ἔθη) of gesture (σῶμα), voice (φωνὰς), and thought (διάνοιαν)” (395d1-3). Hence, Murray accurately observes that “Μίμησις thus has ethical implications right from the start of the discussion, even though it is introduced at 392d5 in the context of narrative style.”[237] Again, in order to comprehend the matter in question, we need to recall the use and ubiquity of poetry in Greek education and culture and the fact that recital of poetry – whether as a schoolboy or rhapsode – involved imitation in the performing of poetry.[238] Consequently, Socrates is concerned that if imitation is to happen that the guardians “must imitate (μιμεῖσθαι) from childhood what is appropriate for them (τὰ τούτοις προσήκοντα), namely, people who are courageous, self-controlled (σώφρονας), pious (ὁσίους), and free, and their actions” and nothing inappropriate such as “shameful actions (τῶν αἰσχρῶν), lest from enjoying the imitation, they come to enjoy the reality” of imitating these negative things (395c3-d1). Thus, any visiting poet who does not conform to these guidelines is, while still accorded respect[239], sent away from the city (398a), since “for our own good (ὠφελίας ἕνεκα)” only “a more austere and less pleasure-giving poet and storyteller, one who would imitate the speech of what is fitting (τὴν τοῦ ἐπιεικοῦς λέξιν) and who would tell his stories in accordance with the patterns (ἐν ἐκείνοις τοῖς τύποις) we laid down when we first undertook the education (παιδεύειν) of our soldiers” can be allowed to remain in the city (398a1-b4).[240]

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[235] They can be mixed as in Homeric epic or purely mimetic as in comedy and tragedy or purely narrative as in dithyrambs (394b9-c5). Cf. Murray, *Plato on Poetry*, 172.
[236] “to make oneself like (ὁμοιοῦν ἑαυτὸν) someone else in voice or appearance is to imitate (μιμεῖσθαί) the person one makes oneself like (ἐκεῖνον ᾧ ἄν τις ὁμοιοῖ)” (393c5-6).
[237] Murray, *Plato on Poetry*, 170.
[238] See Ibid., 173, 176; Guthrie, *Greek Philosophy 4*, 453. As we had noted in our above discussion of the Euthyphro the performance of poetry has equally an effect on the audience (cf. Ion 535d8-e3).
[239] Guthrie, *Greek Philosophy 4*, 453. Cf., however, Murray, *Plato on Poetry*, 183–84. who detects irony in Socrates’ remarks.
[240] Modified. Grube: “decent person”.

II.5 The Eventual Exile of Poetry (Rep. X)

While Plato aimed at reforming poetry in Books II and III, he reconsiders the nature of poetry once more at the very end of the *Republic*. At this stage Plato has introduced his theory of forms (596a5-6) as well as the notion of a tripartite soul (595a7-b1) to which he can now appeal as a basis for expelling the poets from his ideal city.

Appealing to his Theory of Forms, Plato assumes three ontological levels: the forms, their copies, and representations or copies of these copies (595a-597e). Mimetic arts such as poetry and painting produce representations on this last ontological level as they depict sense-perceptible objects which are themselves only representations of their respective intelligible forms (598b-599b).[241] Hence, Socrates can assert that "their works are at the third remove from that which is (τριττὰ ἀπέχοντα τοῦ ὄντος) and are easily produced without knowledge of the truth (μὴ εἰδότι τὴν ἀλήθειαν)" (598e6-599a2). Indeed, the poets' and specifically Homer's reputation to "know all crafts, all human affairs concerned with virtue and vice, and all about the gods" is refuted (598e1-2; cf. 599a-602b).

Moreover, the general populace, unknowing of the truth themselves, are captivated by poetry (602a, cf. 595b)[242] due to its appeal to the inferior part of one's soul (603c-607a). Yet, by "gratifying the irrational part (τῷ ἀνοήτῳ αὐτῆς χαριζόμενον)" of the soul, poetry has a destructive effect on the rational part of the soul and can even corrupt good people with devastating ramifications on the wider city (605b10-c1; cf. 605c-607a). Thus, Socrates decrees that "hymns to the gods (μόνον ὕμνους θεοῖς) and eulogies to good people (ἐγκώμια τοῖς ἀγαθοῖς) are the only poetry we can admit into our city" (607a3-5) and that he "had reason to banish it [sc. poetry] from the city (τῆς πόλεως ἀπεστέλλομεν) earlier" (607b1-3). While not reflecting the historical reality, Plato's Socrates casts his discussion of poetry in the framework of "an ancient quarrel between it [sc. poetry] and philosophy (παλαιὰ μέν τις διαφορὰ φιλοσοφίᾳ τε καὶ ποιητικῇ)" (607b5-6). A true poet can only be the philosopher-king as he is the only one who knows the truth.[243]

III. The Typoi and Fittingness in Plato's own Thought

Lastly, we shall briefly mention two examples of how the τύποι περὶ θεολογίας influenced Plato's own thought.[244]

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[241] Guthrie, *Greek Philosophy 4*, 545–51.
[242] "even though he doesn't know the good or bad qualities of anything, but what he'll imitate, it seems, is what appears fine or beautiful to the majority of people who know nothing" (602a).
[243] Guthrie, *Greek Philosophy 4*, 547–48. The myth of Er (614b2-621d3), which illustrates the way life should be lived, is an example of the type of story which is, while fictional, conveying a deeper truth that also proves to be useful for the city and is hence a "noble lie". Cf. Murray, *Plato on Poetry*, 168, 185.
[244] For further examples see Dreyer, *Untersuchungen*, 34–37.

A prominent passage where we encounter the first typos is in Plato's account of the creation of the sensible universe by the Demiurge in his *Timaeus*. Here he states that the cause for the creation (αἰτία γενέσεως) of the sensible universe was the fact that the Demiurge "was good (ἀγαθὸς ἦν)" (29e1; cf. 29a3: "δημιουργὸς ἀγαθός"). From this goodness it is also inferred that he does not exhibit any jealousy since the "one who is good can never become jealous of anything (ἀγαθῷ δὲ οὐδεὶς περὶ οὐδενὸς οὐδέποτε ἐγγίγνεται φθόνος)" (29e1-2). As a result of this the Demiurge intended "everything to become as much like himself as was possible" (29e2-3). The consequence of this was that "[t]he god wanted everything to be good (ἀγαθὰ μὲν πάντα) and nothing to be bad (φλαῦρον δὲ μηδὲν) so far as that was possible (κατὰ δύναμιν)" (30a2-3) and transferred unorderly matter "from a state of disorder to one of order, because he believed that order (τάξιν) was in every way better than disorder (ἀταξίας)" (30a5-6). This whole reasoning is summed up with the comment that "it wasn't permitted (θέμις) [sc. fitting; FG] (nor is it now) that one who is supremely good should do anything but what is best." (30a2-7).[245] Thus, the point made here fully agrees with the discussion of the first typos in the Republic: the divine Demiurge is good and hence it would not be fitting for him to do anything else which would not be in accordance with his nature.

The second typos can, for instance, be discovered in Socrates' response to the Delphic oracle's claim. In the context of the *Apology*, Socrates recounts the story of his deceased childhood friend Chaerephon travelling to Delphi to ask the oracle whether there was anyone wiser than Socrates. It was of course assumed that it was the god Apollo who communicated through the entranced Pythia to mankind. Surprised about the oracle's reply that there is in fact no one wiser than him, Socrates voices his disbelief and exclaims: "what then does he [sc. the god Apollo] mean by saying that I am the wisest? For surely he does not lie (ψεύδεταί); it is not legitimate for him to do so (οὐ γὰρ θέμις αὐτῷ)" (21b5-7). Thus, we can clearly notice that Socrates believes that it is not fitting for god to lie since divine deception would violate the second typos – god's unchangeability. Consequently, lying does not befit god and hence he cannot be thought to do so.[246]

Conclusion

In this chapter we were able to observe that the poetry of Homer played a major role in Plato's thought. While Plato also marshalled poetry as (cultural) support to his arguments, we have focused in this chapter on Plato's quarrel with poetry. As we had witnessed in earlier chapters, poetry – and first and foremost among it the poetry of Homer – had a tremendous influence on the Greek mind and consequently on the Greeks' perception of morality and the gods.

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[245] θέμις δ' οὔτ' ἦν οὔτ' ἔστιν τῷ ἀρίστῳ δρᾶν ἄλλο πλὴν τὸ κάλλιστον (*Tim*. 30a6-7).
[246] See Dreyer, *Untersuchungen*, 34 ("Was einem Gott nicht ziemt, das tut er auch nicht.").

Advancing a completely new understanding of the nature of god, it was not surprising that Plato found himself struggling against this influence of Homeric poetry. This struggle can, as I have argued, already be discerned in Plato's earliest dialogues which show him competing with and ultimately undermining the claims of poetry to know the truth about the gods and morality. It was, however, notably, in his *Republic* that Plato attacked poetry's accounts of the gods. As I have shown, Plato rejected poetry by highlighting the destructive influence poetry could have on the social cohesion of the state as well as the untruth of its accounts of the gods.

I have argued that it was in this context that Plato introduced his new concept of god, presenting god's goodness as well as his unchangeability as two essential and obligatory features through which one had to think about the gods. Plato's conception of god determined what was considered fitting for god. As a result, he rejected many of the poets' stories about the gods on the grounds that they did not portray the gods in a manner befitting their – newly defined – nature. In the end, however, Plato rejected poetry entirely for its detrimental effect on the soul as well as its mimetic character, coming to the conclusion that the only poet could be a philosopher who knew the truth. Lastly, I have demonstrated that the outlines for speaking about god in a fitting way – his goodness and unchangeability – also occurred in Plato's thought more generally.

Chapter 3: Hellenistic and Imperial Period

Introduction

The Platonic typoi were to have a major impact on the subsequent understanding of the divine and the nature of poetry and with them the principle of god-fittingness. Hence, in this chapter I will argue that the principle of god-fittingness played an important role in the thought of the major Hellenistic (and the Imperial) schools of philosophy, in their philosophical debates as well as their approach to poetry.[247] By both sketching some wider developments as well as focusing on select figures, I will further outline some of the important philosophical precedents to the Jewish and Christian figures we shall examine in the second part of the thesis.

After a brief introduction of the period, we shall begin with brief sketches of the Epicurean, Stoic, Academic as well as Middle Platonist theologies and the importance they attached to a fitting conception of god. This concern will become especially apparent in their inter-school debates as we shall consider in the subsequent section. Thirdly, we shall examine their views of the myths in reference to unfitting depictions of the gods. Finally, we consider some further instances that attest to the continued concern for god-fittingness at the time of the second century AD, the century we shall spend most of our time on in the second part of this thesis.

I. The Philosophical Schools

One of the features held in common by the Hellenistic schools was their goal of achieving εὐδαιμονία for the individual. As such their philosophies can be understood as a way of life.[248] Of course, the various schools differed in their views and approaches on how to best reach this goal, but we can notice a shift in their philosophies away from metaphysics and towards an emphasis on ethics.[249] Yet, they all believed that this approach can "nur in Verbindung mit einem geeigneten Theorierahmen gelehrt werden", a theory that explains the world and mankind's role in it.[250] It is in this context we want to

[247] Due to the limitations of this thesis, we can obviously not sketch the entire history of Hellenistic and Imperial philosophy. Rather, we will start with some of the major figures of the Hellenistic schools and then mainly focus on some (Middle) Platonists and Stoics towards the end as these two movements represent the most important intellectual background for the Jewish and Christian figures we shall examine in the second part of the thesis. All this means that we shall exclude the Old Academy and the Cynics and only consider Pyrrhonian Scepticism in the context of Sextus Empiricus' arguments that likely derive from Carneades. For any further information on any of these movements and their proponents see the relevant literature provided in the footnotes.

[248] See for instance Heinrich Niehues-Pröbsting, *Die Antike Philosophie: Schrift, Schule, Lebensform* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 2004), 176–80; Matthias Perkams, *Philosophie in der Antike: Von den Vorsokratikern bis zur Schule von Nisibis* (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 2023), 332.

[249] Hellmut Flashar and Woldemar Görler, "Die hellenistische Philosophie im allgemeinen," in *Die Hellenistische Philosophie* (vol. 1, 2 vols.; Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie. Die Philosophie der Antike 4; Basel: Schwabe Verlag, 1994), 1:7.

[250] Perkams, *Philosophie in der antike*, 332.

observe the occurrence of an "erkenntnistheoretische Wende im Hellenismus".[251] Taking its beginning from the Sceptic Pyrrho of Elis, the epistemological debate shifted from the Platonic and Aristotelian concern with the object – or realm – of knowledge to the question whether knowledge was possible at all.[252] Reacting to Pyrrhonian scepticism as well as that of the Academy, Epicureans and Stoics both assumed there to be "criteria of truth" which allowed for a distinction between false and true beliefs.[253] Part of these criteria was the concept of preconception (πρόληψις) which had first been introduced by Epicurus and was a prominent feature in both Epicurean as well as Stoic epistemology. The two schools differed, however, as to which characteristics should be considered a preconception (πρόληψις) of the divine and found their own beliefs incessantly attacked by the other as well as the Academic Sceptics.

The reason why holding the right conception of the divine was so important can be found in its link with ethics: whereas the right conception of the divine was essential for the Epicureans in reaching eudaimonia since the gods were "paradigms of moral excellence which are to be imitated"[254], it was of likewise importance for the Stoics in their attempt to live in accordance with nature – nature which was divine insofar that it was pervaded by divine Logos. Similarly, the goal for the later (middle) Platonists was assimilation to god. Against the background of these concerns, it is not surprising that it was essential to hold to the right conception of god. Hence, we witness that the Stoics, Epicureans, Academics, and the later Platonists were all concerned to maintain a fitting notion of god and often accused each other of not upholding a concern for god-fittingness.

It appears that in their understanding of divine blessedness the Epicureans emphasised the Platonic typos of immutability to the extent that the gods were so indifferent to the world that they had no relation with it at all. This naturally excluded divine providence, which, as we shall see, was considered a major characteristic of the divine by the Stoics who thereby emphasised the first Platonic typos.

I.1. Epicurus and Epicureans

Founded by Epicurus (341-270 BC), Epicureanism, or "the Garden" as the school was known, was the oldest of the Hellenistic schools. Having started as a group of philosopher friends, the school's particular focus on and devotion to its founder Epicurus led to a strong sense of orthodoxy as well as a uniform system.[255] Often disparaged by the other philosophical schools for their emphasis on *ἡδονή* – obviously

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[251] This is the title heading of Schriefl's sub-chapter on Stoic epistemology treated as part of Stoic logic. See Anna Schriefl, *Stoische Philosophie: Eine Einführung* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2019), 44–47.
[252] Ibid., 45.
[253] LS 17 (for Epicureans) and LS 40 (for Stoics). Ibid., 45–46.
[254] Michael Erler, "Epicurus as Deus Mortalis: *HOMOIOSIS THEOI* and Epicurean Self-Cultivation," in *Traditions of Theology* (ed. Dorothea Frede and André Laks; Leiden: Brill, 2002), 160.
[255] On the unity and orthodoxy of the Epicurean school see e.g. Numenius, *frag*. 23 (=Eusebius, *PE*, 14.5.3). For further references see Michael Erler, "Die Schule Epikurs," in *Die Hellenistische Philosophie* (vol. 1, 2 vols.; Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie. Die Philosophie der Antike 4; Basel: Schwabe Verlag, 1994), 1:210–12. Epicurus was even described as saviour and herald as noted by Michael Erler, "Epicureanism in the Roman

often depicted in a wilfully distorted manner by its opponents – Epicurean philosophy nonetheless enjoyed a standing as one of the major philosophical schools enduring for several centuries and being among the four schools for which emperor Marcus Aurelius endowed a "chair" in philosophy in Athens in AD 176.[256] Epicurus was alleged to have written copiously, and despite the fact that only a meagre portion of his writings survive, he is still among the better attested philosophers in terms of primary sources. As mentioned earlier, among one of the few things that Epicureanism had in common with the other philosophical schools at the time was the goal of enabling the individual to achieve eudaimonia. Yet, in the approach on how to achieve the state of eudaimonia it differed from them.[257] We shall examine the role a fitting notion of god – one that was god-fitting – had in the interrelated contexts of ethics, epistemology ("canonic"), and physics, since it is by situating it in this wider context that we shall discover its importance.

Epicurus' philosophy proposed "that pleasure (τὴν ἡδονὴν) is the beginning and end (ἀρχὴν καὶ τέλος) of the blessed life (τοῦ μακαρίως ζῆν)" (LS 21B). Pleasure itself was more concretely understood as the absence of pain from body (ἀπονία) and mind (ἀταραξία), resulting in "the health of the body (τὴν τοῦ σώματος ὑγίειαν) and the soul's freedom from disturbance (τὴν <τῆς ψυχῆς> ἀταραξίαν)" (LS 21B).[258] However, it was the fear of death, the gods, celestial occurrences, and the unknown that was believed to cause the soul to be disturbed and thereby prevented the individual's soul from achieving the state of ἀταραξία.[259] According to Epicurus, essential in the removal of these fears was "sober reasoning (νήφων λογισμὸς) which tracks down the causes of every choice and avoidance, and which banishes the opinions (τὰς δόξας ἐξελαύνων) that beset souls with the greatest confusion (ἐξ ὧν πλεῖστος τὰς ψυχὰς καταλαμβάνει θόρυβος)" (LS 21 B).[260] Consequently, Epicurus' philosophy was primarily aimed at removing these very obstacles and employed physics and its constituents of cosmology, meteorology, psychology and theology with the distinct purpose of removing these fears, thereby making physics a handmaiden of ethics.[261] This focus of Epicurus' philosophy is further expressed in his conviction that

Empire," in *The Cambridge Companion to Epicureanism* (ed. James Warren; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 53.

[256] Eleni Kechagia-Ovseiko, "Plutarch and Epicureanism," in *A Companion to Plutarch* (ed. Mark Beck; Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2014), 105. For the misunderstanding of *ἡδονή* see LS 21 A8, O. On pleasure in Epicurus see the comments by A. A. Long and David Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 121–25.

[257] Michael Erler, "Epikur," in *Die Hellenistische Philosophie* (vol. 1, 2 vols.; Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie. Die Philosophie der Antike 4; Basel: Schwabe Verlag, 1994), 1:127.

[258] The health of the body is also described as "freedom from pain in the body (ἀλγεῖν κατὰ σῶμα) (LS 21B). See also LS 21 A.

[259] Erler, "Epikur," in *Die Hellenistische Philosophie*, 1:126. Cf. LS 25B.

[260] Moreover, "the greatest good is prudence (τὸ μέγιστον ἀγαθὸν φρόνησις) […] it is the natural source of all the remaining virtues" (LS 21B6).

[261] See for the specifics of how each area of physics accomplishes this Erler, "Epikur," in *Die Hellenistische Philosophie*, 1:139–53. Cf. LS 19 (celestial phenomena), 23 (god), and 24 (death).

"there is no use in philosophy if it does not expel the suffering of the soul" (LS 25C) and hence his philosophy can rightly be described as a "therapy of the soul".[262]

The fear of the gods manifested itself primarily as a fear of divine punishment. As we shall see, Epicurus deemed this to be an unfitting notion of god which not only prevented the achievement of ataraxia but also obstructed the notion of the gods as moral exemplars which should be imitated and not feared. The Epicureans believed that at the root of these false and unfitting notions of god's nature were false preconceptions of the gods. Epicurus believed there to be an innate preconception (prolepsis) of the gods which was common to all mankind, for "nature herself had imprinted the conception of them in all men's minds".[263]

Thus, examining the divine in the context of Epicurus' epistemology ("canonic") and physics, we find that the gods are really "the product of streams of images with human shape which enter our minds and form in us idealized impressions of a supremely blessed existence."[264] These impressions of the gods presented the gods in ways close to the traditional Greek understanding, imagining the gods as anthropomorphic, "blessed and immortal" (LS 23E; cf. LS 23B), which due to their universality among man showed them to be preconceptions.[265] However, since conceptions of the gods were ultimately reflective of one's own moral views, the conceptions of the gods could naturally vary among different people and, if not conforming to the Epicurean preconceptions, were deemed "not preconceptions but false suppositions" which could often lead to disquiet and fear, preventing the desired state of ἀταραξία.[266] Hence, Epicurus endeavoured to cure people from their false and distorted beliefs. This was mainly achieved by enlightening people with the correct knowledge of the gods, revealing to them, for instance, that the gods did not intervene in the lives of mankind who, therefore, had nothing to fear

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[262] Ibid., in *Die Hellenistische Philosophie*, 1:126–27, 139. Cf. LS 25C: "[Quoting Epicurus] 'Empty are the words of that philosopher who offers therapy for no human suffering. For just as there is no use in medical expertise if it does not give therapy for bodily diseases, so too there is no use in philosophy if it does not expel the suffering of the soul.'". Similarly, the famous Epicurean "fourfold remedy [tetrapharmakos]" states that "God presents no fears, death no worries. And while good is readily attainable, evil is readily endurable" (LS 25J). Cf. LS 25B (=Epicurus, Key doctrines 11 – 13), where KD 11 reads: "Were we not upset by the worries that celestial phenomena and death might matter to us, and also by failure to appreciate the limits of pains and desires, we would have no need for natural philosophy".

[263] Cicero, *ND* 1.44 cf. 1.45, 48. (=LS 23E). For the Epicurean understanding of "preconception" see LS 17E and the commentary in Long and Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, 88–89.

[264] Ibid., 145. Whether the gods are mere concepts that coalesce in the mind and are thus mere constructs of the human mind derived from magnified concepts – almost in a Feuerbachian sense – or whether the perception of these mental images and the concepts formed of the Gods corresponded to real beings – still unlike humans of course, does not need to concern us at this point. See also Jaap Mansfeld, "Theology," in *The Cambridge History of Hellenistic Philosophy* (ed. Keimpe Algra et al.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 455, 472–75.

[265] While the Gods are anthropomorphic, they do not have real physical bodies but only quasi-corporeal bodies.

[266] LS 23B = Letter to Menoeceus 123-124. Philodemus informs us that Epicurus supposedly believed that the first humans received the image of the Gods' existence and nature in their dreams. This was followed by a process of decline which introduced false notions of the divine. Cf. *De pietate* ll.225-231. See on this Dirk Obbink, ed., *Philodemus on Piety: Part 1: Critical Text with Commentary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 6, with n. 1.

from them. And it is in the context of this endeavour that we can notice the relevance of the principle of fittingness in Epicurean arguments to which we shall now turn.

In his letter to Menoeceus, Epicurus maintains that one should

> "think of god as an imperishable and blessed creature (τὸν θεὸν ζῷον ἄφθαρτον καὶ μακάριον), as the common idea of god (ἡ κοινὴ τοῦ θεοῦ νόησις) is in outline, and attach to him nothing alien to imperishability (τῆς ἀφθαρσίας ἀλλότριον) or inappropriate to blessedness (τῆς μακαριότητος ἀνοίκειον), but believe about him everything that can preserve his combination of blessedness and imperishability."
>
> (LS 23B = Epicurus, Letter to Menoeceus 123)

As we can observe, Epicurus attempts to safeguard the correct notion of god – as blessed and immortal – by appealing to the principle of fittingness, ordaining that nothing "alien" or "inappropriate" to the two specified characteristics is attributed to the gods. He then continues by observing that, regrettably, many people "do *not* preserve them [sc. the right notions]", for they often hold false notions of the gods which do not befit them, pointing out that "[t]he impious man (ἀσεβὴς) is not he who denies the gods of the many, but he who attaches to gods the beliefs of the many (τὰς τῶν πολλῶν δόξας) about them." (LS 23B = Epicurus, Later to Menoeceus 123-4). Among such beliefs was the idea of the gods' interaction with the world, manifesting itself in earthly and celestial phenomena such as earthquakes and the movements of the heavenly bodies (LS 23C = Epicurus, Letter to Herodotus 76-77). Against this belief, Epicurus argues that any such notions cannot concur with an "individual who at the same time possesses the combination of total blessedness and imperishability (ἅμα τὴν πᾶσαν μακαριότητα ἔχοντος μετὰ ἀφθαρσίας). For trouble, concern, anger (ὀργαὶ) and favour are incompatible (οὐ γὰρ συμφωνοῦσι) with blessedness, but have their origin in weakness (ἀσθενείᾳ), fear (φόβῳ) and dependence on neighbours." (LS 23C = Epicurus, Letter to Herodotus 76—7). Hence, these false notions are not only not fitting for god but they are also "incompatible (οὐ γὰρ συμφωνοῦσι)" with god's perfect and immutable nature as they would ultimately be attesting to a "weakness (ἀσθενείᾳ)" in god.[267] The same is expressed by the Epicurean Velleius who maintains that "nothing is blessed if it is not tranquil", and argues that if god were to "watch over land and sea and guard men's well-being and lives, he is surely involved in a troublesome and laborious job" (LS 13H = Cicero, *ND* 1.52). Such unfitting notions conflicting with the notion of god's blessedness were assumed by the Epicureans to have arisen from "false quasi-preconception [which; FG] can be explained away as the product of faulty inference".[268] Additionally, the myths' portrayal of the gods, as Velleius recognises, was partly to blame for strengthening these wrong notions (*ND* 1.16). Indeed, if one were to hold to the views expressed by

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[267] Epicurus also maintains that "we must observe all the majesty associated with all the names which we apply to such conceptions" (LS 23C = Letter to Herodotus 76-77).
[268] Long and Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, 89, with reference to LS 23A 3-6 .

the poets, the effects on one's own state of mind could be severe, for one would be living in constant fear of the gods. Hence, we are advised to

> "expel these ideas from your mind and drive far away beliefs unworthy of the gods (*dis indigna*) and alien to their tranquillity (*alienaque pacis eorum*), [or else; FG] the holy divinity of the gods, damaged by you, will frequently do you harm: not because of the possibility of violating the gods' supreme power, and of their consequent angry thirst for bitter vengeance, but because you yourself will imagine that those tranquil and peaceful beings are rolling mighty billows of wrath against you. You will be unable to visit the shrines of the gods with a calm heart, and incapable of receiving with tranquillity and peace the images from their holy bodies which travel into men's minds to reveal the gods' appearance. The direct effect on your life is obvious." (23D = Lucretius 6.68-79).

As this passage from Lucretius effectively shows, merely one's own perception is the issue that needs to be resolved. Since the gods neither live in our world (cf. Lucretius, 5.146-155 = LS 23L), nor are concerned with us[269], the only damaging effect which is holding us back from achieving ataraxia is our own conception of the gods. Having a god-fitting conception of the gods is therefore relevant for our life: the gods are already in a state which one endeavours to achieve, hence we should emulate them and become like them.[270]

I.2. The Stoics[271]

It is also in Stoic thought as well as the debates between them and the Epicureans and the Academic sceptics that we can observe the principle of fittingness at work. As we had seen, the Epicureans argued that as a result from our innate preconceptions of the divine characteristics of blessedness and imperishability, any divine involvement with the world had to be excluded.[272] Considering the

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[269] See also Philodemus, *De pietate* Col. 40, ll. 1153-1155: "God has no need of human things".
[270] Long and Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, 146–47.
[271] Due to the limitations of this chapter, we can rarely draw clear distinctions between the different opinions and developments among the various Stoics and will have to combine different accounts. For a chronological account of the different figures of the Old, Middle, and Late Stoa see Peter Steinmetz, "Die Stoa," in *Die Hellenistische Philosophie* (vol. 2, 2 vols.; Die Philosophie der Antike 4; Basel: Schwabe Verlag, 1994), 491–716. For thematic accounts see especially Maximilian Forschner, *Die Philosophie der Stoa: Logik, Physik und Ethik* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2018); Max Pohlenz, *Die Stoa: Geschichte einer geistigen Bewegung: Band I* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1948); Max Pohlenz, *Die Stoa: Geschichte einer geistigen Bewegung: Band II* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1949). And for a brief and succinct account see Schriefl, *Stoische Philosophie*. In particular on Stoic theology see Mansfeld, "Theology"; Keimpe Algra, "Stoic Theology," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Stoics* (ed. Brad Inwood; Cambridge University Press, 2003), 153–78; Keimpe Algra, "Stoic Philosophical Theology and Graeco-Roman Religion," in *God and Cosmos in Stoicism* (ed. Ricardo Salles; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 224–52. Furthermore, it should be noted that in the case of Stoicism, we are, besides Cleanthes' *Hymn to Zeus*, some fragments, and the accounts of the Roman Stoics, mainly dependent on the second-hand, and often polemical, accounts of Cicero, Diogenes Laertius, Sextus Empiricus, and Plutarch which all have their own philosophical agendas and presuppositions.
[272] Long and Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, 145. LS 23E 2-3, 6; LS 17.

characteristics the Stoics believed to be among the preconceptions of god, we note that, according to Antipater of Tarsus, "the clear apprehension which we have of god […] [is to] conceive god to be an animate being, blessed and indestructible and beneficent towards men" (Plutarch, *De Stoic. rep.* 1051f). What is especially striking is the notion of providence. Indeed, while both the Epicureans and the Stoics assumed that mankind possessed preconceptions of the gods, they differed from each other in that the Stoics vehemently criticised "Epicurus for ruining the preconception of the gods by abolishing providence. For […] god is preconceived and thought of not only as immortal and blessed but also as benevolent, caring and beneficent."[273] It was thus especially the divine characteristic of providence over which the Stoics disagreed with the Epicureans, hence denouncing the Epicurean preconception, which excluded providence, as faulty.[274] Unlike the Epicurean mechanistic explanation for the creation of the world, the Stoics believed that the world had been made for the sake of man by a providential deity (ND 2.154-158).

Considering god and the world, we note that the Stoics treated theology as part of physics and it is within this setting that we will briefly remark on it.[275] In contrast to the Academy, the thought of a transcendent realm was abandoned and replaced with the assumption that everything that was thought of as existent was corporeal and causally connected, including the soul, virtue, knowledge, the world, and god.[276] The reason for this was the assumption that only bodies could act or be acted upon.[277] Constituting the foundation of the world were two principles[278], one passive and the other active.[279] While the passive principle was described as "unqualified substance" and "matter", and could be acted upon, the active principle was termed "reason", "cause", and "god", and was creatively acting upon the passive principle.[280] Moreover, since the two principles have to be thought of as inextricably connected

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[273] LS 54K; Cf. LS 40P and 54C.
[274] Long and Sedley note that this was "a deliberate dig at Epicurus' claim that his own non-providential theology is founded on 'preconceptions' which differ from the 'false suppositions' of the many" (Long and Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, 253.). Cf. LS 23B 3 for the Epicurean claim.
[275] LS 43B. Since physics deals with the world and its nature (LS 26A), it is also closely connected to ethics which has as its goal to "live in agreement with nature" (LS 63 A-C). Cf. Ibid., 43; Algra, "Stoic Theology," 155; Forschner, *Philosophie der Stoa*, 94; Schriefl, *Stoische Philosophie*, 79. Lastly, theology was understood to provide the knowledge of the interconnectedness of the Stoic system (cf. LS26).
[276] For bodies and the corporality of everything existent see LS 27B, 45A-D. We should note, however, that there is also the ontologically distinct realm of the "incorporeals" which do not exist but "subsist" and together with the realm of bodies make up the highest genus of "something" (LS 27A-D). See the helpful stemma-chart by Long and Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, 163. For commentary see Ibid., 163–66, 273–74; Forschner, *Philosophie der Stoa*, 95–100; Schriefl, *Stoische Philosophie*, 81–88.
[277] LS 45C. See Forschner, *Philosophie der Stoa*, 95; Schriefl, *Stoische Philosophie*, 83–85.
[278] It should be noted that the world – thought of as the Whole – together with the void external to it makes up the All, that is the universe (LS 44A; cf. 49A2). See Long and Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, 270; Forschner, *Philosophie der Stoa*, 94.
[279] That both principles are considered corporeal should be clear from the above comments and is evidenced at LS 44B3 and 45G.
[280] LS 44B, 55E. LS 44C indicates that god is probably self-moved; cf. Cicero, *ND* 2.32. The Stoics also assumed there to be four elements which were clearly distinct from the two principles, and which came into being during the creation of the world (DL 7.134-136, 142). Yet, later Chrysippus transferred the distinction of the principles

– they are portrayed as "mixed"[281] – with each other and divine reason permeating matter, Diogenes Laertius is able to report that "Zeno says that the whole world and heaven are the substance of god" (LS 43A1 = DL 7.148) and to have been followed in this conviction by Chrysippus and Poseidonius.[282] Indeed, Chrysippus is reported by Cicero to have proclaimed that "god is the world itself"[283]. Yet, the divine active reason that pervaded the world was depicted in various other ways depending on its function or role. For instance, believing only active bodies to be causes, the foundational divine active principle was also understood as the ultimate causal nexus which determined reality and was called fate.[284] Since divine reason pervaded everything in the world and thereby connected everything in it, Chrysippus spoke of it as fate which "is the rationale of the world', or 'the rationale of providence's acts of government in the world', or 'the rationale in accordance with which past events have happened, present events are happening, and future events will happen'" (LS 55M). Besides labelling this causal nexus as fate, it could also be portrayed as divine providence, leading to the identification of the two.[285]

Furthermore, the divine active principle could also be described as "designing fire" or "pneuma".[286] These descriptions especially emphasised the active role god played in the world, expressing his function as "the vital principle in living things".[287] Yet, the world was itself finite and subjected to cycles of "conflagration" which meant its eventual destruction.[288] However, these conflagrations were followed by a reconstitution of the very same world as the world was perfect,[289] with both conflagration and reconstitution being repeated in an everlasting cycle.[290] However, we can note that besides the perception of god in these expansive notions such as reason pervading, sustaining and ordering the world in the forms of fire, pneuma, logos, nature, fate, and providence, god could also be addressed in personal ways which at times used the traditional religious language of the myths. A famous example of this is Cleanthes' *Hymn to Zeus*, in which he combined these two different strands by addressing god

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as active and passive to the elements themselves: fire and air being active and water and earth being passive (LS 47D). Fire holds itself a special status. See Forschner, *Philosophie der Stoa*, 107–17.

[281] LS 48B-D, H. See for commentary Long and Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, 292–94; Forschner, *Philosophie der Stoa*, 119–21; Schriefl, *Stoische Philosophie*, 91–97.

[282] See Long and Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, 271–72; Forschner, *Philosophie der Stoa*, 106.

[283] LS 54B.

[284] LS 54B, 55L-N, 62C, 55R. On active bodies as causes see Schriefl, *Stoische Philosophie*, 97–102. On causes, fate, and providence as well as the question of determinism and human freedom see Forschner, *Philosophie der Stoa*, 122–36.

[285] LS 54U, which depicts this to be the view of Chrysippus and also notes a slight difference to Cleanthes. See also Forschner, *Philosophie der Stoa*, 129.

[286] LS 46A, 47I. For commentary see Long and Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, 277–78, 286–89; Forschner, *Philosophie der Stoa*, 108–9, 113–22. It was probably Chrysippus who emphasised the "pneuma" (Ibid., 115.).

[287] Long and Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, 278, with reference to LS 46D2. Cf. also LS 46A.

[288] LS 46I-M. Yet, some later Stoics denied conflagration (see LS 46P) and our comments below.

[289] LS 46G, 52C. For commentary see Long and Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, 278–79, 310–13.

[290] LS 52C.

as the "ever omnipotent Zeus", whilst reinterpreting elements of traditional religion and myth in ways that conformed to the particular Stoic notions of god which we had just examined.[291]

Unsurprisingly, all of these various portrayals of god made for a "rather fluid concept of god"[292] and has often lead to assessments of Stoic theology as a "mixture of pantheism, theism, and polytheism."[293] This fluidity of the Stoic concept of god elicited critique by the other philosophical schools as we shall see in due course.[294] Finally, a helpful account that succinctly sums up many of the Stoic views of god's nature can be found in Diogenes Laertius who states that the Stoics believed god to be

> "an animal which is immortal (ἀθάνατον) and rational (λογικόν) or intelligent, perfect in happiness (τέλειον ἢ νοερὸν ἐν εὐδαιμονίᾳ), not admitting of any evil (κακοῦ παντὸς ἀνεπίδεκτον), provident (προνοητικὸν) towards the world and its occupants, but not anthropomorphic (ἀνθρωπόμορφον). He is the creator of the whole and, as it were, the father of all, both generally and, in particular, that part of him which pervades all things, which is called by many descriptions according to his powers. For they call him Zeus (Δία) as the cause (δι' ὃν) of all things; Zen (Ζῆνα) in so far as he is responsible for, or pervades, life (ζῆν)" (LS 54A).

While this summary lists many characteristics which Xenophanes and Plato would consider to be god-fitting, some of these were perceived by Epicureans and Sceptics to conflict with other views held by the Stoics. In particular, the Stoic concept of conflagration as well the existence of evil in the context of god being the ultimate cause were perceived as inconsistent and unfitting for an understanding of god's nature as being "indestructible", "not admitting of any evil (κακοῦ παντὸς ἀνεπίδεκτον), and "provident (προνοητικὸν) towards the world and its occupants". We shall consider these contended issues in due course but before we do so, we must consider one more important philosophical movement: a movement known as Middle-Platonism.

I.3. The New Academy and the (Middle) Platonists

Besides the Stoics and Epicureans who were undoubtedly the leading Hellenistic schools, the third of the major philosophical schools was the Academy. Over the course of this long period the Academy had experienced various developments which had, already in ancient times, resulted in a distinction between the Old and the New Academy.[295] The Old Academy which had begun with Speusippus took a distinct

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[291] LS 54I. See Long and Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, 332; Forschner, *Philosophie der Stoa*, 156–61.
[292] Algra, "Stoic Theology," 169.
[293] Ibid., 165.
[294] Cicero, *ND* 1.36-41; Plutarch, *De comm. not.* 1085b-c. cf. Ibid., 169.
[295] The history of the Academy has been divided in various ways, ranging all the way from two up to five periods However, most Academics – except Antiochus of Ascalon – would never have considered themselves as founding a new school. Indeed, it was probably Antiochus' turn towards dogmatism and reclaiming the title "Old Academy" (LS 68B) which initiated this periodisation of the Academy. See on this Woldemar Görler, "Älterer Pyrrhonismus.

turn towards Scepticism under Arcesilaus around 275 BC, a shift that is thought of as inaugurating the New (Sceptic) Academy.[296] Against the dogmatism of the Old Academy, Arcesilaos presumed that Plato had only advanced nothing more than hypotheses as he believed Plato's often aporetic dialogues to clearly indicate.[297] Hence, besides rejecting the dogmatism of the Old Academy, Arcesilaus was to especially contest Zeno's newly founded Stoic school for he probably considered Zeno and his school "to be misappropriating much of the Platonic tradition" in their philosophy.[298] Arguably the most famous and influential Academic Sceptic was Carneades, whose arguments with the Stoics we shall consider shortly.[299]

A further shift was initiated by a return to a dogmatic understanding of Plato by Antiochus of Ascalon at the beginning of a trend which gained momentum in the first century BC and which alleged that Plato's thought could be systematised into a coherent system of Platonic dogmata.[300] While the various figures that are counted among this movement understood themselves solely as Platonists, this trend has been labelled by scholars as Middle Platonism.[301] Its goal of systematising Plato's thought into a set of doctrines was neither an easy nor a uniform task since Plato had evidently not written a dogmatic outline of his philosophy but had explored countless issues in the form of (at times aporetic) dialogues. Nonetheless, it was from these dialogues that any reconstruction of a Platonic system had to begin. This meant that those who engaged in this task had to make attempts at resolving certain issues which had already concerned the Old Academy and naturally these attempts diverged from each other at times.[302] Moreover, Stoics and Aristotelian thought were appropriated if it was deemed helpful and could be made subservient to overarching Platonic thought.[303] Nonetheless, there were certain themes which linked the various Middle Platonic figures, and which set them apart from the other philosophical

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Jüngere Akademie. Antiochus aus Askalon," in *Die Hellenistische Philosophie* (vol. 2, 2 vols.; Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie. Die Philosophie der Antike 4; Basel: Schwabe Verlag, 1994), 2:779–81.

[296] LS 68D-E. The Sceptic Academy has to be distinguished from Pyrrhonian Scepticism as well as its later reappraisal with Sextus Empiricus.

[297] Long and Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, 445–47.

[298] Ibid., 445. For Arcesilaus' conflict with Zeno, who, just like Arcesilaus had earlier been a pupil of the Academic Polemo see LS 68A, C, G, O.

[299] Since both Arcesilaus and Carneades only taught orally, we are completely dependent on later reports for their views.

[300] Dillon's chapter on Antiochus of Ascalon bears the fitting subtitle "The Turn to Dogmatism". On Antiochus of Ascalon see John M. Dillon, *The Middle Platonists, 80 B.C. to A.D. 220* (Rev. ed. with a new afterword.; Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press, 1996), 52–106. It should be noted that Antiochus of Ascalon was himself still largely beholden to Stoic physics and theology and hence Dillon concludes his chapter on Antiochus that "God had yet to be put back in his heaven, and freed from all taint of Matter." (Ibid., 106, cf. 81-84.).

[301] "Middle Platonism" or "Middle Platonists" is hence not used as a self-ascription by any of these figures. For whether "Middle Platonism" is a "new" movement, or a revival of a continual Platonic tradition see George Boys-Stones, *Platonist Philosophy 80 BC to AD 250: An Introduction and Collection of Sources in Translation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 1–6, who argues for the former.

[302] For these see e.g. Dillon, *Middle Platonists*, 1–43.

[303] Moreover, these were at times seen as deviations from Plato's thought and hence included elements of truth which could be integrated into one's system.

schools.[304] Against the materialistic understanding of the Epicureans and Stoics, the Platonists after Antiochus of Ascalon emphasised the transcendence of an immaterial first principle.[305] However, the number of principles assumed by each Platonist could vary due to differing assessments of Plato's dialogues as well as varying degrees of Stoic and Peripatetic influence. For instance, in the case of Plutarch, we can discern both a dualism between god and matter (*De def. or.* 435f-436f), yet, at other times, Plutarch affirms what is often taken as the typical Middle Platonist view of three principles.[306] The important thing to note is, however, that these Platonists all emphasised the transcendence of the (first) god.[307] This transcendent god was, moreover, thought of as unchangeable and providential. As we shall see, these three characteristics – transcendence, immutability, and providence – formed central features which were debated among the philosophical schools. For now, we shall briefly consider the role the principle of fittingness played in the theology of two well-known Platonists: Plutarch and Alcinous.

Plutarch (ca. AD 45 – ca. AD 120)[308] was both a Platonist philosopher as well as priest for Apollo at the oracle of Delphi and is the foremost (middle) Platonist of whose writing we possess extensive amounts.[309] When considering the role of the principle of god-fittingness in Plutarch's thought, we can note that it appears throughout his thinking and we shall briefly consider some important instances of its use in Plutarch.[310] In Plutarch's *De E apud Delphos*, we encounter a conversation about the meaning of the letter E at the entry of the Apollo temple in Delphi. In the course of the discussion, the E is later understood as εἶ – "you are" – and used in reply to Apollo's "know thyself" (392a) as the only "form of address which is truthful (ἀληθῆ), free from deception (ἀψευδῆ), and the only one befitting him only (μόνην μόνῳ προσήκουσαν), the assertion of Being (τοῦ εἶναι)" (392a7-9). This then leads to a discussion of being, in which Plutarch, like Plato, distinguishes between the two realms of being and becoming. Just like the realm of being (ὄντως ὄν)

> "which is eternal (τὸ ἀίδιον), without beginning (ἀγένητον) and without end (ἄφθαρτον), to which no length of time brings change (μεταβολὴν)" (*De E*, 392e7-8), "God is (ἔστιν ὁ θεός)

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[304] For these see the section "The Dominant Themes of Middle Platonism" by Dillon, *Middle Platonists*, 43–51.

[305] Erler, *Platon*, 525; Franco Ferrari, "Der Begriff 'Mittelplatonismus' und die Forschungsgeschichte," in *Philosophie der Kaiserzeit und Spätantike* (vol. 1; Die Philosophie der Antike 5; Basel: Schwabe Verlag, 2018), 1:553.

[306] Franco Ferrari, "Plutarch von Chaironeia," in *Philosophie der Kaiserzeit und der Spätantike: Band 5/1* (Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie. Die Philosophie der Antike 5; Basel: Schwabe, 2018), 574.

[307] In the case of Numenius, for instance, the first god is utterly transcendent, whereas the second god – the Demiurge – is not, for he has two aspects, one of which is engaged in creating the world and one is in this process affected by matter. This has led to the assumption that Numenius assumes three gods. On Numenius see Dillon, *Middle Platonists*, 361–83.

[308] For an overview of Plutarch's life and teaching see Ferrari, "Plutarch"; Dillon, *Middle Platonists*, 184–230.

[309] While we have several of Plutarch's treatises, we are not left with a systematic account of his own philosophy and we have to extract his views from his various treaties. In particular Plutarch's treatises *De E apud Delphos* and *De Isis and Osiris* provide us with statements which are relevant to unearth his view of the divine.

[310] Since a full account of the principle of fittingness in Plutarch has been given by Dreyer, I shall note only a few select instances here. See for further information the account in Dreyer, *Untersuchungen*, 48–67.

(if there be need to say so), and He exists for no fixed time, but for the everlasting ages which are immovable, timeless, and undeviating (κατὰ τὸν αἰῶνα τὸν ἀκίνητον καὶ ἄχρονον καὶ ἀνέγκλιτον)" (*De E,* 393a7-9).[311]

As this section of *De E* shows, since god is thought of as unchanging and eternal, the address "you are" is befitting god's nature as it highlights his belonging to the realm of being. Consequently, "it is irreverent (οὐδ' ὅσιόν ἐστιν)" – meaning unfitting[312] – to speak "of that which is (ἐπὶ τοῦ ὄντος)" in words which would indicate "that it was or shall be (ἦν ἢ ἔσται)", for these are obviously characteristics which belong to the realm of becoming (393a4-6).[313] All this shows once more the influence of Plato's second typos which asserted god's immutability.

Moreover, Plutarch clarifies this god is none other than the god Apollo and from the god's three different names, Plutarch demonstrates god to be numerically one as well as a non-composite one, who is "pure and undefiled" (393c).[314] This is further supported by appealing to the principle of god-fittingness in that "it is characteristic (προσήκει) [sc. fitting; FG] of the imperishable and pure to be one and [always; FG] uncombined (ἕν τ' εἶναι καὶ ἄκρατον ἀεὶ)." (393c9-10).[315] Additionally, god is defined as "imperishable and pure (τῷ ἀφθάρτῳ καὶ καθαρῷ)" as well as being "one and uncombined (ἕν τ' εἶναι καὶ ἄκρατον)" (*De E* 393d). All these statements demonstrate the influence of the second Platonic topos on Plutarch's thinking. Moreover, Plutarch concurs with Plato's first theological principle and sees its related attributes as befitting god's nature, hence describing god as "being consummately good (ἀγαθὸς γὰρ ὢν τελέως)" and not lacking any virtues, especially "those which concern justice and friendliness (δικαιοσύνην καὶ φιλίαν); for these are the fairest and are fitting for Gods (θεοῖς πρέπουσαι)" (*De def. or.* 423d).[316] Indeed, just like the Stoics, Plutarch believes god to be providential (*De def. or.* 426d, 436d).

Nonetheless, since Plutarch is always attentive to observe a fitting understanding of divine nature and hence not ascribe anything contrary to god's nature, he finds himself treading a fine line at times. In the case of oracles for instance, Plutarch considers the extent to which these can be said to be connected to god.[317] Considering the question why there are fewer oracles in the present day than there were in the past, Plutarch has the Cynic Planetiades raise the even more drastic question as to why there are any oracles at all given that many wicked people asked the god "shameful and impious questions (αἰσχρῶν

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[311] While these statements are made by Ammonius, Plutarch's teacher, they are likely Plutarch's own views. See on all of this Dillon, *Middle Platonists*, 199; Ferrari, "Plutarch," 570–71.
[312] ὅσιος is used more in a cultic context. Yet, Dreyer rightly recognizes that the cultic and philosophical realms are often related, notably so in the case of Plutarch who is a priest of Apollo (Dreyer, *Untersuchungen*, 54–55.).
[313] The realm of becoming is of course "that which by its nature has no permanence in Being (τοῦ μένειν ἐν τῷ εἶναι μὴ πεφυκότος)" (393a6).
[314] Cf. 392a-c.
[315] For the details of this argument see Dreyer, *Untersuchungen*, 56.
[316] Ibid.
[317] See on this also Ibid., 64–66.

καὶ ἀθέων ἐρωτημάτων)" as well as tested his wisdom (*De def. or.* 7.413a-b). While Planetiades' suggestion is rejected, it raises a fundamental problem, which is acknowledged by the character Ammonius, Plutarch's teacher, with the words:

> "Now I do not like what Planetiades said, and one of the reasons is the inconsistency (τὴν ἀνωμαλίαν) which it creates regarding the god (ἣν περὶ τὸν θεὸν ποιεῖ), who in one way turns away from wickedness (τὴν κακίαν) and disavows it, and again in another way welcomes its presence" (*De def. or.* 8.413e).

Ammonius considers here the two consequences that spring from Planetiades' suggestion, neither of which could be deemed god-fitting as each would violate one of the Platonic typoi. If Planetiades was right and it was due to the abuse of the oracles that god decided to cease them, it would suggest "inconsistency (ἀνωμαλία)" on the part of god, which would violate the second Platonic typos. Or, if Planetiades was wrong, then god is complicit in evil, which would violate the first Platonic typos. Ultimately, the danger of assuming god to be directly present in the oracles is apparent since "if he [sc. god] allows himself to become entangled (καταμιγνὺς) in men's needs (ἀνθρωπίναις χρείαις), he is prodigal with his majesty (οὐ φείδεται τῆς σεμνότητος) and he does not observe (οὐδὲ τηρεῖ) the dignity and greatness (τὸ ἀξίωμα καὶ τὸ μέγεθος) of his pre-eminence" (414e). In other words, what is at issue is the preservation of god-fittingness. Considering the Epicurean and the Stoic views on this matter, Plutarch notes that both "those who make the god responsible for nothing at all and those who make him responsible for all things alike go wide of moderation and propriety (τοῦ μετρίου καὶ πρέποντος)" (414f).[318] The consequences of either view would be unacceptable and not befit god's nature. Yet, Plutarch is able to maintain a middle ground between these two extremes and preserve a god-fitting account of god's nature by the introduction of demons.[319] These demons are a "race of demigods midway between gods and men" (415a). Instead of direct divine involvement in mysteries, oracles, and punishments, Plutarch maintains that one should "commit these matters to those ministers of the gods to whom it is right to commit them, as servants and clerks" (417a-b). Indeed, Plutarch maintains that all unfitting characteristics, such as the "tales of rapine and wanderings of the gods, their concealments and banishment and servitude, which men rehearse in legend and in song, all these are, in fact, not things that were done to the gods or happened to them, but to the demigods (οὐ θεῶν εἰσιν ἀλλὰ δαιμόνων παθήματα καὶ τύχαι)", the demons (417e).[320] Thus, we can observe that Plutarch is very

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[318] The Epicurean view would "make the relations of gods and men remote and alien by doing away with the 'interpretive and ministering nature [sc. the demons],' as Plato has called it" (417f), whereas the Stoics would "bring the god into men's emotions and activities, drawing him down to our needs" (416f).
[319] For the role of demons in Platonism more generally see John M. Dillon, "Dämonologie im frühen Platonismus," in *Apuleius. De deo Socratis. Über den Gott des Sokrates* (ed. Matthias Baltes et al.; Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2004), 123–41.
[320] Likewise, any immoral demands of the mysteries cults of the past, such as human sacrifices, are not to be ascribed to the gods but to the demons. See 14.417cd.

attentive to always maintain a fitting depiction of the gods. This feature comes especially to the forefront in the debates between the different philosophical schools since they are all concerned to preserve a fitting notion of god.

Besides Plutarch, we shall briefly consider the second century AD Platonist Alcinous whose *"Handbook of Platonism* (Διδασκαλικός των Πλάτωνος δογμάτων)"[321], a teaching manual for teachers, is among the best starting points for an investigation of middle Platonic thought since its intention is to provide a condensed account of Plato's doctrines and hence makes for one of "der interessantesten Zeugnisse des Mittelplatonismus".[322] In the case of first principles, Alcinous presents us with what is often considered the "classical" view of Middle Platonism, the assumption of three principles: god, forms, and matter (*Did*. 9.1/ 163.11-14).[323] Moreover, the forms which are "eternal and unchanging (αἰώνιά τε καὶ ἄτρεπτα)" (*Did*. 9.3/163.34) are located within god as his thoughts for he is an intellect (νοῦς) which is "engaged in thinking of itself and its own thoughts (ἑαυτὸν ἂν οὖν καὶ τὰ ἑαυτοῦ νοήματα)" (*Did*. 10.3/164.27–30).[324] Turning to Alcinous' tenth chapter which deals with god, we encounter several descriptions of god which cohere with what would be considered god-fitting notions by Xenophanes and Plato.[325] God is an intellect which is able to act (Ἐνεργεῖ) while "remaining itself unmoved (ἀκίνητος αὐτος ὤν)"[326]. He is, moreover, described as "the Good (ἀγαθὸς μέν ἐστι)"[327], "eternal (ἀΐδιος)"[328], as well as perfect in an all-encompassing way, which is expressed by Alcinous as god being "'self-perfect (αὐτοτελὴς)' (that is, deficient in no respect (ἀπροσδεής)), 'ever-perfect (ἀειτελὴς)' (that is, always perfect (ἀεὶ τέλειος)), and 'all-perfect (παντελὴς)' (that is, perfect in all respects (πάντη τέλειος))" (*Did*. 10.3/164.32-33).

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[321] For the correct title see Dillon's remarks in John M. Dillon, trans., *Alcinous: The Handbook of Platonism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), xiii.
[322] Franco Ferrari, "Alkinoos," in *Philosophie der Kaiserzeit und Spätantike* (vol. 1; Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie. Die Philosophie der Antike 5; Basel: Schwabe Verlag, 2018), 1:608.
For further information on Alcinous see Dillon, *Middle Platonists*, 267–306 ; Ferrari, "Alkinoos." For the Greek text of the *Didaskalikos* see John Whittaker, ed., *Alcinoos: Enseignement des doctrines de Platon* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1990). For an English translation and extensive commentary see Dillon, *Handbook*. It should be noted that in Dillon, *Middle Platonists*, 267–206 Alcinous is treated as "Albinus", the presumed name by earlier scholarship. Later, Dillon changed his opinion under the influence of Whittaker and others (see Dillon, *Handbook*, ix–xiii. And his acknowledgment in the afterword to the second edition Dillon, *Middle Platonists*, 445–46.).
[323] For example Ferrari, "Alkinoos," in *Philosophie der Kaiserzeit und Spätantike*, 1:610. The three principles are discussed in *Did*. 8 (matter), 9 (forms), and 10 (god).
[324] Ibid.
[325] The fact that at the beginning of the chapter Alcinous refers to god as ineffable (ἄρρητος) but then proceeds to describe various characteristics of god has often confused readers. However, as Dillon argues, the notion of god's ineffability has to be understood as it being "impossible to communicate the nature of the deity to everyone, that is, it is possible only to a few" (Dillon, *Handbook*, 101.). In *Did.* 10.5-6, Alcinous presents three ways to conceive of god, namely – to label them with their better known later scholastic Latin terms – *via negationis*, *via analogiae*, and *via eminentiae*. On this see Ibid., 109–10; Ferrari, "Alkinoos," in *Philosophie der Kaiserzeit und Spätantike*, 1:211.
[326] *Did*. 10.2 (164.23). The forms are described as the "eternal and perfect thoughts of God" (τὰς ἰδέας νοήσεις θεοῦ αἰωνίους τε καὶ αὐτοτελεῖς)" (Did 9.2 = 163.30-31).
[327] *Did*. 10.3 (164.36)
[328] *Did*. 10.3 (164.31)

Strikingly, towards the end of the chapter, Alcinous argues that god "is motionless in respect to both locomotion and qualitative change (ἀκίνητος ἄν εἴη κατὰ τόπον καὶ ἀλλοίωσιν)" (*Did*. 10.7/165.38) and provides a proof which is indebted to Plato's argument for the second typos in the Republic and the principle of god-fittingness, which is expressed by Alcinous with the term ἄτοπος, denoting the absurdity – that is the unfittingness – of supposing a particular characteristic to apply to god's nature.[329] Alcinous argues that

> "if he [sc. god] were subject to change, this would have to be by his own agency or that of another. If at the hands of another, that one would be stronger than him; if by his own agency, either he would be altered for the worse or for the better" (*Did*. 7.3/165.38-42).

Ultimately, Alcinous dismisses both options by remarking that "both alternatives are absurd (ἄμφω δὲ ἄτοπα)" (*Did*. 7.3/165.42), hence implying that neither would befit god's nature. Likewise, the ensuing case for god's incorporeality is based on the notion of god-fittingness, with the term ἄτοπος appearing three more times. The claim of god's incorporeality is advanced by three arguments each of which contends that the consequences resultant from the premise "if god were a body" are utterly absurd (ἄτοπος) – that is, they would not befit god's nature – and therefore god's incorporeality has to be presumed. For example, Alcinous argues that "if he [sc. god; FG] is a body, he would be also perishable (φθαρτὸς) and generated (γενητὸς) and subjected to change (μεταβλητός); but each of these is absurd in his connection (ἕκαστον δὲ τούτων ἄτοπον ἐπ' αὐτοῦ)" (*Did*. 7.3/166.12-14).[330]

I.4. The Concern for God-Fittingness in the Debates on God's Nature

While we have already witnessed disagreement between the Stoics and the Epicureans over the question of whether the notion of divine providence was part of one's common perception, the Sceptics were particularly keen to expose what they perceived as inconsistencies within the Stoic system. Indeed, Arcesilaus found himself in a debate with the Stoics and is said to have "launched an all-out attack on the arguments that streamed from him [sc. Zeno the Stoic; FG] … And observing the fame at Athens of that doctrine and its name, which Zeno had first discovered – the cognitive impression – he used every resource against it" (LS 68G). It was, therefore, in particular the theory of cognitive impressions which found itself at the centre of the dispute. The fact that the Epicureans and Stoics disagreed over what exactly should be considered as part of a cognitive impressions was utilized by the Sceptics to argue for

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[329] The recent German translation renders ἄτοπος with "unstatthaft" which expresses the notion of fittingness well. See Alcinous, *Didaskalikos: Lehrbuch der Grundsätze Platons* (trans. Orrin Finn Summerell and Thomas Zimmer; Sammlung wissenschaftlicher Commentare; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2007), 29. While Dillon also recognises Alcinous' primary indebtedness to the argument in the *Republic*, he also notes *Parmenides* 138b7-139b3 as a possible further parallel (Dillon, *Handbook*, 110.).

[330] Cf. the arguments that "it is absurd (ἄτοπον) that god should be composed of matter and form (for he could not then be simple or primordial)" (*Did*. 7.3 = 166.5-7) and that "[s]ince these conclusions [sc. from the premise of god being body], then, are absurd (ἀτόπων ὄντων)" god's incorporeality has to be assumed (*Did*. 7.3 = 166.11-12).

a complete "suspension of judgement" (LS 68I; cf. 68H). This could either be achieved by advancing equally strong arguments for both sides of an argument, as was famously demonstrated by Carneades during his visit to Rome (LS 68M), or by highlighting contradictions within the Stoic system. It is this latter aspect which we shall consider in this section by investigating two of our primary transmitters of Academic Sceptic thought – the Platonist Plutarch and the Pyrrhonian Sceptic Sextus Empiricus – who both utilised arguments from the Academic Sceptic tradition.[331] Moreover, the Sceptics make a great case as they utilised both the Epicurean critique of the Stoics and vice versa.[332]

First, it is important to note that in their attack on the Epicurean and Stoic "attempt to justify theological doctrines by appeal to experience, conceptual analysis, and argument", the Sceptics were not arguing for atheism but rather an agnostic position that suspended judgment on these matters.[333] As we had seen earlier, both the Epicureans and the Stoics assumed there to be a criterion for the establishment of truth of which the notion of preconception was an essential feature, the validity of which the Sceptics contested (especially LS 41C, 70A, cf. 70B-C). Regarding the preconception of the divine the Epicureans and Stoics both agreed on one characteristic of the divine: that of "beatitude, or supremely perfect life."[334] With both Epicureans and Stoics starting their reasoning from preconceptions, the major "question at issue between them was the nature of the being or beings which qualified for this attribute. To put it another way, where in the world or out of it should we look for a nature that answers to this preconception (prolepsis)?"[335] Indeed, as has been observed by various scholars, the starting point of Stoic theology is found in the proleptic conception of the nature of god which is then – that is only subsequently – attempted to be identified with the world via theological proofs.[336] Hence the function of the Stoic proofs of god's existence is only to establish the identity between the Stoic preconception and the world. Thus, it is essentially due to the prominent role the preconceptions of the divine occupy within Stoic theology that Sextus is keen to attack them. He does so as part of his attempt to prove the

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[331] Besides these two it is especially Cicero who provides us with information on the Academic Sceptics. The complicated relationship between Sextus' form of Scepticism and that of the New Academy does not need to concern us here. In particular, we have further reason to disregard this issue here as in the section we are concerned with – i.e., god – it appears likely that Sextus is drawing on the arguments of Academic Sceptics. Not only do Sextus' arguments overlap with those of Cotta in Cicero, *ND* 3, but he also mentions Carneades at 1.140 and acknowledges his indebtedness to him for his arguments in 1.182–90. Cf. Richard Bett, ed., *Sextus Empiricus: Against the Physicists* (trans. Richard Bett; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), XIV, with n. 15; A. A. Long, "Scepticism About Gods," in *From Epicurus to Epictetus: Studies in Hellenistic and Roman Philosophy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006), 116–17, with nn. 5 and 7; Richard Bett, "God: *M* 9.13–194," in *Sextus Empiricus and Ancient Physics* (ed. Keimpe Algra and Katerina Ierodiakonou; Cambridge University Press, 2015), 50–51.

[332] Long, "Scepticism," 117–18. See for instance Sextus' use of the Epicurean notion of pleasure as the absence of pain in his argument against the Stoics (SE 9.162–6); on which see James Warren, "What God Didn't Know (Sextus Empiricus AM IX 162–166)," in *New Essays on Ancient Pyrrhonism* (ed. Diego E. Machuca; Leiden: Brill, 2011), 41–68.

[333] Long, "Scepticism," 116. See also the comment in Cicero that Carneades' intent "was not to get rid of the gods […] but to convict the Stoics of failing to explain anything about the gods" (LS 70D).

[334] Ibid., 118.

[335] Ibid.

[336] Ibid., 118–19, with n. 9.

non-existence of a god who is supposed to correspond to these preconceptions. Hence, Sextus' attack attempts to show that the acceptance of a concept of god in accordance with Stoic preconceptions would result in the outcome that this god has to be thought of as perishable. However, the notion of god being perishable contradicts the god-fitting notion of an imperishable god and therefore has to be dismissed.

In his argument for the non-existence of such a god (9.138-190), Sextus consequently starts from the Stoic preconceptions that god is an animal as well as sentient and possessing all virtues in perfection.[337] Reasoning from these characteristics, Sextus demonstrates that it has to logically follow that such a god is perishable. For instance, he argues that the various sense-perceptions such as smelling, seeing, hearing result in situations which are

> "distressing to god; and if there are certain things distressing to god, god comes to be in a state of change for the worse, and so also in a state of perishing. Therefore god is perishable (φθαρτὸς ἄρα ὁ θεός)." (9.143)

Commenting on the outcome that this god is perishable, Sextus remarks:

> "But this is contrary to the common conception of him (τοῦτο δὲ παρὰ τὴν κοινὴν ἔννοιαν ὑπῆρχεν αὐτοῦ); so there is not the divine (τοίνυν οὐκ ἔστι τὸ θεῖον)." (9.143)

Thus, Sextus places the outcome (perishability) of his reasoning on one Stoic conception (sentience) in contrast to another (imperishability)[338], asserting the former to be contrary to the latter, thereby reaching his goal of demonstrating the non-existence of a divine being which is understood in accordance with this particular Stoic preconception. While not explicitly using the terminology, supposing a notion to be contrary to the common conception of god entails its being unfitting for god's nature. This aspect comes more fully to the fore when Sextus summarises his earlier argument – in a way that partly resembles Plato's syllogism for the second typos – observing that

> "sense-perception is a kind of alteration; […] but if he [sc. god] is altered, he is liable to alteration and change; but if he is liable to change, he is definitely also liable to change for the worse. But if so, he is also perishable. But it is absurd to say that (ἄτοπον δέ γε τὸ λέγειν) god is perishable (τὸν θεὸν φθαρτὸν ὑπάρχειν); therefore it is also absurd to maintain that he is (ἄτοπον ἄρα καὶ τὸ ἀξιοῦν εἶναι τοῦτον)". (9.146-147)

Thus, besides Sextus' maintaining that the result (i.e. a perishable god) is not only "absurd to say (ἄτοπον δέ γε τὸ λέγειν)", his contention that it would also be "absurd to consider it suitable or fitting"

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[337] We can observe that Sextus starts from the Stoic preconception of god as "Animal or animate, sentient, and supremely excellent or virtuous" (Ibid., 121.).
[338] It should be noted that the earlier Stoics did not assume imperishability to be an attribute of god and we are, therefore, dealing with a critique of the later Stoics. See on this our comments below.

– as τὸ ἀξιοῦν could also be translated – that such a god exists, suggests a very close link between absurdity and unfittingness.

Yet, it should be noted that, as Long has shown, the earlier Stoics, such as Chrysippus, did not presume imperishability to be an essential characteristic of god's nature, since they "presumably did not regard it as part of the Stoic preconception of divinity."[339] Hence, Sextus is probably attacking the view of the later Stoics, such as Diogenes of Babylon and Antipater of Tarsus, here, for they changed their view on this matter and did assume imperishability to be an essential feature of god's nature. The reason for the later Stoics to have modified their view on the preconception of the divine had been caused, unsurprisingly, by another Sceptic attack to which we shall now turn for it is also concerned with maintaining a fitting understanding of god's nature.

It was the Stoic notion of conflagration that elicited severe attacks by the Academics and Platonists. And at the centre of their critique was a concern for the preservation of a nature befitting the divine; something they accused the Stoics of violating by their concept of conflagration. As we had noticed above, the Stoics assumed a perpetual cycle of the world's conflagration and eventual reconstitution. However, since the Stoics supposed god to be immanent in matter, leading to such statements that equated god with the world, the consequence would be to assume that god was himself subject to this conflagration.

We can already note that Plutarch takes issue with the Stoic pantheistic conception of god by applying the concept of fittingness, stating that "it is neither probable nor fitting (Οὐ γὰρ εἰκὸς οὐδὲ πρέπον) that god is, as some philosophers [sc. the Stoics] say, mingled with matter (ἐν ὕλῃ), which is altogether passive, and with things, which are subject to countless necessities, chances, and changes (ἀνάγκας καὶ τύχας καὶ μεταβολάς)" (*Ad princ. iner.*, 781f).[340] Hence, Plutarch rejects the Stoic view that virtually equates god with matter since it entails subjecting god to change during the conflagration of the world. Thus, Plutarch accuses the Stoics to have inadvertently introduced with their notion of conflagration the conception of god as finite and subject to destruction, a notion that went against the common conception held by most people, for it uprooted "the established traditions in the belief about the gods (τὰ καθεστῶτα […] καὶ πάτρια τῆς περὶ θεῶν δόξης)" (*De comm. not.* 31.1074e). This belief, which is held by all humans, Plutarch purports, is the conception that "the divinity is […] indestructible and everlasting (ἄφθαρτον […] καὶ ἀίδιον τὸ θεῖον)" (*De comm. not.* 31.1074f). Moreover, such "common preconceptions about the gods (κοιναῖς προλήψεσι περὶ θεῶν)" are confirmed by the poetic tradition as Plutarch points out and in support of which he cites lines from Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* as well as Pindar that speak of the everlastingness and immortality of the gods (*De comm. not.* 31.1074f-1075a).[341]

[339] Long, "Scepticism," 124.
[340] Dreyer, *Untersuchungen*, 54.
[341] Homer, *Ody*. 6.46, *Il*. 5.442; Pindar, *frag*. 143.

Furthermore, Plutarch even marshals some famous atheists in support, claiming that while they may have denied the existence of god, they never supposed the nature of the gods whom they denied to be perishable and hence Plutarch mockingly concludes that even the atheists were "preserving the preconception of god while not admitting the existence of what is indestructible (τοῦ μὲν ἀφθάρτου τὴν ὕπαρξιν μὴ ἀπολείποντες τοῦ δὲ θεοῦ τὴν πρόληψιν φυλάττοντες)" (1075a).

Hence, Plutarch derides the Stoics for the various "absurdities (τῶν ἀτόπων)" which follow "as consequences of their doctrines", which, in this case, is the Stoic claim that except Zeus "all the other gods have come into being and will be destroyed by fire (τοὺς ἄλλους θεοὺς ἅπαντας εἶναι γεγονότας καὶ φθαρησομένους ὑπὸ πυρός)" (*De comm. not.* 31.1075b-c). The absurdity is that god is described in unfitting ways for the notion of god being perishable does not preserve the essential difference between the divine and mankind, since one cannot, Plutarch complains, "see what difference there would be between god and man (οὐχ ὁρῶ, τίς ἔσται θεοῦ πρὸς ἄνθρωπον διαφορά) if god too is an animal rational and subject to destruction (φθαρτόν)" (1075c). Yet, Plutarch was aware of the fact that Chrysippus and Cleanthes made a distinction between the gods of this world and Zeus, believing that "none of all these many [sc. the gods of this world] is indestructible or everlasting (οὐδένα τῶν τοσούτων ἄφθαρτον οὐδ' ἀίδιον) except Zeus alone (πλὴν μόνου τοῦ Διός), in whom they consume all the rest" (*De comm. not.* 31.1075b).[342] However, Plutarch likewise argued that the gods' dissolvement into Zeus was not fitting for Zeus' nature either, contending that

> "The result is that he [sc. Zeus] too has the attribute of destruction (ὥστε καὶ τούτῳ τὸ φθείρειν προσεῖναι), which is not more fitting than that of being destroyed (τοῦ φθείρεσθαι μὴ ἐπιεικέστερον), for some weakness is the reason (ἀσθενείᾳ γάρ τινι) both why what changes into a different thing is destroyed (τὸ μεταβάλλον εἰς ἕτερον φθείρεται) and why that is preserved which is nourished on the destruction of others that it absorbs (τὸ τοῖς ἄλλοις εἰς ἑαυτὸ φθειρομένοις τρεφόμενον σῴζεται)" (*De comm. not.* 31.1075b).

Hence, while Plutarch acknowledges that Zeus is not being destroyed, he assumes that Zeus is being sustained by the gods which are incorporated into him, hence asserting that the chief characteristic underlying both processes is "weakness". In the case of Zeus, this weakness is, as just mentioned, his need of having gods dissolved into him in order to be sustained. Thus, Plutarch can argue that Zeus' weakness of having a need "is not more fitting than that of being destroyed (τοῦ φθείρεσθαι μὴ ἐπιεικέστερον)" (*De comm. not.* 31.1075b).[343]

Moreover, since the Stoics claimed that the world's constitution of being useful and beneficent to mankind evinced its providential maker, a related challenge faced by the Stoics was the objection as to

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[342] Cf. also LS 28O and 46O.
[343] See also Dreyer, *Untersuchungen*, 54.

why a providential god should destroy a perfect world. Would this not demonstrate the world to not be perfect or – even worse – god to not be providential as was the common belief since Plato?[344] It appears likely that the Stoics tried to resolve this issue by considering the question of conflagration in the context of theodicy as is indicated by two of Plutarch's comments that "when the conflagration comes Zeus, being the only imperishable one among the gods, withdraws into providence, whereupon both, having come together, continue to occupy the single substance of aether" (LS 28O = Plutarch, *De comm. not.* 1077c-e) as well as that after the conflagration "no evil at all remains, but the whole is then prudent and wise" (46N = Plutarch, *De comm. not.* 1067a).[345] Nonetheless, it appears that under the sustained critique of Academic Sceptics like Carneades, some later Stoics such as Boethus of Sidon, Diogenes of Babylon, and Panaetius changed their views and "gave up the conflagrations and regenerations (τὰς ἐκπυρώσεις καὶ παλιγγενεσίας), and deserted to the holier doctrine (πρὸς ὁσιώτερον δόγμα) of the entire world's indestructability (τὸ τῆς ἀφθαρσίας τοῦ κόσμου παντὸς)" (LS 46P Philo). This report by Philo of Alexandria seems to provide a further indication that it was a concern over possessing a fitting notion of god's nature: this holier or more fitting doctrine –ὁσιώτερον δόγμα – necessitated the belief that the world (and by implication god) was indestructible.[346]

Yet, the "pantheism" of the Stoics issued forth many further difficulties which were exposed by (Academic) Sceptics and Platonists. In particular, the Stoic equation of providence and fate with god raised the concern of how god could be said to be good and providential in the face of moral and cosmic evil. The Stoics attempted to answer this problem of evil both via the assumption of free will within an overall deterministic system as well as the supposition that certain things should be thought of as contrary to what they seemed. Regarding the latter, Plutarch mentions that it was Chrysippus' belief that "for the divinity to become accessory to shameful things is not reasonable, for just as law could not become accessory to illegality or the gods to ungodliness so it is reasonable for them not to be accessories to anything shameful either" (1049e), ultimately leading him to advance the argument that many bad things had to be understood as divine beneficial acts, hence explaining wars, such as the Trojan war, to have been "brought about by the gods for the purpose of draining off the surplus population" (Plutarch, *De Stoic. rep.* 1049b). Likewise, Chrysippus is said to have pronounced that "bed-bugs are useful for waking us, that mice encourage us to not be untidy" (LS 54O). All of these attempts seem to derive from Chrysippus' desire to square the existence of evil (which he believed to only appear as such) with the belief of god as the active creating and providential principle, whilst preserving a fitting notion of god. However, Plutarch keenly perceives an inherent contradiction in the

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[344] It is also noted by Forschner that this question is even more pressing in light of the fact that the Stoics drew heavily on Plato's Timaeus in which it is professed, as we had observed above, that the world would not cease to exist as a direct consequence of the Demiurge's goodness (see Forschner, *Philosophie der Stoa*, 142.).
[345] See on these issues Ibid., 142–43.
[346] Furthermore, Plutarch reports that – unlike Chrysippus – the later Stoic Antipater of Tarsus "thinks that in the gods there is nothing indestructible except fire" (*De Stoic. rep.* 38.1051F).

Stoic attempt to think of god not as an "accessory to anything shameful (οὐδενὸς αἰσχροῦ) and at the same time that not even the slightest thing can come about" without him, due to his being the causal nexus of the world, its fate, and providence (Plutarch, *De Stoic. rep.* 34.1075B). Rather, the consequence of these convictions, Plutarch asserts, has to be that god is indeed responsible for the shameful as well, since "among all the things that come about are included […] the shameful (τὰ αἰσχρὰ) also" (*De Stoic. rep.* 34.1050b5-8).

Indeed, Plutarch recognised a major contradiction in the Stoic view that god was both the ultimate cause of everything, whilst not responsible for evil. Believing god to be the active principle, fate, and even the world, Chrysippus is alleged to have declared that every part of the world had to be "in conformity with the will of Zeus", since "it is the nature of every animate thing to stay and to move as Zeus guides it and as he turns and stops and arranges it" (*De comm. not.* 1076e). Yet, Plutarch asserts that, if god was the cause of everything (*De comm. not.* 34.1076d-e), then the Stoics were consequently "mak[ing] god (τὸν θεὸν ποιοῦσιν), though good (ἀγαθὸν ὄντα), the origin of things evil (δὲ τῶν κακῶν ἀρχὴν)" 1076c). The only possible solution to this contradiction is the rejection of one of the two premises. Considering the Stoic unwillingness to do either, Plutarch assesses that it would be

> "ten thousand times more fitting (μυριάκις γὰρ […] ἐπιεικέστερον) to think that owing to the weakness (ἀσθενείᾳ) and impotence (ἀδυναμίᾳ) of Zeus his parts break out and do many monstrous deeds contrary to his nature and his will (παρὰ τὴν ἐκείνου φύσιν καὶ βούλησιν) than to say that there is neither incontinence (μήτ' ἀκρασίαν) nor villainy (μήτε κακουργίαν) for which Zeus is not responsible (οὐκ ἔστιν ὁ Ζεὺς αἴτιος)." (*De comm. not.* 1076f).

To be sure, Plutarch would not consider it to be fitting for god to be either weak or evil. Yet, he believes there to be a gradient within what befits – or rather, does not befit – god.[347] Since Plutarch sees it as logically contradictory to assert – like the Stoics – that there is "neither incontinence (μήτ' ἀκρασίαν) nor villainy (μήτε κακουργίαν) for which Zeus is not responsible (οὐκ ἔστιν ὁ Ζεὺς αἴτιος)", he suggests that it is "more fitting (ἐπιεικέστερον)" to concede that god is not all powerful than to assume him to be responsible for evil.[348]

In the context of the Stoic notion of fate, questions of how god, the ultimate causal nexus, could still be said to interact with mankind in divination and prayer raised further difficulties and both Epicureans as well as Sceptics attacked Stoic notions of divination.[349] Epicurus, for instance, rejected divination, deriding the foretelling of the weather from the behaviour of animals as folly, since "no divine being

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[347] This was first observed by Dreyer, *Untersuchungen*, 52.
[348] Dreyer rightly notes that this portrays the influence of Plato's first typos on Plutarch's thought. See Dreyer, *Untersuchungen* 52.
[349] For the following see Algra, "Stoic Theology," 173. Divination had also been attacked by the sceptic Carneades (Cicero, *Div*. 1.12).

sits observing when these animals go out and afterwards fulfilling the signs which they have given", especially if the divine being "enjoys perfect felicity" (DL 10.115-116).[350] As is clear, what underlies Epicurus' argument is his dismissal of any involvement of the gods in worldly affairs on the basis that this was not befitting the gods' blessed state. However, contrary to this, the Stoics had affirmed in their argument for divination[351] that they did not "consider it inappropriate to their [sc. the gods'; FG] majesty (for nothing is more glorious than beneficence)" (Cicero, *Div*. 1.82), but agreed, on the other hand, that the idea that "the gods are concerned with every single fissure of livers, with every birdsong" had to be dismissed on the grounds of being "neither appropriate, nor worthy of the gods, nor in any way possible (*neque enim decorum est nec dis dignum nec fieri ullo pacto potest*) (*Div*. 1.118), hence demonstrating that they too were concerned to maintain a god-fitting understanding of the nature of god.[352] Thus, they defended divination by assuming, as Wardle noted, "a global system of causality which the gods had organized" and which thereby absolved them from the charge of being concerned with the smallest issue whilst remaining in overall charge (cf. Cicero, *Div*. 1.118).[353]

Furthermore, we can witness the principle of god-fittingness at work in Plutarch's debate with the Epicureans. In *Non posse,* his follow-up to his anti-Epicurean *Adversus Colotem*, Plutarch discusses the Epicurean notion of pleasure, which is purported to achieve "in peace of mind the unperturbed condition (τὴν ἀταραξίαν τῆς ψυχῆς)" after the removal of allegedly false notions about the gods and the afterlife. Following his mocking of the Epicureans' general enterprise by suggesting that in that case animals must most firmly hold this state of mind as they do not even have to "put aside the notion about the gods that is disturbing, but have never even adopted it" (1092a-1092b-c),[354] Plutarch reproaches the Epicureans for their exclusion of the notion of "providence in their conception of God" (*Non posse* 1092b).

In the first tenet of his Κυρίαι Δόξαι, Epicurus had asserted that due to the divine's blessedness and imperishability, it "neither suffers trouble itself nor brings it on others; hence it is not a prey to feelings of anger or of favour" (KD 1), thereby omitting all feelings from the divine nature, including providence. Against this, Plutarch appeals to the first Platonic typos and insists that it is because of god's goodness that it is not only fitting (θέμις) but also binding for god not to harm but to also exercise providence.[355] Thus, Plutarch contends against Epicurus that it is not owing to the exclusion of all

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[350] (= Epicurus' Letter to *Pythocles*). Cf. also 10.98. Epicurus advises Pythocles that through study and examination he will realise that god is not the cause and will "understand the causes of the particular phenomena" (10.116).
[351] As Algra, "Stoic Theology," 173 notes, the Stoics considered divination as a science that was concerned with fate and not "some kind of irrational religious hocus-pocus, nor as a form of theurgy."
[352] Translation (slightly modified) is that of D. Wardle, *Cicero on Divination: De Divinatione, Book 1* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006). For comments on the passage see *ibid*., p. 390.
[353] Ibid., 390. For further comments see *ibid.* and Algra, "Stoic Theology," 173.
[354] The brutes have obviously never adopted a wrong notion of the gods as they are not possessing reason.
[355] Plutarch expresses this binding necessity via a metaphor of heat having the property to warm and not to chill. See above for a fuller discussion of this passage.

feelings that god cannot exercise providence but that due to god's goodness all negative feelings are to be excluded and all positive feelings are to be confirmed, stating that "because it *is* God's nature (πέφυκεν) to bestow favour and lend aid, it is *not* his nature (οὐ πέφυκεν) to be angry (ὀργίζεσθαι) and do harm (κακῶς ποιεῖν)" (1102) – god's nature being, of course, goodness.

We may end this brief discussion on which notions the different philosophical schools deemed to befit god's nature with a comment by Plutarch, for the times that were to soon come witnessed an increasing importance of Platonic thought.[356]

> "If, then, he who holds that the gods are subject to destruction (φθαρτοὺς) is as absurd (ἄτοπος) as is he who believes that they are not provident (προνοητικοὺς) and humane (φιλανθρώπους), Chrysippus has erred as much as has Epicurus, for the latter eliminates the beneficence (τὸ εὐποιητικὸν) of the gods and the former their indestructibility (τὸ ἄφθαρτον)." (*De Stoic. rep.* 1052b)

II. The Continued Concern over the God-Fittingness of Poetry

As we had seen, the notion of fittingness played a major role in the various philosophical debates on how god's nature should be conceived. However, how did the philosophical schools perceive the poetry of Homer which told of the divine? While most philosophers integrated or supported their beliefs by inserting references to poetry, especially that of Homer, the question we want to consider is how they viewed the various episodes in Homer which might be considered unfitting depictions of the divine?

As we had observed earlier, the Epicureans critiqued the detrimental influence of the myths on mankind's perception of the gods for the myths disseminated a wrong picture of reality which led to fear (cf. LS 24F). As Epicurus had pointed out, many people were "expecting or apprehending some everlasting evil, either because of the myths, or because we are in dread of the mere insensibility of death" (Letter to Herodotus 81 = DL 10.81).[357] Hence, we find the later Epicurean Velleius asserting that poetry's false and unfitting depictions of the gods were "harmful […] owing to the mere charm of their style (*suavitate nocuerunt*)", since they were falsely

> "represent[ing] the gods as inflamed by anger (*ira inflammatos*) and maddened by lust (*libidine furentis*), and have displayed to our gaze their wars and battles, their fights and wounds, their hatreds (*odia*), enmities and quarrels, their births and deaths, their complaints and lamentations, the utter and unbridled licence of their passions, their adulteries (*adulteria*) and imprisonments

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[356] This is, of course, a gradual process as Stoa and Garden continue to play a very important role. One only has to consider the famous Roman Stoics, including Seneca and emperor Marcus Aurelius, the latter of whom instituted "chairs" for the major philosophical schools in AD 176. Moreover, Aristotelianism is being reinvigorated at this time as well.

[357] Cf. KD 12 (=DL 10.143): "but lived in dread because of what the legends tell us (ὑποπτεύοντά τι τῶν κατὰ τοὺς μύθους).

(*vincula*), their unions with human beings and the birth of mortal progeny from an immortal parent." (Cicero, *ND* 1.16).

Hence, it is not surprising that Epicurus is usually ascribed a negative view of poetry and is purported to have recommended that "the wise man will be able to converse correctly about music and poetry, without however actually writing poems himself" (DL 10.120).[358]

Contrary to the Epicureans' dismissal of the unfitting depictions of the gods in poetry, the Stoics often used allegorical interpretation which disposed of the unfitting depictions of the gods for which they were criticised by the Epicureans. Moreover, the Epicureans derided the Stoic approach to myths, such as the Homeric ones, as a violent appropriation of the myths for their own theology. We find, for instance, references of this Epicurean reproach in Philodemus[359] as well as in Cicero's *De Natura Deorum*, where the Epicurean Velleius alleges that Chrysippus' physical allegoresis of various gods as elements proves nothing else but Chrysippus' "aim[ing] at reconciling (*accommodare*) the myths of Orpheus, Musaeus, Hesiod and Homer with his own theology" (*ND* 1.41).[360] Criticism such as this has led scholars to believe that it must have been via allegoresis that the earlier Stoics "secured the support of Homer and the other great poets of the past for their own philosophy", as is for instance concluded by Pfeiffer after just citing this very passage.[361] Hence, following the Epicurean criticism, scholars such as Dreyer often assumed that the Stoics' allegorical interpretation of the myths chiefly represented a defence, which attempted to save Homer from his critics who had derided the poet for depicting the gods in unfitting ways, as well as an appropriation of the poet for their own theology.[362]

However, while the Stoics' allegorical interpretations did inadvertently "absolve" Homer from some of the criticism levelled against his depictions of the gods, it seems that this was not the Stoics' primary

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[358] Cf. "Epicurus writing to Pythocles: 'Hoist the sails of your ship and, my blessed man, steer clear of every form of conventional education' and "Epicurus writing to Apelles: 'I count you blessed, Apelles, because you have started out pure of every form of conventional education'", cited in Diskin Clay, "Framing the Margins of Philodemus and Poetry," in *Philodemus And Poetry* (ed. Dirk Obbink; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 3–4. Cf. Plutarch, *Non posse* 1094d and Sextus Empiricus, *AM* 6.27.

[359] See for this Philodemus' *Περὶ εὐσεβείας/De pietate*, in which he accuses Chrysippus that „[i]m 2. (Buch) versucht er in der Nachfolge des Kleanthes, was dem Orpheus und Musaios zugeschrieben wird und was bei Homer, Hesiod, Euripides und anderen Dichtern steht, mit den stoischen Lehrmeinungen zu kombinieren (σ[υ]νοικειοῦ[ν] ταῖς δόξ[αι]ς αὐτῶ[ν])." (PHerc.1428, col. VI, ll. 16-26; Greek text and German translation are that of Albert Henrichs, "Die Kritik der stoischen Theologie im PHerc. 1428," *Cronache Ercolanesi* 4 (1974): 17.)

[360] Velleius alleges that Diogenes of Babylon followed Chrysippus in this approach to myth since he "rationalizes the myth of the birth of the virgin goddess from Jove by explaining it as an allegory of the processes of nature" (1.41). See also Algra, "Stoic Theology," 169.

[361] Pfeiffer, *Classical Scholarship*, 238.

[362] Dreyer, *Untersuchungen*, 42. Under the heading "Der Begriff des Gottgeziemenden in der allegorischen Methode der Stoiker" Dreyer devotes only about a page's length to this issue (pp. 42-43); there he maintains that the reason for the Stoics' use of allegoresis was to "weiterhin Homers Autorität als ‚Lehrer Griechenlands' aufrechtzuerhalten" and "alles Anstößige der Mythen zu beseitigen und zugleich die Göttervorstellungen der Dichter ihren eigenen anzupassen." (p. 42).

aim. Rather, as more recently argued by Boys-Stones,[363] the earlier Stoics believed that the poets had in fact unintentionally distorted some former wisdom: a wisdom which was held by an earlier generation of humans and which was far superior to the wisdom of current times, for these first humans had an undiluted perception of the divine since their "sharpness of thought was like an extra sense-organ, focused on the divine nature and conceived certain powers of the gods" (Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Physicists* 9.28).[364]

Moreover, as the approach of the Stoic Balbus, as described by Cicero, indicates, the earlier Stoics, namely Zeno, Cleanthes and Chryisppus, did not think of the poets as fountains of wisdom at all, but quite the opposite. Rather, these Stoics thought that the myths were "legends (*fabulas*)" created by the poets which now had "filled man's life with superstitions (*superstitione*) of all sorts" (2.63).[365] Moreover, Balbus offers an explanation how these myths were created in the first place. He states that there had originally been

> "[a]nother theory also, and that a scientific one (*ex ratione et quidem physica*), [which] has been the source of a number of deities, who clad in human form (*induti specie humana*) have furnished the poets with legends (*fabulas*) and have filled man's life with superstitions (*superstitione*) of all sorts." (Cicero, *ND* 2.63)

Balbus believes that there had been an original scientific theory which explained the multitude of the gods. This theory was, of course, as Balbus tells us, the (Stoic) theory of "the highest element of celestial ether or fire, which by itself generates all things", things which, as we had seen earlier, could equally be understood as divine for the divine permeated everything (2.64). Of course, this generation of divine things was, as Balbus asserts, a process that was entirely "devoid of that bodily part which requires union with another for the work of procreation" (2.64). Yet, according to Balbus, the poets distorted this scientific view of non-sexual procreation by not only describing the gods in anthropomorphic form, but also transforming its very essence into the shameful myth of Uranus being mutilated by Chronos (2.64).[366] Thus, we can now understand why the Stoics were able to suppose that within "these immoral fables (*impias fabulas*) [was] enshrined a decidedly clever scientific theory (*physica ratio non inelegans*)" (2.64). Yet, as we had seen, it was not the poet who had been the origin of this wisdom but earlier humans whose wisdom was only found in the distorted form of the poet's myths. Indeed, Balbus maintains that the poets' misunderstanding of the original wisdom had led to "a fruitful source of false

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[363] This argument has been advanced most prominently by George R. Boys-Stones, *Post-Hellenistic Philosophy: A Study of Its Development from the Stoics to Origen* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 3–59.

[364] Translation is Bett, *Sextus*.

[365] "Another theory also, and that a scientific one, has been the source of a number of deities, who clad in human form have furnished the poets with legends and have filled man's life with superstitions of all sorts. This subject was handled by Zeno and was later explained more fully by Cleanthes and Chrysippus." (Cicero, *ND* 2.63).

[366] The story is continued by Balbus with Zeus binding Chronos. Of course, Balbus uses here the Roman equivalents Caelus, Saturn, and Jove.

beliefs (*falsas opiniones*), crazy errors (*erroresque turbulentos*) and superstitions (*superstitiones*) hardly above the level of old wives' tales" (2.70). In turn, the influence of these had affected our understanding of the gods to the extent that we suppose to know

> "what the gods look like (*formae*) and how old they are (*aetates*), their dress and their equipment (*vestitus ornatusque*), and also their genealogies, marriages and relationships." (2.70)

Besides, through the myths we encounter the gods "represented as liable to passions and emotions—we hear of their being in love, sorrowful, angry" – and we even read of theomachies (2.70).[367] As Jaeger had observed, it appears that it is Xenophanes' anti-anthropomorphic critique which is in the background of this passage.[368] And indeed, Balbus, in similar fashion to Xenophanes, condemns all such depictions, since it is through these that the gods have been "distorted into the likeness of human frailty (*ad similitudinem inbecillitatis humanae*)", and advocates for the dismissal of both the myths (*dicuntur*) and the resultant beliefs (*creduntur*) since these are "utterly foolish (*stultissime*); they are stuffed with nonsense and absurdity of all sorts (*futilitatis summaeque levitates*)" (2.70).

However, while Balbus contends that these myths are repulsive since not befitting god's nature, he suggests that we are nonetheless able to discern the true nature of the gods within these myths by the means of allegorical interpretation.[369] Furthermore, while he recommends to continue with the customs of old and accordingly "worship these gods under the names which custom has bestowed upon them", Balbus asserts that "the best and also the purest, holiest and most pious way of worshipping the gods is ever to venerate them with purity (*pura*), sincerity (*integra*) and innocence (*incorrupta*) both of thought (*mente*) and of speech (*voce*)" (2.71). It is, therefore, the right thought and speech – thought and speech that befits the gods' nature – that is envisaged by Balbus. The names of the gods of old can be retained, but one has to think and speak of them in a god-fitting way; a way that is very much contrary to many of the erroneous and unfitting depictions of the gods in the myths and the popular beliefs resultant from these. One of the means to do so is via the use of etymology. And Balbus demonstrates that the names of the gods stand for various physical occurrences or indicate the nature of the divine (2.64-69).[370] However, distortions of this original wisdom were not only to be found in poetry but also sculpture as

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[367] As Balbus notes the gods fight each other directly, "not only when as in Homer two armies are contending and the gods take sides and intervene on their behalf, but they actually fought wars of their own" (2.70). This is of course not entirely correct as Zeus does not engage in any direct fighting in the *Iliad*. See Pease, p. 735.
[368] Jaeger, *Theology*, 214, n. 53.
[369] "But though repudiating these myths with contempt, we shall nevertheless be able to understand the personality and the nature of the divinities pervading the substance of the several elements, Ceres permeating earth, Neptune the sea, and so on" (2.71).
[370] This latter aspect can for instance be seen in the name Juno which is traced back to the Latin "*iuvare*" – to help – and shows divine beneficence (2.64).

is suggested by a report of Chrysippus interpreting a statue, which depicts a sexual act between Zeus and Hera, as matter receiving parts of divine reason (*logoi spermatikoi*).[371]

II.1 Plutarch and Poetry

Plutarch's treatise *How the Young Man should Study Poetry* is a fascinating work and of particular importance to our investigation since Plutarch's "central concern is not what we usually think of as 'literary criticism', but rather with the moral well-being of young men; the goal is the creation of the proper responses within young pupils which will prepare them for the challenges of serious philosophy when they are older."[372] Plutarch shows himself well aware of the dangers lurking in poetry as well as the critique Plato had levelled against it. However, while Plato had banned poetry from his ideal city, Plutarch is writing for the real-life situation, in which poetry was all pervasive in education and entertainment. And it is in this context that he devises a strategy for reading poetry. A strategy that aims at protecting the young man from the moral perils and negative influences that poetry is able to exert without proper hermeneutics and guidance in place.

Plutarch is very perceptive of the real-life situation he finds himself in and knows that young people receive great pleasure from poetry (cf. 14f-15a; 16a). Yet, he also knows that poetry contains much that is "disturbing and misleading (τὸ ταρακτικὸν καὶ παράφορον)" (15c3). Despite the latter, Plutarch dismisses the idea of rejecting poetry altogether (14f-15a; 15d)[373] and rather advises to guide the student with "proper oversight (παιδαγωγίας ὀρθῆς)" (15c; cf. 15a). Plutarch's goal is to instil in the student

> "some upright standard of reason (ὀρθῷ τινι λογισμῷ) and there bind them fast, guiding and guarding their judgement (τὴν κρίσιν), that it may not be carried away from the course by pleasure (τῷ τέρποντι) towards that which will do them hurt (πρὸς τὸ βλάπτον)" (15d11-14).

The way to inoculate the student's faculty of judgment lies in enlightening him about some key insights regarding the nature of poetry. One of the first and fundamental ones is the fact that "[m]any the lies the poets tell, some intentionally and some unintentionally ("πολλὰ ψεύδονται ἀοιδοὶ" τὰ μὲν ἑκόντες τὰ δ' ἄκοντες.")" (16a8-9). Hence, one has to be careful not be consumed and assert to "some strange and disconcerting statement (ἄτοπόν τι καὶ δυσχερὲς) either about gods or lesser deities (περὶ θεῶν ἢ δαιμόνων)" (16d1-2), risking to have one's "opinions perverted (διέφθαρται τὴν δόξαν)" (16d5). Rather, the ideal student should be someone "who always remembers and keeps clearly in mind the sorcery of

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[371] Boys-Stones, *Post-Hellenistic Philosophy*, 34, n. 16; Michael W. Herren, *The Anatomy of Myth: The Art of Interpretation from the Presocratics to the Church Fathers* (New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 115; Forschner, *Philosophie der Stoa*, 145.

[372] R. L. Hunter and D. A. Russell, eds., *Plutarch: How to Study Poetry (De Audiendis Poetis)* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 2. Cf. the comment: "what is at stake here is, after all, not 'literary interpretation', but the moral health of young men" (*ibid*., p. 16).

[373] Plutarch rejects the idea to "force them [sc. the young students; FG] to put to sea in the Epicurean boat, and avoid poetry and steer their course clear of it" (*Aud. poet.* 15d).

the poetic art in dealing with falsehood" (16d5-7), with the outcome that he "will not suffer any dire effects (οὐδὲν πείσεται δεινόν) or even acquire any base beliefs (οὐδὲ πιστεύσει φαῦλον)" (16d5-e2).

Indeed, unfitting examples can simply have been provided by the writer as examples of unfitting behaviour and at times Plutarch sees the poet provide a comment that indicates how he wants things understood. At other times, instances where one finds the writer to be wrong can also be perceived as (deliberate) instances where the writer provides a cause for deliberation, and one is allowed to adduce other writers or philosophers in support of one's view. Plutarch attempts to foster a hermeneutic of suspicion in the young readers.

Considering the mimetic arts of poetry and painting, Plutarch observes an important point: he maintains that when we admire a representation, we do not do so on the grounds that the representation is itself beautiful but that it has been represented in the likeness of its represented object. As he points out, the nature of an object always remains unchangeable, just as "by its essential nature (οὐσίᾳ) the ugly cannot become beautiful (οὐ δύναται καλὸν γενέσθαι τὸ αἰσχρόν). Hence, "the imitation (ἡ δὲ μίμησις), be it concerned with what is base (ἄν τε περὶ φαῦλον) or with what is good (ἄν τε περὶ χρηστὸν), if only it attain[s] to the likeness (τῆς ὁμοιότητος), is commended". This means that the representation of an ugly object, can be admired, not on the ground of its ugliness, but for its likeness to the object, thereby making it a fitting representation of the object. The reverse case would be if the mimetic arts were to "produce a beautiful picture (εἰκόνα καλὴν) of an ugly body (ἂν αἰσχροῦ σώματος), [since] it fails to give what propriety and probability require (τὸ πρέπον καὶ τὸ εἰκὸς οὐκ ἀπέδωκεν)" (18a4-10). It is important to note with Konstan and Russell that the terms καλός and αἰσχρός "have both aesthetic ('beautiful', 'ugly') and moral ('honourable', 'shameful') senses and thus ease the transition between the representation of images and of deeds."[374]

The latter is the case in immoral depictions such as matricide or pornographic depictions (18a-b). In such instances, Plutarch notes that "it is especially necessary (δεῖ) that the young man should be trained by being taught that what we commend is not the action (τὴν πρᾶξιν) which is the subject of the imitation (ἧς γέγονεν ἡ μίμησις), but the art (τὴν τέχνην), in case the subject in hand has been properly imitated (μεμίμηται προσηκόντως)" (18b3-5). The young man is therefore taught to differentiate between the form and the content of poetry. When the poet represents an object in accordance with its likeness, it is the form of poetry, its art of representing something in a fitting way. Yet, while this representation might be praised for its fitting depiction of the object, it does not follow that the portrayed content is praised as well. This is particularly important in cases where poetry "gives an imitative recital of base deeds (ἔργα φαῦλα), or of wicked experiences and characters (πάθη μοχθηρὰ καὶ ἤθη), [and] the young man must not accept as true (ὡς ἀληθὲς) what is admired (τὸ θαυμαζόμενον) and successful therein, nor

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[374] Hunter and Russell, *Poetry*, 99.

approve it as beautiful (ὡς καλόν), but should simply commend it as fitting (ὡς ἐναρμόττον) and proper (οἰκεῖον) to the character in hand" (18b). If the young man has understood this distinction, he is, in the encounter of morally wrong representations, able to "commend the faculty and art which imitates these things, but to repudiate and condemn the disposition and the actions which it imitates" (18d). Plutarch summarises his remarks by observing that "it is not the same thing at all to imitate something beautiful and something beautifully (οὐ γάρ ἐστι ταὐτὸ τὸ καλὸν καὶ καλῶς τι μιμεῖσθαι), since "beautifully (καλῶς)" means "fittingly and properly (τὸ πρεπόντως καὶ οἰκείως)" and ugly things (τὰ αἰσχρά) are "fitting and proper (οἰκεῖα δὲ καὶ πρέποντα) for the ugly (τοῖς αἰσχροῖς) (18d).

One way, Plutarch suggests, to realise whether the content is recommended and befits its object is "to see whether the poet himself gives any hints against the sentiments expressed to indicate that they are distasteful to himself" (19a). Indeed, Plutarch believes Homer to have often indicated what he makes of a particular scene or character in brief comments or closing remarks (19b). In the case of Ares engaging in adultery, Plutarch observes that Homer "represents the gods as saying, Evil deeds do not succeed; the swift by the slow is taken" (18d, citing *Ody*. 8.329). Moreover, we are encouraged to consider how immoral characters fare in the wider story. Plutarch suggests for instance that Euripides knew that his character Ixion was "an impious and detestable character" but saw no issue with it since the character was punished accordingly (19e). Similarly, Plutarch suggests that this type of didactic can also be found in Homer. However, unlike drama, we find that "[i]n Homer this form of instruction is given silently, but it leaves room for a reconsideration, which is helpful in the case of those stories which have been most discredited" (19e-f).[375] Hence, Plutarch suggests that while Homer does not always explicitly narrate the corresponding punishment for bad behaviour, it is often implied and can be realised when one contemplates the story. Consequently, Plutarch rejects the use of allegoresis as a means to explain any depictions of morally difficult actions or characters.

A further point made by Plutarch is that when one encounters unfitting depictions that are (morally) reprehensible, the teacher should refer to other instances in the poem where positive comments are made to the contrary, with the effect of nullifying the shameful ones. Strikingly, this method is not only restricted to the particular poem in question, but the teacher is permitted to adduce statements from other poets as well (20d-21d).

After illustrating this method of juxtaposing verses to each other (20c-d), Plutarch concludes that "passages as these admit of solutions (τὰς λύσεις) which are obvious (προδήλους), if, as has been said, we direct (κατευθύνωμεν) the young, by the use of criticism (τῇ κρίσει), toward the better side (πρὸς τὰ βελτίονα)" (20e). The same method is used for poetic depictions of the gods and Plutarch mentions "Homer's accounts of the gods being cast forth by one another, their being wounded by men, their

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[375] Ibid., 110.

disagreements, and the displays of ill-temper" as examples of unfitting depictions (20e). It is in contrast to such stories that Plutarch adduces lines from Homer which depict the gods in a god-fitting way (20e-f). The views contained in these other statements are described by Plutarch as "sound opinions about gods (ὑγιαίνουσαι περὶ θεῶν δόξαι), and true (ἀληθεῖς), but those other accounts have been fabricated (πέπλασται) to excite men's astonishment" (20f). Moreover, Plutarch instructs one to consider the context in which a statement is made as well as the meaning of words in their particular context in order to account for any seemingly unfitting statements made in a poem (22b-c).[376] Additionally, Plutarch points out how particular words are used by poets in different ways (22c-d). In particular the names of the gods can be used in manifold ways. Indeed, they can be used metaphorically to describe something else and hence the young need to be taught that "when the poets employ the names of the gods, sometimes they apprehend in their conception the gods themselves, and at other times they give the same appellation to certain faculties of which the gods are the givers and authors" (23a). An obvious example of this is the name Hephaestus denoting fire (23b).[377] Similarly, with the name Zeus "the poets address sometimes the god, sometimes Fortune, and oftentimes Fate" (23c-d). Plutarch lists an example of the former and then the latter, noting that in this verse it is fate that the poet speaks of when using the name Zeus. Strikingly, the reason Plutarch provides as the ground for determining whether the god Zeus is envisaged or, as he claims, fate, is the principle of god-fittingness; asserting that it has to be fate in this case

> "[f]or the poet does not imagine that it is the god who contrives evils for mankind, but by the name he rightly implies the compelling force of circumstances" (23d-e).

As this statement reveals, it is Plato's first typos that determines Plutarch's view of god and hence acts as the deciding principle in his hermeneutics. Most evidently, Plutarch expresses this hermeneutical principle when he states that "a corrective is to be found for most of the seemingly unjustifiable statements regarding Zeus" (24a-b), when one takes the name Zeus "as referring to Fortune or Fate, in which guise are denoted those phases of causation which baffle our logic (τὸ ἀσυλλόγιστον […] τῆς αἰτίας), and are, in a word, beyond us. But wherever there is appropriateness (τὸ προσῆκον), reason, and probability (κατὰ λόγον καὶ εἰκός) in the use of the name, let us believe that there the god himself is meant" (24b-c). Thus, the principle of god-fittingness is declared the arbiter in deciding whether it is the god Zeus or fate. Only in cases where the poem's description is found to be god-fitting, it is possible that it speaks of god; in all other cases, it has to be referring to fate.

Furthermore, Plutarch emphasises that it has to repeatedly be pointed out to the student that imitative poetry usually attempts to remain in the realm of the plausible and "does not forsake the semblance of

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[376] 22b: "We must not neglect, either, the means for rectifying a statement which are afforded by the words that lie near, or by the context".
[377] 23b: "it is fire that he called by this name and not the god".

truth, since imitation depends upon plausibility for its allurement" (25b-c). Yet, at times poetry diverts from this approach in order to achieve an emotional reaction from the audience (25d) and Plutarch notes that "not even the gods […] are represented in the poets' usage as free from emotion (ἀπαθέσι) or fault (ἀναμαρτήτοις), that the perturbing and exciting element in the poetry shall nowhere become idle and dull, for want of danger and struggle" (25d). Hence, he emphasises that poetry might depict the gods who are, in his view, free from emotion and fault, in ways contrary to their real nature for poetic effect.[378]

After being acquainted with the way poetry works, the student is now able to see through the varied depictions of gods and heroes and "feels elation and a sympathetic enthusiasm over noble words and deeds, and an aversion and repugnance for the mean, […] render[ing] his perusal of poetry harmless" (26a-b). Indeed, the student has learned the tools to discern what he reads and "acquire[d] the habit of exclaiming with confidence 'wrong (οὐκ ὀρθῶς)' and 'improper (οὐ προσηκόντως)' no less than 'right (ὀρθῶς)' and 'proper (πρεπόντως)'" in his verdict of poetry (26b11-12). Towards the end, Plutarch emphasises that while people read poetry for different purposes, the ones who are reading poetry "as being useful for character" – which is the type of reading Plutarch is concerned with – should look out for "utterances that look toward manliness or sobriety or uprightness" (30d). Thus, Plutarch hopes that through his instructions the young man is able to, just like a bee which "discovers amid the most pungent flowers and the roughest thorns the smoothest and most palatable honey[,] […] draw some wholesome (τι χρήσιμον) and profitable (ὠφέλιμον) doctrine even from passages that are suspect of what is base and improper (ἀπὸ τῶν φαύλους καὶ ἀτόπους ὑποψίας ἐχόντων)" (32e-f).

II.2 Heraclitus the Allegorist

This brings us to Heraclitus the "Grammarian" or the "Allegorist". Heraclitus is of interest to our study as he represents a great example of the continued engagement with the unfitting instances found in Homeric poetry as well as their allegorical interpretation.

Unfortunately, we do not have much information on Heraclitus. His only work – of which we know – is a continuous commentary on Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* with the title "*Homeric Problems concerning What Homer Has Expressed Allegorically in Respect to the Gods*".[379] Heraclitus' mention of certain historical figures in his work as well as his hesitant introduction of an astrological allegory (53) suggest that he likely wrote around AD 100.[380] The very title of his work already provides us with

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[378] Hunter and Russell, *Poetry*, 114.
[379] D. A. Russell and David Konstan, eds., *Heraclitus: Homeric Problems* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005), xiii.
[380] For the details of dating see Ibid., XI–XIII; David Konstan, "Heraclitus the Allegorist, *Homeric Problems*," in *The Oxford Handbook of Greek and Roman Mythography* (ed. R. Scott Smith and Stephen M. Trzaskoma; Oxford University Press, 2022), 192–93. Besides the mention of 2nd century BC figures at 7.1, 11.2, 27.2, the mentioning of Alexander of Ephesus, also known as Alexander Lychnus, at 12.8 provides us with the 1st century BC as *terminus post quem* (only mentioned in Ibid., 192.).

two crucial insights: The title "*Homeric Problems (ΟΜΗΡΙΚΑ ΠΡΟΒΛΗΜΑΤΑ)*" situates the work in the current of Zetemata literature, whereas the latter "*What Homer Has Expressed Allegorically in Respect to the Gods (εἰς ἃ περὶ θεῶν Ὅμηρος ἠλληγόρησεν)*" indicates both his view of Homeric poetry – assuming Homer to have (intentionally, as we shall see) expressed things allegorically – as well as his particular area of concern, namely the gods.[381] Heraclitus' commentary begins by stating the reason for his treatise:

> "It is a weighty and damaging charge that heaven brings against Homer for his disrespect for the divine (περὶ τῆς εἰς τὸ θεῖον ὀλιγωρίας). If he meant nothing allegorically, he was impious through and through (πάντα γὰρ ἠσέβησεν, εἰ μηδὲν ἠλληγόρησεν), and sacrilegious fables (Ἱερόσυλοι δὲ μῦθοι), loaded with blasphemous folly (θεομάχου), run riot through both epics. And so, if one were to believe that it was all said in obedience to poetical tradition without any philosophical theory (ἄνευ φιλοσόφου θεωρίας) or underlying allegorical trope (ὑφεδρεύοντος ἀλληγορικοῦ τρόπου), Homer would be a Salmoneus or a Tantalus 'with tongue unchastened, a most disgraceful sickness.'" (1.1-3)

Heraclitus informs us that some accuse Homer of displaying ὀλιγωρία – contempt – for the divine in his epics. While Heraclitus mentions no one in particular, he is certainly aware of Plato's critique of Homer in his *Republic*, demanding to do "[a]way too with Plato, the flatterer, Homer's dishonest accuser, who banishes him from his private Republic" (4.1).[382] Yet, strikingly, Heraclitus agrees with Homer's accusers insofar that Homer's depictions of the gods would indeed amount to ἀσέβεια (impiety), a lack of reverence of the divine, "if he [had] meant nothing allegorically (εἰ μηδὲν ἠλληγόρησεν)" (1.1). Truly, Heraclitus states that if Homer had composed his statements about the gods "without any philosophical theory (ἄνευ φιλοσόφου θεωρίας) or underlying allegorical trope (ὑφεδρεύοντος ἀλληγορικοῦ τρόπου)" he would be just like Salmoneus or Tantalus, two well-known despisers of the gods (1.3).[383]

Heraclitus' work is therefore concerned with those Homeric stories that portray the gods in a way which does not befit their divinity, making these stories ἀπρεπής. Indeed, Heraclitus professes his concern over the fittingness of various stories, for many of these are "disgraceful (ἀπρεπεῖς)" (21.6) and "would

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Cf. further arguments by Russell and Konstan, *Heraclitus*, XXVIII; Donald A. Russell, "The Rhetoric of the *Homeric Problems*," in *Metaphor, Allegory, and the Classical Tradition* (ed. G. R. Boys-Stones; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 217.

[381] Konstan, "Heraclitus," 192.

[382] It is somewhat bizarre that Heraclitus then mentions Homer's pervasive influence on everyone's life since childhood (1.5-7), while also asserting that his poetry requires an allegorical interpretation to not be perceived as impious, when one considers that Plato rejected allegorical interpretation exactly on the basis that young children would probably not be able to understand it. Heraclitus has a particular axe to grind with Plato and Epicurus and accuses both of plagiarising Homer for their respective philosophies (e.g. 4.4-5).

[383] This very condemnation is at the end of the treatise applied to Plato (78.5; cf. 78.8). See Russell, "The Rhetoric of the *Homeric Problems*," 224.

indeed be an improper tale to tell of the gods (ἀπρεπὲς ὄντως ἱστορεῖν περὶ θεῶν)" (26.5). And it is this unfitting portrayal of the gods which amounts to impiety (cf. 1.1-2). This is, however, not the last word on this matter, for Heraclitus' treatise has the very aim to exonerate Homer's epics from these charges. The method he chooses in order to vindicate Homer's poems, which he sees as the "only one remedy for this impiety (τῆς ἀσεβείας) [, is] to show that the myth is an allegory (ἠλληγορημένον τὸν μῦθον)." (22.1). It is thus allegorical interpretation – allegoresis – Heraclitus sets his hopes upon to claim that Homer is "not telling disreputable tales of the gods (μηδὲν περὶ θεῶν ἀπρεπὲς ἱστοροῦντα) but giving enigmatic hints by means of the technique we have been studying (sc. allegoresis; FG) (δίχα δὲ τῆς τοιαύτης ἐμπειρίας αἰνιττόμενον)" (60.3). As we shall see, the episodes Heraclitus envisages and deals with over the course of his commentary are, unsurprisingly, some of the most famous and most treated Homeric episodes of the previous centuries.

First, however, Heraclitus begins his commentary with some general remarks stating his conviction that it should be "perfectly plain (σαφὲς) and evident to all (πᾶσιν εὔδηλον)" that there is in Homer's poetry "no stain of abominable myth (ἐναγῶν μύθων) [which] disfigures his poems", but that "[t]hey are pure (καθαρὰν) and innocent (ἁγνεύουσαν) of all pollution" (2.1) and he asserts that Homer's poems embody a "sacred solemnity with which he [sc. Homer] speaks of all the gods (ὑπὲρ ἁπάντων ἱεροπρεπῶς τεθεολόγηται) equally and in general" (2.5). What Heraclitus contends here is that Homer spoke about the gods (θεολογεῖν) in a way that was indeed befitting their sacredness (ἱεροπρεπῶς). Listing examples of such god-fitting language, Heraclitus recalls some of the Homeric epithets such as "blessed gods who live forever (μάκαρες θεοὶ αἰὲν ἐόντες)" and "givers of blessings (δωτῆρες ἑάων)" (2.5; cf. 2.1-5) in order to highlight that Homer made pleasant and fitting statements about the gods. Moreover, for Heraclitus these statements also demonstrate that Homer possessed a god-fitting understanding of the gods, since the notion of the gods dispensing blessings was of course in agreement with Plato's first typos. Hence, according to Heraclitus, Homer's own poetry was indicative of "Homer's pious plan (τῆς Ὁμήρου θεοσεβοῦς προαιρέσεως), that he honours (νεωκορεῖ) all divine beings with exceptional expressions of feeling" (3.1). While Heraclitus had now shown that Homer speaks about the gods in fitting ways, he still had to account for the various instances of Homeric poetry which on a literal reading would not befit the gods and hence amount to impiety. He does so by claiming that when Homer composed his works, he intentionally used allegory. Consequently**,**

> "[i]f some ignorant people (ἀμαθεῖς τινες ἄνθρωποι) fail to recognize Homeric allegory (τὴν Ὁμηρικὴν ἀλληγορίαν) and have not descended into the secret caverns of his wisdom (τῆς ἐκείνου σοφίας) but instead have risked a hasty judgment of the truth without proper consideration, and if then they seize hastily on what they take to be his mythical invention, because they do not know what is said in a philosophical sense (τὸ φιλοσόφως ῥηθὲν)—well, off with them and good riddance! But let us, who have been hallowed within the sacred enclosure, methodically track down the grand truth of the poems." (3.2-3)

After defining the trope of allegory (5.1-2)[384], Heraclitus first establishes that many other poets wrote allegorically (5.3-12) and demonstrates that just like them "Homer himself is sometimes found using allegories which are neither ambiguous nor still in dispute" (5.15). To demonstrate this, he quotes a line from the *Iliad* and observes that "[t]he words here speak (Τὸ μὲν γὰρ λεγόμενόν) of farming, though what is intended (τὸ δὲ νοούμενον) is battle; and yet we understand (ἐπείπομεν) the true significance (τὸ δηλούμενον) from the pair of contrasting opposites (δι' ἐναντίων ἀλλήλοις πραγμάτων)" (5.16).[385] Homer is, according to Heraclitus' view, intentionally expressing certain things allegorically. And it is therefore Homer's intentional use of allegory in his writings which call for an allegorical interpretation of the same. So, all that is left for Heraclitus, is to employ his very own "subtle learning to expound the allegorical statements about the gods (τὰ περὶ θεῶν ἠλληγορημένα) in each book" (6.2), thereby "mending his [sc. Homer's; FG] alleged wrong notions about the gods" (6.1). This is exactly what Heraclitus then proceeds to do by presenting various allegorical interpretations of many of the well-known unfitting depictions of the gods such as the binding of Zeus (21-25), the wounding of gods (30-24), and the theomachy (52-58). The types of interpretations used by Heraclitus include scientific, ethical, astronomical, and physical allegoresis. I shall briefly discuss one of these allegorical interpretations to show how Heraclitus was concerned with preserving the god-fittingness of the Homeric poems.

In his dealings with the Odyssey, Heraclitus unsurprisingly considers the affair between Ares and Aphrodite and their discovery by Hephaestus, Aphrodite's husband, narrated by the bard Demodocus in the Odyssey (*Ody*. 8.266-366), since it was a much-discussed episode; a fact also known to Heraclitus for he notes "the continued grievous accusations which Homer's traducers notoriously make. For up and down they go with their pretentious talk of the "impious" fiction (ἀσεβῶς διαπεπλάσθαι) concerning Ares and Aphrodite" (69.1-2). The accusation made by these critics consists in the charge that Homer "has given immorality (ἀκολασίαν) citizenship in heaven", because by including such a tale in his poem, "he has felt no shame about attributing to the gods (παρὰ θεοῖς ἱστορῆσαι) a crime punishable by death in human societies, adultery (μοιχείαν)" (69.3). However, this is made even worse, since the other gods are depicted as laughing at the sight of Aphrodite and Ares caught in Hephaestus' net – seemingly receiving joyous entertainment from this incident. These depictions are objected to by critics, who note that if these "failings of the gods" were true, "there is no longer need for human wrongdoers to be punished" (69.6). The concerns are, therefore, very old ones: the ascription of human immorality to the gods and the effect this might have on human morality. Both charges are addressed by Heraclitus, asserting that there is "some philosophical relevance (φιλοσόφου τινὸς ἐπιστήμης)" to this story (69.7).

[384] Heraclitus provides "a little technical account of allegory", saying that "[t]he word itself, which is formed in a way expressive of truth, reveals its own significance. For the trope which says one thing but signifies something other than what it says receives the name "allegory" precisely from this." (5.1-2).

[385] Note that Russell reads ἐπεῖπεν and translates: "But he (sc. Homer; FG) has also indicated the real meaning by means of mutually contradictory things." See Russell, "The Rhetoric of the *Homeric Problems*," 229.

First, from the fact that Homer is "calling strife Ares and love Aphrodite", Heraclitus presumes Homer to "be confirming Sicilian doctrine (the views of Empedocles)" (69.8). Hence, when Ares and Aphrodite engage in their affair, the story speaks of the Empedoclean principles of strife and love "coming together in concord", with the result that "the child born of these two is Harmonia, because the universe is unshakably and harmoniously put together" (69.9-10). The gods' laughter is, consequently, not seen as the gods' implicit approval of adultery, but their happiness over the fact that the "original forms are not destructively separated, but maintain concord and peace" (69.11). Thus, Heraclitus understands Homer to be the philosophical predecessor of Empedoclean philosophy. Yet, Heraclitus even maintains that the story may equally well be "an allegory relating to the art of the bronzeworker" (69.12), thereby tapping into the notion that Homer was truly an educator and an authority on all things. In that case, Heraclitus posits, the gods of the story are merely symbols of the various elements involved in the art of a bronzeworker. While Ares stands for the iron that is being forged, the bronzeworker employs his "delicate art (ἐπαφροδίτῳ τινὶ τέχνῃ)" (Aphrodite) to use fire (Hephaestus) to soften the iron which is then rescued from the fire by water (Poseidon) which has the property to calm and extinguish the fire (69.13-16). In summary, we can observe that either of the allegorical readings presented by Heraclitus resolve the charge of being unfitting stories about the gods.

Indeed, after offering many further allegorical interpretations of episodes from the Odyssey, Heraclitus concludes his work with an epilogue, in which he asks the rhetorical question whether "[a]fter all this, can Homer, the great hierophant of heaven and of the gods, who opened up for human souls the untrodden and closed paths to heaven, deserve to be condemned as impious (ἐπιτήδειός ἐστι κατακριθῆναι δυσσεβεῖν)?" (76.1). From the foregoing allegorical interpretations which revealed the wisdom contained in the Homeric poems, the implied answer is of course a negative one. Even more, Heraclitus suggests that if one were to agree with Homer's accusers and their "vile (μιαρᾶς) and unholy (ἀνοσίου) verdict [was] to be given and his poems destroyed", the consequence would be that "dumb ignorance (ἄφωνος ἀμαθία) would spread across the world" for the poems contain vital knowledge (76.2). This is then combined with an attack on Plato whose dialogues are placed in stark contrast to Homer's poems. Whereas Heraclitus asserts that Homer's poems are "full of noble virtue" (78.2) and "the most righteous principles of human life are embedded in the society of both Homer's poems" (76.14), Plato's dialogues are denigrated as being full of pederasty (76.15). Indeed, Plato is disparaged as an immoral philosopher who "recommends marriages and children in common", quite in contrast to the Homeric poems which embody the ideals of "chaste marriages" (76.12).[386]

In summary, in considering Heraclitus' *Homeric Problems*, we found a further instance that testified to the ongoing concern over the god-fittingness of the Homeric poems in Imperial times. By interpreting

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386 On Heraclitus' invective against Plato, which is only held back "out of respect for the reputation of Socratic wisdom" (79.1), see Ibid., 219, 227, 230–31.

the unfitting passages of the poems in an allegorical way, Heraclitus was able to defend the poems and their author from the charge of an unfitting depiction of the gods and hence from being impious.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter has shown that concerns over the preservation of a fitting conception of god and the god-fittingness of poetry continued to be prevalent during Hellenistic and Imperial times. This concern was shown to play a major role in the thought of the philosophical schools as well as in their inter-school debates, where it was used as a tool to critique each other's philosophies as not maintaining a god-fitting notion. Likewise, we demonstrated that the problem of unfitting depictions of the gods in poetry continued to exert readers and interpreters of poetry alike, resulting in various reading strategies which attempted to account for poetry's god-unfitting notions. These ranged from a hermeneutic of suspicion to allegorical interpretation of the poems.

Part 2: The Jewish-Christian Application of God-Fittingness

Chapter 4: Philo of Alexandria

Introduction

The writings of Philo of Alexandria are one of the earliest and foremost instances where we can observe in detail the contact between Greek philosophical notions and the Jewish faith that is based on the Jewish scriptures. Since Philo's work occurs in the Alexandrian context of Greek philosophy as well as Jewish and Homeric exegetical endeavours, it is not surprising that we encounter the influence of the principle of fittingness in his writings. Thus, we shall briefly consider the role the principle of fittingness played in Philo's thought and exegetical endeavours.

I shall argue that Philo's thought is heavily influenced by the notion of god-fittingness which can particularly be observed in instances where Scripture describes God in ways that clash with philosophical notions. Since Philo understands the Scriptures as divinely inspired, he naturally attempts to account for the unfitting depictions of God found within it. Moreover, I will argue that Philo – unlike Plato – does not discard certain unfitting notions from Scripture but grants them, despite their unfitting and false nature, a particular role in the Scriptures. The hermeneutics that undergird Philo's thinking in this regard are derived from the Scriptures themselves. Thus, the Scriptures are of primary importance for Philo and are interpreted against contemporary philosophical notions. Yet, while what is considered to be god-fitting in Philo's exegesis is largely consistent with the Platonic typoi and their later specifications, I argue that there are some important differences in the way the principle of fittingness is used by Philo as well as his understanding of unfitting instances.

I shall begin by briefly situating Philo in his historical context. This will be followed by a brief description of some of Philo's fundamental theological and philosophical assumptions. Thirdly, I shall examine the notion of fittingness in some of Philo's writings with particular reference to instances where either the scriptural text is considered to present an unfitting description of God or where the argument of fittingness is introduced in order to vindicate another problematic instance encountered in the biblical text.

I. The Man and His Context

I.1 A Brief Sketch of Philo's Life

Unfortunately, precise information about Philo's life is meagre at best.[387] Philo's birth, most likely in Alexandria[388], is usually dated to around 20-10 BC[389] and his death will have certainly been after January AD 41[390], perhaps between AD 42-45[391], but when exactly we do not know.

Philo came from a very wealthy Alexandrian family which had links to the Roman and Judean aristocracy. His brother Alexander ran an import-export business besides also being the alabarch, the chief customs officer of Egypt.[392] Alexander was reportedly very wealthy and had connections to the Roman as well as the Judean Herodian aristocracy.[393] Yet, it was Alexander's son, Tiberius Julius Alexander, who had the most illustrious career. His exceptional career in the Roman Empire included, amongst other positions, roles as procurator of Judea in AD 46 and prefect of Egypt in AD 66. In these roles he was to instruct the execution of Jewish rebels in Judea as well as the squashing of riots in Alexandria.[394] Furthermore, he soon thereafter aided Titus, emperor Vespasian's son and later emperor himself, in the siege of Jerusalem. Towards the end of his career, he became Praetorian prefect in Rome.[395] It does not come as a surprise then that Tiberius abandoned his native Judaism, an assumption which can be inferred from Philo's discussion with Tiberius in his writings *De providentia* and *De animalibus* as well as Josephus' comment that Tiberius 'did not persevere in his ancestral practices' (*Ant.* 20.100-*101*).[396]

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[387] Besides a few references in Philo himself our best source is Flavius Josephus. On Philo's life see Daniel R. Schwartz, "Philo, His Family, and His Times," in *The Cambridge Companion to Philo* (ed. Adam Kamesar; Cambridge University Press, 2009), 9–31.
[388] We actually have no direct reports that Philo was born in Alexandria until Jerome (*Vir. ill.* 11) and only infer so from his family being settled in Alexandria. See Ibid., 11.
[389] This is based on Philo's own remark in *Legat.* 1 that he was an old man when he participated in the Jewish delegation to emperor Gaius Caligula. Samuel Sandmel, "Philo Judaeus: An Introduction to the Man, His Writings, and His Significance," in *Religion (Hellenistisches Judentum in Römischer Zeit: Philon Und Josephus)* (ed. Wolfgang Haase; Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 1984), 3. dates Philo's birth to 25-20 BC.
[390] Schwartz, "Philo, His Family, and His Times," 10.
[391] Sandmel, "Philo Judaeus," 4.
[392] Schwartz, "Philo, His Family, and His Times," 12. Schwartz notes that the import-export business is also attested to by some ostraca.
Alexander might be identical with Gaius Iulius Alexander mentioned in CPJ II 420a.b as Winston points out (David Winston, "Philon von Alexandrien," in *Philosophie der Kaiserzeit und der Spätantike: Band 5/1* (ed. Christoph Riedweg, Christoph Horn, and Dietmar Wyrwa; Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie. Die Philosophie der Antike; Basel: Schwabe Verlag, 2018), 725–26.).
[393] According to Flavius Josephus, Alexander provided silver and gold for the adornment of some of the gates of the Jerusalem temple (*Bell.* 5.205), lent money to the Judean king Agrippa I (*Ant.* 18.159), and was in charge of managing Antonia Minor's, one of Marcus Antonius' daughters and the mother of the future emperor Claudius, Egyptian estates (*Ant.* 19.276), being an "old friend" of Claudius' (*Ant.* 19.276).
[394] Schwartz, "Philo, His Family, and His Times," 23.
[395] Ibid., 13–14.
[396] Ibid., 13–14. Ibid., 23, n. 51. also points to Tacitus' description of Alexander which does not mention his Jewish heritage but speaks of him as "Egyptian" (*Hist.* 1.11.1).

Returning to Philo, we can note that he was the intellectual in his family. He had a superb education which furnished him with an expansive knowledge of Greek literature. Furthermore, Philo was heavily influenced by Plato, whom he certainly knew not from handbooks but from his own personal reading.[397] Hebrew he knew not – or only very little –and was dependent on an onomasticon, a glossary for names, for etymologies of Hebrew names in his exegesis and was fully dependent on the Septuagint in his reading of the Jewish Scriptures.[398] It was indeed the Jewish Scriptures to which Philo devoted his philosophical and exegetical endeavours, the pursuit of which we have to most likely imagine in the context of his own private school.

It was from these scholarly pursuits which Philo was suddenly taken away by an urgent request from Alexandria's Jewish community to lead a delegation to Rome around the year AD 38/39 on behalf of the Alexandrian Jews. Severe riots against the Jewish community in Alexandria had broken out and Philo was part of a petition to emperor Gaius Caligula in support of the Jewish cause.[399] It appears that Philo's stay in Rome had most likely a profound philosophical influence on his thought since he probably came into increased contact with Roman Stoic philosophy which he will have encountered in his expected interactions with philosophical circles.[400] Moreover, he is likely to have found himself engaged with the two intellectual leaders of the rival Egyptian faction – Chaeremon and Apion – which had equally brought their case to the Roman emperor.[401]

I.2 Philo's Notion of God

Before we consider the use of the principle of fittingness in Philo, we shall briefly outline some basic key points of Philo's understanding of God. As has often been noted, Philo did not compose a purely philosophical treatise on either God or the world but his thought on these issues has to be gleaned from his remarks on these issues in the context of his exegesis of the Jewish scriptures. The consequence of which is a vacillation in Philo's descriptions of God. [402]

Besides the influence of his Jewish faith, Philo was heavily influenced by Stoic and Platonist thought, especially the burgeoning prevalence of Middle Platonism in his native Alexandria in its Neopythagoreanizing strand.[403] One particular feature Philo shares with many Middle Platonists, such

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[397] Dillon, *Middle Platonists*, 140–41; Winston, "Philon," 726.
[398] Dillon, *Middle Platonists*, 141 cf. p. 182; Winston, "Philon," 726.
[399] This is the subject of his *De legatione ad Gaium* and *In Flaccum*.
[400] This is especially argued for by Maren R. Niehoff, *Philo of Alexandria: An Intellectual Biography* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2018).
[401] Joan E. Taylor and David M. Hay, *Philo of Alexandria: On the Contemplative Life: Introduction, Translation and Commentary* (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 8–17.
[402] Roberto Radice, "Philo's Theology and Theory of Creation," in *The Cambridge Companion to Philo* (ed. Adam Kamesar; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 124–26.
[403] For the Neopythagoreanizing influence in Philo see Hans Joachim Krämer, *Der Ursprung der Geistmetaphysik: Untersuchungen zur Geschichte des Platonismus zwischen Platon und Plotin* (Amsterdam: P. Schippers, 1964), 267–69. Cf. for instance Philo's assenting invocation of the Pythagorean Philolaus in *Opif.* 100: "[a]s a witness for this account I can call on Philolaus when he says: "There exists (Ἔστι γάρ) the Director and Ruler of all things

as Eudorus, is an emphasis on the utter transcendence of God. For example, Eudorus' depiction of the first principle as "God beyond/above (ὁ ὑπεράνω θεός)" is mirrored by Philo's description of God being ὑπεράνω at several points.[404]

The biblical God is for Philo the one highest principle (*Virt.* 216).[405] Philo calls him the One (*Opif.* 171), the Monad, as well as with the Platonic epithet "that which truly is (τὸ ὄντως ὄν)" (*Deus* 11, *Her.* 187, *Migr.* 182).[406] Yet, at times the personal aspect of the biblical God prompts Philo to change the neutral τὸ ὄν to the personal ὁ ὤν (*Abr.* 121; *QE* 1.20).[407] As mentioned earlier, Philo also expresses God's transcendence, like Eudorus, with the adverb ὑπεράνω (*Post.* 14, *Congr.* 105, *Conf.* 137, *Leg.* 3.175). For instance, Philo speaks of God transcending both time and space since he is not "locally in any place at all (οὐδὲ συνόλως ἐν τόπῳ), but high above (ὑπεράνω) both place and time (καὶ τόπου καὶ χρόνου)" (*Post.* 14). Intriguingly, Philo also employs certain terms for the first time in history to describe God. At *Somn.* 1.67, an often cited passage, he applies the terms "unnameable (ἀκατονόμαστος)", "unutterable (ἄρρητος)" (cf. *Mut.* 14, 15; *Her.* 170), and "incomprehensible under any form (κατὰ πάσας ἰδέας ἀκατάληπτος)" to God.[408] However, Philo goes even further than Eudorus in that God transcends everything, including the Good and the One which, for Eudorus, had both been designations of the first principle.[409] Thus, God is for Philo "superior to excellence (κρείττων ἢ ἀρετή) and superior to knowledge (κρείττων ἢ ἐπιστήμη) and even superior to the good and the beautiful itself (κρείττων ἢ αὐτὸ τὸ ἀγαθὸν καὶ αὐτὸ τὸ καλόν)" (*Opif.* 8). Indeed, God is surpassing both the One as well as the Platonic Good for he "is better than the good (ἀγαθοῦ κρεῖττον), more venerable than the monad (μονάδος πρεσβύτερον), purer than the unit (ἑνὸς εἰλικρινέστερον)" (*Praem.* 40, cf. *Contempl.* 2; *QE* 2.68). Thus, God is "transcending as He does the peculiarities that mark all created things (ἅτε τὰς τῶν γεγονότων ἰδιότητας ἁπάντων ἐκβεβηκώς)" (*Post.* 7; cf. *Deus* 55), and his transcendence, unknowability, and incomprehensibility, his absence of qualities and attributes ultimately make him the wholly other. Despite this negative theology, mankind can know God's existence but not his essence.

Yet, God can still be characterised by certain positive attributes which are inferred via reasoning as well as from his active powers and which do not pertain to his essence. First of all, we can note that Philo

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(ἡγεμὼν καὶ ἄρχων ἁπάντων), God who is one (θεὸς εἷς), always existent (ἀεὶ ὤν), abiding (μόνιμος), unchanged (ἀκίνητος), himself identical to himself (αὐτὸς αὐτῷ ὅμοιος) and differing from all others (ἕτερος τῶν ἄλλων)."" (= DK 44 B20). Cf. also the statement by Clement of Alexandria which speaks of Philo as a Pythagorean. There are times when Philo assumes he is following Plato despite restating Stoic philosophy (cf. Winston, "Philon," 231. Winston, 231). Cf. also Krämer, *Geistmetaphysik*, 266. who likewise locates Philo in the Platonist tradition despite Stoic influences in some areas.

[404] E.g. *Post.* 14, *Congr.* 105, *Conf.* 137, *Leg.* 3.175.

[405] For what follows see especially Dillon, *Middle Platonists*; Winston, "Philon."

[406] The latter was of course used by Plato to describe the ideas.

[407] Dillon, *Middle Platonists*, 155, n. 1; Winston, "Philon," 738.

[408] Cf. Dillon, *Middle Platonists*, 155; Winston, "Philon," 738.

[409] Dillon, *Middle Platonists*, 156. It should, however, be noted that Dillon sees this as "an essentially rhetorical flourish" and not philosophical statements (*ibid.*).

assumes God to not be idle (*Opif.* 7-8)[410] but the active intellect (νοῦς)[411] which is the cause of all things including creation (cf. *Spec.* 3.178-180; *Cher.* 87; *Det.* 161; *Fug.* 8-13). Moreover, God is described by various common philosophical attributes such as "immortality" (*Virt.* 204), "eternity" (*Congr.* 105; *Deus* 52; *Virt.* 204, 214)[412] and many more.[413] In particular, we find a range of terms which illustrate the two Platonic typoi by characterising God as good (*Deus* 108), self-sufficient (*Spec.* 1.277), immobile and immutable (*Post.* 28-29; *Somn.* 2.222),[414] consistent (*Mut.* 87), and apathetic (*Cher.* 86). We also find the notion that God has no human appearance (*Leg.* 1.36) and no parts or bodily parts (*Deus* 52).

Faced with the problem of how the utterly transcendent God could possibly relate to the finite and material creation and could be known by mankind, Philo employed certain intermediary figures such as God's powers and his Logos in order to bridge this ontological and epistemological divide. However, the ways Philo describes the Logos is extremely complex and multi-faceted due to the fact that Philo has to maintain his Jewish monotheism, the utter transcendence and simplicity of the first principle, while equally accounting for the existence of the cosmos. While we cannot trace Philo's doctrine of the Logos or the powers here in detail, it may suffice to note that Philo assumed the existence of a divine Logos and powers that mediated between the utterly transcendent God and the world. The origin of Philo's notion of the Logos is probably impossible to accurately trace as it contains various elements, including Stoic and Platonic influences, as well as biblical aspects such as wisdom speculations[415] and statements about God's creative word.[416] In the case of creation, we can for instance, summarise the role of the Logos as "a kind of divine *agent* containing the forms, *from* the supreme, Creator God, *as part of the means by which* he creates the cosmos."[417] Similarly, the powers are other means in which the first principle, God, acts (*Cher.* 27).[418] Moreover, we shall see that the powers and various intermediary figures are related to the issue of god-fittingness.

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[410] See for commentary on this section David T. Runia, *Philo of Alexandria: On the Creation of the Cosmos According to Moses* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 114–16.
[411] Ibid., 116.
[412] Note that he has no relation to time (*Post.* 14) to which he is superior since his eternity is the model for time (*Deus* 32).
[413] See also the end of *De Opificio Mundi* where Philo provides a summary of the five central things that Moses is said to have taught us about God and the world.
[414] *Post.* 28: "that the Existent Being who moves and turns all else (ὅτι τὸ ὂν τὸ τὰ ἄλλα κινοῦν καὶ τρέπον) is Himself exempt from movement and turning (ἀκίνητόν τε καὶ ἄτρεπτον); and secondly that He makes the worthy man sharer of His own Nature, which is repose (ἠρεμίας)." Cf. *QG* 1.42, *QE* 2.37, 45, 46, *QG* 3.55; *Mut.* 24, 28, 87; *Leg.* 2.89.
[415] See for instance Kaiser who assumes Wisdom of Solomon to have been written in Alexandria and reacting to the problem of the relation between god and world as posed by Eudorus (Otto Kaiser, *Philo of Alexandria. Denkender Glaube – Eine Einführung* (Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments Bd. 259; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2015), 169–70.).
[416] Winston, "Philon," 739.
[417] Boys-Stones, *Platonist Philosophy*, 158. See for creation for instance *Cher.* 125-126 (= BS 3D/ p. 93) and *Spec.* 1.327-329 (=BS 3R/ p. 99).
[418] Francesca Calabi, *God's Acting, Man's Acting: Tradition and Philosophy in Philo of Alexandria* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 14. See also the succinct comments by Taylor and Hay, *Philo of Alexandria*, 129.

II. Fittingness in Philo

That Platonic concepts and the principle of god-fittingness played a major role in the thought and writings of Philo is not a new discovery. Yet, the issue of god-fittingness does not seem to have been particularly acknowledged, let alone studied, in recent Philonic scholarship.[419] To my knowledge, Dreyer's dissertation, whose particular focus is on the issue of god-fittingness in Philo, remains the unsurpassed and most detailed examination of the issue in Philo and will thus serve as our principal point of reference for examining the concept of god-fittingness in Philo. While Dreyer studied a wider range of the occurrence and use of the principle in Philo, including, for instance, its use in Philo's transformation of the Jewish cultic service, I shall restrict myself to some instances where the Scriptures could be perceived as violating the notion of god-fittingness, in particular conceived in accordance with the two Platonic typoi.[420]

I shall consider the issue of god-fittingness in Philo's writings under the heading of two themes: instances in Scripture that conflict with the understanding of God as the ultimate cause as well as the giver of only good things and those that speak of God in anthropomorphic and anthropopathic ways. Considering the first issue, we shall see that Philo's understanding of God as the ultimate cause as well as the giver of only good things (including the virtues of mankind) is naturally challenged by various instances in which the scriptural texts appear to speak of God as either not being the sole cause or being responsible for evil things. I shall examine some of these instances in relation to the principle of god-fittingness. Secondly, I will examine some instances where Philo is faced with scriptural passages which speak of God in anthropomorphic and anthropopathic terms,[421] such as God planting, toiling, walking and subsequently resting from these as well as undergoing passions such as regret and wrath. Lastly, I shall summarise some key insights regarding the role the principle of fittingness played in Philo's thought.

II.1 Instances relating to God being Good and the Omnipotent Cause of All

II.1.1 The Creation of Mankind and Theodicy (Opif. 72-75)[422]

In his treatment of Moses' account of creation, Philo arrives at the plural of *Gen* 1.26, which portrays God as saying, "let us make a human being after our image and likeness" (72). He keenly observes that

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[419] The only current work that seems to consider the issue of god-fittingness in Philo, and is also largely dependent on Dreyer's examination, is the essay by Pieter W. Van Der Horst, "Philo and the Problem of God's Emotions," in *Studies in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity* (Brill, 2014), 37–46.

[420] We shall thereby exclude three sections Dreyer deals with, namely that it only befits God to call something his own, that it only befits God to create virtues in mankind, and the use of the principle of fittingness in Philo's spiritualization of the cult.

[421] Indeed, it seems that Philo was the first to have coined the term "anthropopathic (ἀνθρωποπαθής)" (cf. John M. Dillon, Valentin Nikiprowetzky, and David Winston, "Commentary," in *Two Treatises of Philo of Alexandria: A Commentary on De Gigantibus and Quod Deus Sit Immutabilis* (Chico, California: Scholars Press, 1983), 305.).

[422] For the translation see Runia, *Philo of Alexandria: On the Creation of the Cosmos According to Moses*.

Moses’ use of the plural would appear to attribute the creation of mankind “not to a single creator (ἑνὶ δημιουργῷ) […], but as if to a plurality (ἀλλ’ ὡσανεὶ πλείοσιν)” (72). Immediately Philo recognises that “[i]t would not be off the mark to raise the difficulty as to why (Ἀπορήσειε δ’ ἄν τις οὐκ ἀπὸ σκοποῦ, τί δήποτε)” the text speaks of a plurality of creating entities, thus acknowledging as well as raising the text’s difficulty in the form of a *quaestio* (72).[423] The fact that Scripture speaks of a plurality of creating entities naturally raises the question whether God might not have been powerful enough to accomplish the act of creation himself. Such conjecture is, however, immediately rejected by Philo with the remark that is unquestionable that God “would not be in need of (μὴ γὰρ χρεῖός ἐστιν) anyone whatsoever” (72).[424] As a result, the fact that Scripture speaks of a plurality of creating agencies needs to be otherwise accounted for and Philo explores whether an explanation for the plural might be discovered in the fact that solely in the case of the creation of mankind Scripture suggests the involvement of multiple creating agencies.

Investigating along these lines, Philo examines the nature of mankind as well as the nature of the other living beings which had been created just before the creation of mankind in a dihairetical fashion (73). His finding is that while none of those living entities created prior to mankind had an inclination towards evil[425] – plants and animals are indifferent towards evil as they have no reason, whereas angelic beings have reason but only incline towards the good – the nature of mankind exhibits a mixed disposition, granting mankind the capacity to do both good as well as evil (73). It is this observation which leads Philo to introduce an argument from fittingness to account for the plurality of creating entities suggested by Scripture, noting that

> “for God the universal Father it was highly appropriate (οἰκειότατον ἦν) to make the virtuous beings [sc. the angelic beings; FG] on his own (δι’ αὐτοῦ μόνου ποιεῖν) because of their family relationship with him (ἕνεκα τῆς πρὸς αὐτὸν συγγενείας), and in the case of the indifferent beings [sc. plants and animals; FG] it was not alien to him to do so (οὐκ ἀλλότριον), since these too have no part in the wickedness (κακίας ἀμοιρεῖ,) that is hateful to him.” (74)

Philo observes that God created the various things before the creation of mankind by himself since the creation of none of these was apparently unfitting for him. Yet, in the case of the creation of mankind, Philo asserts that

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423 On the exegetical method of *quaestio* see the remarks by Ibid., 239.

424 Philo notes that it would be absurd to think that God had made all the other things but in the case of mankind “he was unable to fashion it all by himself without the assistance of others” (72). Cf. *Opif.* 23: “With no one to assist him—indeed who else was there?—, but relying solely on his own resources, God recognized that he had to confer the unstinting riches of his beneficence on the nature”.

425 See the helpful chart of Philo’s divisions by Runia, *Philo of Alexandria: On the Creation of the Cosmos According to Moses*, 240.

"it was partly appropriate and partly inappropriate (τῇ μὲν οἰκεῖον τῇ δ' ἀνοίκειον), appropriate (οἰκεῖον μὲν) on account of the better kind mixed in with them, inappropriate (ἀνοίκειον δὲ) on account of the kind that was opposite and inferior" (74).

These passages show that Philo introduces a three-tiered scale of god-fittingness which appears to rest on the level of goodness of the things being created. Firstly, since the nature of "the virtuous beings (τὰ σπουδαῖα)", namely the angelic beings, displayed a "family relationship with" God, due to their rationality and disposition towards moral goodness, Philo argues that it was "highly appropriate (οἰκειότατον)" for God not only to create them but to be their sole creator (δι' αὐτοῦ μόνου ποιεῖν) (74).[426] In the background is, of course, the notion that only God can be the cause of good things. Second on the scale of god-fittingness is the creation of indifferent beings, such as plants and animals, who, while displaying neither reason nor a disposition towards moral evil, do not display an inclination towards goodness either. As a result of these characteristics, it was likewise neither unfitting nor particularly fitting for God to create them, but rather their creation was οὐκ ἀλλότριον, not alien or not unfitting, to God. Lastly, Philo argues that the creation of mankind proves much more problematic since mankind's dual capacity for good and evil makes their creation "partly appropriate and partly inappropriate (τῇ μὲν οἰκεῖον τῇ δ' ἀνοίκειον)" for God (74). Consequently, Philo argues, that it is only fitting for God to create the "better kind [which is] mixed in with them", but not the "opposite and inferior" part of their nature (74). Although it is not explicitly stated, what might be envisioned here is the creation of the rational and the irrational parts of the human soul which are considered the seat of mankind's disposition towards good and evil respectively.[427] Philo's understanding of god-fittingness which undergirds his argument is itself based on the first Platonic typos as can be clearly seen in that Philo categorically emphasises that "it must be the case that the Father is blameless of evil in his offspring (ἔδει γὰρ ἀναίτιον εἶναι κακοῦ τὸν πατέρα τοῖς ἐκγόνοις)" (75). Moreover, it has been observed that Philo's explanation is deeply influenced by Plato's *Timaeus*, where in a similar fashion the Demiurge delegated parts of the creation of mankind to the younger gods with the intention to extricate himself from any responsibility of evil (*Tim.* 42d-e).[428] Hence, in a similar fashion, we can observe Philo to propose that God had only created the part which empowered mankind to do good, with the result that God could not in any way be considered responsible for the creation of the part which enabled mankind to do evil, for this would not befit God who could only be the cause of good things (75). Therefore, the creation of this latter part had to "be attributed to others who are subordinate

[426] See on the idea of a "family relationship" the remarks by Ibid., 342–43.
[427] While Philo assumes this to be that case at *Fug.* 69, there is some debate on where exactly Philo locates the human tendency for evil. See Ibid., 241.
[428] For remarks on similarities and differences between Philo and the *Timaeus* see Ibid., 237.

to him [sc. God; FG]" (75).[429] And these were the ones addressed in the plural spoken by God in *Gen* 1.26.

In summary, we can observe that the original difficulty posed by the plural in *Gen* 1.26, possibly indicating a lack of divine omnipotence, is dismissed and the existence of co-workers in the case of the creation of mankind is suggested by appealing to the principle of god-fittingness. Against this background and in likeness to Plato's *Timaeus*, Philo can show the plural to indeed indicate the involvement of co-workers in creation. Yet, he demonstrates that this was necessary not because God was incapable or in need of others to create but because mankind about to be created was to have the capacity for evil besides good, and therefore God could not be considered the cause of mankind's evil part for it would not befit his nature. The fact that Scripture mentions a plural at *Gen* 1.26 has thus been reconfigured – by the use of an argument from god-fittingness – as not indicating a problem but rather the resolution to a different problem: the problem of theodicy. As we shall see, this is not an uncommon explanation for Philo, and he often links an occurrence of a plural in relation with God to the issue of theodicy.

II.1.2 The King and his Servants (Conf. 168-172)[430]

In his *De Confusione Linguarum*, a treatise on *Genesis* 11.1-9 (the building of the tower of Babel and the subsequent confusion of languages), Philo arrives at *Gen* 11.7 and notices the startling plural in God's announcement: "Come and let us go down and confuse their tongue there" (168). Philo admits that this passage truly speaks of God "conversing with some persons whom He treats as His fellow-workers" (168) and adds that also other occurrences of the plural in passages such as *Gen* 1.26 and 3.22 appear to "imply plurality" (169). However, since the mentioning of plurality could be perceived as a challenge to monotheism, Philo is quick to reaffirm "that no existing thing is of equal honour (ἰσότιμον) to God and that there is only one sovereign and ruler and king, whom alone it befits (μόνῳ θέμις) to direct and dispose of all things" (170).[431] Considering the identity and function of the plural entities addressed by God, Philo points out that whilst God is only one (εἷς ὢν ὁ θεὸς), "He has around Him numberless Potencies (ἀμυθήτους περὶ αὑτὸν ἔχει δυνάμεις)" (171), who, together with the planetary bodies and the angels, have the sole purpose of serving him in instances such as creation as well as

[429] The identity of these subordinate others is not specified and while suggestions could be drawn from Philo's other treatises (e.g. powers, angels, etc), the matter has to remain undecided (cf. Ibid., 241.). The similarities to the Demiurge's delegation to the young gods in Plato's *Timaeus* are obvious. Yet, while there are parallels there are also important differences. See for these the comments by Ibid., 237–38.
[430] Text and translation are found in: F. H. Colson, *Philo: Volume IV* (LCL 261; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1932).
[431] Philo supports his claim by quoting Homer – "It is not well that many lords should rule; Be there but one, one king" (*Il*. 2.204-205) – and applying the phrase to the relationship "of the world and of God", inferring from the existence of only one world the existence of only "one (ἕνα) maker and father and master" (*Conf*. 170). As Dreyer notes, the cited Homeric lines have a long reception history in arguments for monotheistic positions (e.g.. Aristotle, *Metaphy*., 1076a) See Dreyer, *Untersuchungen*, 78, with n. 247.

punishment, aspects on which Philo will elaborate in due course (172-174).[432] Consequently, Philo emphasises that it is important to always acknowledge the "difference between the ruler and the subjects" (173). Yet, Philo still has to provide a reason why at several instances the Scriptures speak of a plurality.

In answer to this question, Philo takes his comparison of God as king further and advances an argument from fittingness, maintaining that for God as king it not only befits him (ἐμπρεπής) to talk to his subservient powers (δυνάμεσιν) but to also "employ them to serve in matters which are not fitting to be consummated by God alone (οἷσπερ ἁρμόττει μὴ ὑπὸ μόνου πήγνυσθαι θεοῦ)" (175). Thus, Philo argues that the reason for the Scriptures' mentioning of divine powers is found in the fact that God utilised them in circumstances which did not befit him. However, it is important to Philo to emphasise the self-sufficiency and omnipotence of God, asserting that God utilising his δυνάμεις neither implies that God displayed a need for anything (χρεῖος μὲν γὰρ οὐδενός ἐστιν), nor that he "require[d] the co-operation of others" in a case such as creation (175). Rather, Philo maintains, it was God who was "seeing what was fitting to Himself and the world which was coming into being (τὸ δὲ πρέπον ὁρῶν ἑαυτῷ τε καὶ τοῖς γινομένοις γῆσαι)", and so decided to employ his powers instead (175). Thus, we can observe that God's utilisation of his powers is due to the task not befitting God. Furthermore, Dreyer was the first to observe a subtle, yet remarkable, modification in the manner the principle of fittingness is applied.[433] Instead of the principle of fittingness being applied to God externally, it is God who freely chooses to abide with what he considers to befit himself and then act accordingly, employing his powers for the task at hand. This change from the usual external application of the principle of fittingness highlights God's free will and his ultimate superiority and independence from the principle of fittingness. Whereas the Greek gods are usually subject to the principle of fittingness, in that their violation of the principle results in their being deemed not divine, Philo's God, in having the decision to abide with what is considered fitting, is shown to be superior to it. The reason for this is found in the fact that God is for Philo a God who is not an abstract philosophical principle that has to abide by certain rules such as the first Platonic typos but a personal God who freely decides to follow what he deems to be fitting for himself.[434] Lastly, it should be noted that Philo also underlines God's control of the entire process as it is God who "allowed (ἐφῆκεν) His subject powers (ταῖς ὑπηκόοις δυνάμεσιν) to have the fashioning of some things" (175).

After determining that the reason for God's use of his powers and thus the plural found in the biblical text is occasioned by an issue over god-fittingness, Philo proceeds to examine why particular cases are not considered god-fitting (176-182). Examining the plural in *Gen* 1.26, Philo argues along the same

[432] There is an order of rank and function among these entities, but they ultimately all serve the will of God.
[433] Dreyer, *Untersuchungen*, 80–81.
[434] Cf. Dreyer, *Untersuchungen,* 75–76, 81.

lines as in *Opif*. 73-74, revealing mankind's dual capacity for good and evil (*Conf*. 176-178) to be the reason why it was only

> "meet and right (Προσηκόντως) that when man was formed, God should assign a share in the work to His lieutenants, […] so man's right actions might be attributable to God, but his sins to others. For it seemed to be unfitting to God the All-ruler (θεῷ γὰρ τῷ πανηγεμόνι ἐμπρεπὲς οὐκ ἔδοξεν εἶναι) that the road to wickedness (τὴν ἐπὶ κακίαν ὁδὸν) within the reasonable soul should be of His making (δι' ἑαυτοῦ δημιουργῆσαι)" (179).

As Philo's comments show, in the context of the creation of mankind, God considers whether he should make the part of the human soul that inclines towards evil. Yet, God considers what befits himself, which is – in agreement with the first Platonic typos – to only be the cause of good things and not of wicked things and decides to delegate any unfitting tasks to his lieutenants.

Likewise, in the case of *Gen* 11.7 (mankind's punishment through the confusion of tongues), Philo argues that it was in order to maintain the principle of fittingness that Scripture spoke of God making use of his ministers to exact his punishment. The reason is, once again, found in the belief "that God is the cause of good things only (ὅτι μόνων ἀγαθῶν ἐστιν ὁ θεὸς αἴτιος) and of nothing at all that is bad (κακοῦ δὲ οὐδενὸς τὸ παράπαν)" (180), hence reflecting the first Platonic typos.[435] While Philo believes the infliction of punishment to also have a useful effect on mankind (τῷ γένει τῶν ἀνθρώπων ὠφελίμους), it nonetheless causes harm and destruction, and is thus clearly contrary to God's nature and cannot befit him, since "it best becomes Him (ἐμπρεπέστατον) that the work of His hands should be akin to His nature (τὰ οἰκεῖα τῇ ἑαυτοῦ φύσει δημιουργεῖν)" (180). And so, while God remains in overall control, "the province of things evil has been committed to angels" (181),[436] whereby the punishment is "exacted by others (δι' ἑτέρων)" (182). Thus, Philo has accounted for the plural of *Gen* 11.7, exposing it to have been resultant from God's own concern over fittingness (181-182).[437]

II.1.3 Commandments without Punishments (Decal. 175-178)[438]

In his consideration of the Ten Commandments, Philo contemplates the question as to why these laws had been ordained by God "in the form of simple commands or prohibitions without laying down any

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[435] Cf. *Conf*. 180: "since He Himself was the most ancient of beings (τὸ πρεσβύτατον τῶν ὄντων) and the good in its most perfect form (τελειότατον ἀγαθὸν αὐτὸς ἦν)" and *Conf*. 182 which notes that God "is only the cause of good gifts to mankind (γνήσια τῶν ἀγαθῶν […] ἐπὶ θεὸν ἀναφέρεται μόνον ὡς αἴτιον)".

[436] Note again that God still remains in overall charge for the angels do not have "full and absolute power (αὐτοκράτορα ἐξουσίαν) of punishment" (*Conf*. 181).

[437] It is made sure "that nothing which tends to destruction should have its origin in Him [sc. God; FG] whose nature is to save" (181). Hence, "[i]t was meet (ἀξιωθῆναι) that while mankind was judged to deserve correction, the fountains of God's ever-flowing gifts of grace (τὰς δὲ πηγὰς τῶν ἀεννάων αὐτοῦ χαρίτων) should be kept free not only from all that is, but from all that is deemed to be, evil (κακῶν)" (182).

[438] Text and translation are that of F. H. Colson, trans., *Philo: Volume VII* (LCL 320; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1937).

penalty, as is the way of legislators, against future transgressors" (176).[439] Once again, the reason for this is located in the principle of god-fittingness and an understanding of God in accordance with the first Platonic typos. Philo maintains that since the giver of the Ten Commandments

> "was God (θεὸς ἦν), and it follows at once that as Lord He was good (ἀγαθός), the cause of good only (μόνων ἀγαθῶν αἴτιος) and of nothing ill (κακοῦ δ' οὐδενός). So then He judged (ὑπολαβών) that it was most in accordance (οἰκειότατον) with His being (αὐτοῦ τῇ φύσει) to issue His saving commandments free from any admixture of punishment" (176-177).

The passage does not require much commentary for it contains much of what we already discussed. God's being good and only the cause of good things – the first Platonic typos – prohibits the simultaneous ordaining of penalties for the transgression of the commandments. However, just like in the case of *Conf.* 168-172, God's personality and superiority is demonstrated by God not being externally subjected to what befits him but freely deciding to abide with what he considers fitting for himself. Nonetheless, Philo maintains that God upholds justice and therefore delegated the task of executing punishments for transgressors to others.[440] God's delegation is equally shown to have been occasioned by a consideration of fittingness, with Philo noting that while "it befits (ἐμπρεπής) the servants and lieutenants of God […][to] bring vengeance […][,] it befits the Great King [sc. God; FG] that the general safety of the universe should be ascribed to Him" (178).

II.2. Instances relating to Anthropomorphic and Anthropopathic Depictions of God

II.2.1 The Eternal Will of the Unchangeable God (Deus 20-50)

Having considered some instances of fittingness, we shall turn to Philo's treatise "*On the Unchangeableness of God*", commonly known by its Latin title as "*Quod Deus sit immutabilis"*, for this treatise represents a further great example in our discussion of the issue of god-fittingness in Philo.[441] *Deus* as a whole is a commentary on *Genesis* 6.4-12 and our main focus will be on *Deus* 20-85, for it is in these chapters that Philo is concerned with an explanation of verses 6-7 of *Genesis* chapter

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[439] Note also that it was befitting God's nature (ἦν γὰρ ἁρμόττον αὐτοῦ τῇ φύσει) to give the Ten Commandments himself in contrast to the other laws which were given by Moses (175). The reason why it befits God to do so is not stated but with Dreyer we can assume the reason to lie in God's characterisation of king and lawgiver (cf. Dreyer, *Untersuchungen*, 89–90.).

[440] Philo describes God's justice in a manner closely resembling Hesiod's description of the justice of Zeus, when he notes that God "knew that justice His assessor (τὴν πάρεδρον αὐτῷ δίκην), the surveyor of human affairs, in virtue of her inborn hatred of evil (ἅτε φύσει μισοπόνηρον), will not rest, but take upon herself as her congenital task the punishment of sinners" (177). See also Dreyer, *Untersuchungen*, 89, n. 278.

[441] The English translation used is F. H. Colson and G. H. Whitaker, *Philo: Volume III* (LCL 247; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1930). For an extensive introduction and a commentary of *Deus* see David Winston and John Dillon, eds., *Two Treatises of Philo of Alexandria: A Commentary on De Gigantibus and Quod Deus Sit Immutabilis* (Chico, California: Scholars Press, 1983).

6.[442] I shall argue that it is due to a concern over the preservation of god-fittingness that Philo is found grappling with these verses for they seemingly speak of divine regret and wrath and therefore pose a direct challenge to a fitting notion of God. Indeed, as we had observed earlier, notions such as these ultimately violate the second Platonic topos of God's immutability**.** That it was this particular topos that was at issue in these verses is already indicated in the very title of *Quod Deus sit immutabilis*. Moreover, while obvious, it is important to note that the treatise does not represent a philosophical contemplation on the nature of God in a void but arises from Philo's engagement with the biblical text itself. The issues tackled in *Deus* which are of central importance to our examination are how Philo handles unfitting representations of God contained in his scriptures, namely anthropopathic and anthropomorphic depictions of the divine. In our examination we shall largely follow the structure of Philo's commentary.

Hence, we will begin with Philo's examination of the question whether *Gen* 6.6 is indicating divine repentance (*Deus* 20-50). Secondly, we shall investigate Philo's digression, occasioned by *Gen* 6.7, on his hermeneutics which explicate his understanding of the difficult subject matter of Moses' habitual anthropomorphic and anthropopathic depictions of God (*Deus* 51-69). Thirdly, we shall consider Philo's explanation of whether *Gen* 6.7 might possibly indicate divine wrath (*Deus* 51-52, 70-85).

a) Conflicting Interpretations (20-50)

After treating *Gen* 6.4 in *Deus* 1-19, Philo now reaches *Genesis* 6.5 in *Deus* 20 and cites *Gen* 6.5-7a as a unit.[443] Philo shows himself aware of a potential reading of these verses which he strongly opposes. Indeed, the very first thing Philo does is to object to this differing interpretation, an interpretation which considers these words of Moses to be "hinting that the Creator repented (ὁ δημιουργὸς μετέγνω) of the creation of men" in view of mankind's evil deeds (21). Anyone holding to this interpretation which assumes the repentance of God would, Philo proclaims, be among "some of those who are careless inquirers (τινὲς τῶν ἀνεξετάστων)" and ultimately be exhibiting "their own godlessness (ἀθεότης)" (21). The possibility of some people understanding these verses in such a way is not difficult to see: not only does the Hebrew text clearly suggest such a reading but also the Septuagint's use of διενοήθη could still be understood as implying regret. As we saw earlier, regret implies change, and it is precisely because of this underlying notion of divine change – implicit in this interpretation – that Philo so forcefully disagrees with it, expressing his disavowal in the rhetorical question: "[f]or what greater impiety could there be (τί γὰρ ἂν ἀσέβημα μεῖζον γένοιτο) than to suppose that the Unchangeable changes (τὸν ἄτρεπτον τρέπεσθαι)?" (22). The words of this rhetorical question not only supply the title of Philo's treatise, but they also show Philo's ultimate concern to be the issue as to whether the scriptures

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[442] *Deus* is preceded by *De gigantibus* which is a commentary on *Gen* 6.1-3. Hence, together they cover *Gen* 6.1-12. Indeed, these two works used to form a unit as is indicated by Eusebius giving the title of the whole as Περὶ γιγάντων ἢ περὶ τοῦ μὴ τρέπεσθαι τὸ θεῖον (Eusebius, *HE* 2.18.4) as well as the fact that the last words of *De gigantibus* point to the first sentence of *Quod Deus sit immutabilis*.
[443] Philo leaves out verse 7b, treating it subsequently in *Deus* 51-69.

depict God in a fitting way. Unquestionably, the assumption of divine change would not befit God, for it violates the second Platonic typos. Hence, in order to dismiss any such interpretation, Philo firstly argues that the notion of divine regret implies change, which would not befit God's nature (21-32). Secondly, Philo accounts for the verses themselves by offering an explanation aimed at demonstrating that they do not speak of regret (22-50).

b) God neither repents nor changes

Philo begins his dismissal of divine regret by observing that from a Stoic as well biblical point of view consistency of mind is a desired human ideal. Just like the Stoic sage attempts to attain exemption from "vacillation of mind and judgement" (22), it is the biblical ideal that "the perfect man seeks for quietude (τὸν τέλειον ἠρεμίας ἐφίεσθαι)" (23). Indeed, Philo understands God's command to the sage Moses "to stand with him" (*Deut* 5.31) to show that Moses' mental disposition was "unbending and unwavering (τὸ ἀκλινὲς καὶ ἀρρεπὲς τῆς γνώμης) (23).[444] Philo's reasoning for this interpretation is clearer in other places where he mentions *Deut* 5.31 again. In *De posteritate Caini* 28, for instance, Philo explains that when God exhorts Moses to stand with him, the unmoved mover, it means that God "makes the worthy man sharer of His own Nature, which is repose" (*Post*. 29). Hence, God is also seen as the cause of mankind's virtue and thus Philo denounces the audacity that one might assume this virtue for the Stoic sage and Moses but to "doubt that He, the Imperishable Blessed One, who has taken as His own the sovereignty of the virtues, of perfection itself and beatitude, knows no change of will (οὐ χρῆται γνώμης μεταβολῇ), but ever holds fast to what He purposed from the first without any alteration (μένει δὲ ἐφ' ὧν ἐξ ἀρχῆς ἐβουλεύσατο οὐδὲν αὐτῶν μετατιθείς)" (*Deus* 26).

Moreover, Philo juxtaposes the marked disparity between God and mankind, observing that the latter is defined by "change (τὸ εὐμετάβολον), through instability (ἀβεβαιότητα) whether it be in themselves or outside them (ἢ διὰ τὴν ἐν αὐτοῖς ἢ διὰ τὴν ἐκτὸς)" (27).[445] Contrary to this human condition, Philo asserts that "God has no such fickleness (ὁ δὲ θεὸς οὐχ ἀψίκορος)" (28). The reason for this difference is understood to lie in the fact that "a mere man cannot foresee (προϊδέσθαι) the course of future events, or the judgements of others, but to God as in pure sunlight all things are manifest" (29). Indeed, Philo believes that the characteristics of "forethought and foreknowledge (προμηθείᾳ καὶ προνοίᾳ) […] are

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[444] "It is a tenet of the lawgiver also that the perfect man seeks for quietude (τὸν τέλειον ἠρεμίας ἐφίεσθαι). For the words addressed to the Sage with God as the speaker, " stand thou here with Me " (Deut. v. 31), shew most plainly how unbending, unwavering and broad-based is his will (τὸ ἀκλινὲς καὶ ἀρρεπὲς τῆς γνώμης καὶ ἱδρυμένον πάντῃ σαφέστατα παρίστησι)" (23). Cf. the comments by Hans Leisegang, "Über die Nachkommen Kains," in *Philo von Alexandria: Die Werke in deutscher Übersetzung: Band IV* (ed. Leopold Cohn et al.; 2nd ed.; Berlin: De Gruyter, 1962), 11, n. 4. Deut 5.31 is also cited at *Post*. 28, *Sacr*. 8, *Gig*. 49, *Conf*. 31, and *Somn*. 2.227 (cf. Ibid., n. 2.). Cf. *Gig*. 49: "true stability and immutable tranquillity is that which we experience at the side of God, who Himself stands always immutable".

[445] Change of mind regarding one's friends without the influence of external factors (27) as well as change of view due to other people's opinions (28) are mentioned as evidence of mankind being subject to inner and outer instability respectively.

virtues peculiarly His [sc. God's; FG] own (οἰκείαις ἀρεταῖς)" – they are befitting God's nature – and therefore "nothing is uncertain or future to God (οὔτε γὰρ ἄδηλον οὔτε μέλλον οὐδὲν θεῷ)" (29).

Since foresight is fundamentally related to time, Philo proceeds to reflect on God's relation to time. He argues that God being "the father and craftsman and steward of the heaven and the universe (πατὴρ καὶ τεχνίτης καὶ ἐπίτροπος τῶν ἐν οὐρανῷ τε καὶ κόσμῳ)"[446] (30) makes him "the maker of time also (δημιουργὸς δὲ καὶ χρόνου" (31). The latter follows from the former, since, according to Philo's reasoning, it is the movement of the universe which enables the existence of time (31-32).[447] However, whereas it was a common philosophical view to assume time to have come into existence *simultaneously* with the cosmos, Philo argues that time is itself further removed from God, stating that God is "the father of time's father, that is of the universe", hence making the universe "the younger son of God (ὁ μὲν γὰρ κόσμος οὗτος νεώτερος υἱὸς θεοῦ)" and time God's "grandson (υἱωνός)" (31).[448]

Moreover, Philo closely follows the treatment of time and eternity in Plato's *Timaeus* (cf. *Tim.* 37e-38a) in order to exempt God from the realm of time. Philo places God's existence in the distinct realm of eternity which is "the archetype and pattern of time (τὸ ἀρχέτυπον τοῦ χρόνου καὶ παράδειγμα)" (cf. *Tim.* 37d), a realm in which "there is no past nor future, but only present existence (ἐν αἰῶνι δὲ οὔτε παρελήλυθεν οὐδὲν οὔτε μέλλει, ἀλλὰ μόνον ὑφέστηκεν)" (*Deus* 32).[449] Thus, having argued that God exists outside the bounds of time and hence there being neither a past he could regret, nor a future he could not know for everything is always and at once present and presently known to God, it follows for Philo that "the Existent does not experience repentance (περὶ τοῦ μὴ χρῆσθαι μετανοίᾳ τὸ ὄν)" (33).

c) God's Eternal Thought of Mankind's Free Will

Despite excluding the interpretation of verse 6 as denoting divine repentance by showing that such notion would not befit God's true nature, Philo still has to explain what is meant – τί ἐστι τὸ – when verse 6 states that "God had it in His mind (ἐνεθυμήθη ὁ θεὸς) that He had made men upon the earth and He bethought Him (διενοήθη)" (33). Firstly, Philo considers how the verbs ἐνθυμέομαι and διανοέω are best to be understood, to then reflect on what exactly it was that God was contemplating.

The verbs ἐνθυμέομαι and διανοέω are explained by Philo to simply speak of God's ἔννοια and διανόησις, which denote God's "thought quiescent in the mind (τὴν μὲν ἐναποκειμένην οὖσαν νόησιν)"

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[446] The description of God as "πατὴρ καὶ τεχνίτης" is, of course, a variant to the Platonic description of God as "father and maker" (*Tim.* 28c).
[447] God "has caused the movements of the one [sc. the universe] to be the source of the generation of the other [sc. time] (τὴν κίνησιν αὐτοῦ γένεσιν ἀποφήνας ἐκείνου)" (31).
[448] Leisegang contemplates whether Philo's remarks might be occasioned by the Stoics' etymological interpretation of the Greek God Chronos as time and hence Philo's intention to distance the Jewish God from "time". Cf. Hans Leisegang, "Über die Riesen und Über die Unveränderlichkeit Gottes," in *Philo von Alexandria: Die Werke in deutscher Übersetzung: Band IV* (ed. Leopold Cohn et al.; 2nd ed.; Berlin: De Gruyter, 1962), 79.
[449] See *ibid*. "For God's life is not a time, but eternity, which is the archetype and pattern of time (καὶ γὰρ οὐ χρόνος, ἀλλὰ τὸ ἀρχέτυπον τοῦ χρόνου καὶ παράδειγμα αἰὼν ὁ βίος ἐστὶν αὐτοῦ·)" (32).

and his "thought brought to an issue (τὴν δὲ νοήσεως διέξοδον)" and are probably best conceived of as denoting god's acts of "thinking or contemplating" and "deciding" something respectively (34).[450] They are, as Philo maintains, merely the manner in which God "contemplates His own works" (34). While there is no shift in meaning by rendering διανοέω as διανόησις, for both words share the same root, we can discern an obvious shift in the rendition of ἐνθυμέομαι as ἔννοια. By interpreting ἐνθυμέομαι as denoting ἔννοια, Philo has silently eliminated the underlying notion of θυμός in ἐνθυμέομαι and thereby any suggestion of there being any sort of passion involved in God's action, a matter which Philo will consider in his following interpretation of verse 7. With these remarks out of the way, Philo investigates what exactly God was considering in regard to mankind. He informs us that God contemplated mankind's unique nature in comparison to the rest of the created order (35-49). Unlike the rest of creation, man occupies a unique position in that he received "mind (διάνοια)" from God (45).[451] Together with reason, man also received free will (47).[452] While this latter aspect made man particularly similar to God (κατὰ τοῦτο μάλιστα ὁμοιωθεῖσα αὐτῷ) (48), its consequence was that man was now also "with reason blamed (εἰκότως ψόγον μὲν ἔσχεν) for what he does wrong with intent (οἷς ἐκ προνοίας ἀδικεῖ), praised when he acts rightly of his own will" (47; cf. 48).

Thus, Philo concludes that his closer examination of God's act and object of thinking had established that when the scriptural text mentions that "God 'had it in His mind and bethought Him (ἐνεθυμήθη καὶ διενοήθη ὁ θεός)'", God was not thinking about the fact "that He had made man (ὅτι ἐποίησε τὸν ἄνθρωπον)" – possibly indicating God's regret over the fact of man's creation – but rather "what nature He had made him (ὁποῖον αὐτὸν εἰργάσατο)" (49).[453] Since the nature of mankind was characterised by free will and hence a responsibility for one's actions, the thought of mankind's deserved destruction was established. As a result, Philo had demonstrated that the Scripture did not unfittingly speak of God's repentance, but rather indicated that mankind was responsible for its own destruction. Yet, the scriptural text presented a further difficulty.

II.2.2 God is not Anthropopathic and Anthropomorphic

All that remains for Philo to explain is the final part of verse 7, where God states: "I will blot out man whom I made from the face of the earth, from man to beast, from creeping things to fowls of heaven,

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[450] Colson translates ἔννοια very close to the Greek as "[h]aving in one's mind" and διανόησις as "bethinking" (Colson, p. 27). Leisegang translates them as „Nachdenken" and „Entschluß" respectively. For the Stoic background of these terms see Dillon, Nikiprowetzky, and Winston, "Two Treatises," 291–92.
[451] Translated as „Vernunft" by Leisegang.
[452] The amount of freedom bestowed on the mind of mankind is only limited and relative to God's and hence the διάνοια only receives "such portion as it was capable of receiving" (47). See also Dillon, Nikiprowetzky, and Winston, "Two Treatises," 300.
[453] Moreover, Philo noting that God's thought was "not now for the first time (οὐχὶ νῦν πρῶτον), but ever from of old (ἀλλ' ἐξέτι πάλαι)—a thought that was fixed and stedfast [sic!] (παγίως καὶ βεβαίως)" (49), probably refers to the fact that God made this thought in eternity and had therefore to exclude the notion of repentance which relied on a human concept of time.

because I was wroth in that I made him (ὅτι ἐθυμώθην, ὅτι ἐποίησα αὐτόν)" (51).[454] The issue Philo has to deal with is apparent: how can the text portray God as displaying wrath, a negative human passion which is even considered unsuitable for humans to display? Interestingly, the verb in question – θυμόω – is not very different to ἐνθυμέομαι, the verb in question in verse 6. Yet, it is striking that Philo – as we shall examine – does not defend verse 7 along the same lines as he had done with verse 6.[455] As in the case of the interpretation of verse 6 (21), Philo is once more opposed to a differing understanding of the verse in question and rejects the reading of "some (τινὲς) [who] on hearing these words suppose that the Existent feels wrath and anger (θυμοῖς καὶ ὀργαῖς χρῆσθαι τὸ ὄν)" (52).[456] Contrary to the view of these people, Philo asserts that "He [sc. the Existent (τὸ ὄν)] is not susceptible to any passion at all (ἔστι δ' οὐδενὶ ληπτὸν πάθει τὸ παράπαν)" (52). Indeed, God and mankind, Philo maintains, are completely dissimilar in these regards and he elucidates this fact on the grounds of what befits each respectively: humans have an innate susceptibility to passions due to their weak nature and hence their "being subject to passions (τὸ κηραίνειν) is peculiar to (ἴδιον) human weakness (ἀσθενείας […] ἀνθρωπίνης)" (52).[457] In contrast to mankind's affectability, Philo avows that "neither the unreasoning passions of the soul, nor the parts and members of the body in general, have any relation to God (θεῷ δὲ οὔτε τὰ ψυχῆς ἄλογα πάθη οὔτε τὰ σώματος μέρη καὶ μέλη συνόλως ἐστὶν οἰκεῖα)" (52).[458] That is to say that neither anthropopathic nor anthropomorphic features befit god (θεῷ […] ἐστὶν οἰκεῖα) (52). Thus, the key difference between man and God rests in the nature of the former being weak and therefore subject to change, whereas the latter's nature is perfect and therefore not subject to change.

Yet, this still leaves open the question why Moses described God using such evidently unfitting terms in the first place and leads Philo to consider the wider question of anthropomorphic and anthropopathic depictions of the divine in Scripture. Philo reveals that any such representation of God – like the display of wrath – are used by Moses with the purpose of "a kind of elementary lesson (τινὸς εἰσαγωγῆς), to admonish (τοῦ νουθετῆσαι) those who could not otherwise be brought to their senses (χάριν τοὺς ἑτέρως μὴ δυναμένους σωφρονίζεσθαι)" (52). Hence, Philo claims these anthropopathic depictions of God function as an elementary introduction – an εἰσαγωγή – with the purpose to admonish (νουθετέω) those people who would otherwise not keep to God's instructions and behave in immoral ways. Whilst this

[454] It should be noted that Philo has a singular here and not the plural of the LXX text which he does, however, cite later on in *Deus* 70. See Leisegang, "Über die Riesen und Über die Unveränderlichkeit Gottes," 88, n. 1.
[455] Dreyer, *Untersuchungen*, 127; Wilhelm Maas, *Unveränderlichkeit Gottes: Zum Verhältnis von griechisch-philosophischer und christlicher Gotteslehre* (München: Schöningh, 1974), 94.
[456] Leisegang points out that the people envisaged are not Gentiles but Jews (Leisegang, "Über die Riesen und Über die Unveränderlichkeit Gottes," 84, n. 4.).
[457] Modified. Colson translates κηραίνω as „disquiet" (p.37). While such a rendering along the lines of "anxiety, being sick at heart" is possible, especially when considering that κῆρ (heart) is at the root of the verb, Dillon, Nikiprowetzky, and Winston, "Two Treatises," 305 point out that rather "[t]he verb seems to mean for Philo 'be subject to passions' in general." In this sense and applied to the current discussion, Leisegang translates it as "zürnen" (to be angry with someone) (p. 84).
[458] Philo subsequently expands why anthropomorphic features are not befitting God's nature.

explanation would suffice to vindicate the presence of unfitting depictions of God in the text, Philo decides to further highlight the hermeneutical framework that undergirds this reasoning.[459]

II.2.2.1. God is and is not like man (53-59)

Philo's hermeneutical principle is derived from the biblical text itself. In fact, it consists of two components: two types of speaking about the divine mentioned by Scripture. Scripture provides "two leading statements about the Cause (δύο τὰ ἀνωτάτω […] κεφάλαια περὶ τοῦ αἰτίου), one that 'God is not as a man' (οὐχ ὡς ἄνθρωπος ὁ θεός); the other that He is as a man (ὡς ἄνθρωπος)" (53). The first principle, "God is not as a man (οὐχ ὡς ἄνθρωπος ὁ θεός)" (53), is directly taken from *Num* 23.19 and is said to be "warranted by grounds of surest truth (ἀληθείᾳ βεβαιοτάτῃ) (54), whereas the second principle, "He is as a man (ὡς ἄνθρωπος)" (53), is taken from *Deut* 8.5, where it says, "like a man He shall train His son (ὡς ἄνθρωπος παιδεύσει τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ)" (54).[460] The mentioning of παιδεύω in *Deut* 8.5 provides Philo with the needed link to assert that this way of speaking about God has only been "introduced for the instruction of the many (πρὸς τὴν τῶν πολλῶν διδασκαλίαν εἰσάγεται)" (54). Hence, when the Scriptures speak of God in an anthropomorphic manner it is only "for training and admonition (ὥστε παιδείας ἕνεκα καὶ νουθεσίας), not because God's nature is such" (54).

The reason why Moses speaks of God in this twofold way is found, according to Philo, in Moses' intent to show that God addressed everyone according to their capacity of comprehension. Philo then proceeds to differentiate two kinds of people which he believes to be addressed: the "soul lovers" and the "body lovers" (οἱ μὲν ψυχῆς, οἱ δὲ σώματος […] φίλοι) (55)". According to Philo, lovers of the soul are the kind of people who "do not compare the Existent (τὸ ὄν) to any form of created things" and rightly "have dissociated Him from every category or quality (πάσης ποιότητος)"[461], since they realised that God's "being is apprehended as simple being (τὴν ὕπαρξιν καταλαμβάνεσθαι), without other definite characteristic (ἄνευ χαρακτῆρος)" only (55). As a result, they have attained the insight to "not picture it [sc. God's being] with form (μὴ μορφώσαντες αὐτό), but to admit to their minds the conception of existence only (τὴν κατὰ τὸ εἶναι φαντασίαν μόνην ἐνεδέξαντο)" (55). In other words, the lovers of the soul have realised that they can only perceive of God's existence (τὴν ὕπαρξιν καταλαμβάνεσθαι) but not his essence (55). In contrast, the lovers of the body are beholden to their physical and sensible world and can therefore only "think of the Cause of all in the same terms as of themselves (οἷα περὶ ἑαυτῶν

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[459] Dreyer, *Untersuchungen*, 128.

[460] As Leisegang, "Über die Riesen und Über die Unveränderlichkeit Gottes," 85, n. 1. rightly notes, Philo refers to *Deut* 8.5 and not 1.31 as thought by Harry Austryn Wolfson, *Philo: Foundations of Religious Philosophy in Judaism, Christianity and Islam* (vol. 2, 2 vols., 2nd ed.; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1948), 97, 129. Also, it should be noted that it is only possible for Philo to read the text as speaking of the impossibility of a comparison between God and mankind since the LXX's renders the Hebrew of *Num* 23.19 ("god is not a man") as "god is not *as* a man" (see Dillon, Nikiprowetzky, and Winston, "Two Treatises," 305.).

[461] On questions regarding divine "qualities" see the comprehensive discussion by Wolfson, *Philo: Foundations of Religious Philosophy in Judaism, Christianity and Islam*, 101–10.

τοιαῦτα καὶ περὶ τοῦ πάντων αἰτίου διενοήθησαν)"[462] (56). Hence, their understanding of God is confined to self-projecting anthropomorphic ways, similar to the ones mentioned by Xenophanes, and they are thus not able to perceive God as simply an "existence needing nothing in its unique solitariness, and free from all admixture and composition in its absolute simplicity" (56). Indeed, beholden to their anthropomorphic conception of God, they imagine God to likewise be "a being which is formed through the union of several faculties [that] needs several parts to minister to the need of each" (56). In other words, they imagine God as a being whose faculties such as seeing and hearing would require eyes and ears. However, Philo dismisses such an anthropomorphic conception of God as absurd and utterly mistaken since "God being uncreated (ἀγένητος ὢν) and the Author of the creation of the others needs none of the properties which belong to the creatures which He has brought into being" (56). Moreover, Philo continues to further highlight the logical absurdities that would follow from such an anthropomorphic understanding of God. To imagine God with feet would be absurd for he would not walk anywhere as his presence fills the universe. Neither does he require hands to receive or give things, himself not receiving anything as he does not lack anything (ἀνεπιδεής) and not giving himself anything directly for "He employs as minister of His gifts the Reason (δίδωσι λόγῳ χρώμενος ὑπηρέτῃ δωρεῶν) wherewith also He made the world" (57). Also, the notion that God could have eyes is absurd since eyes are dependent on light for seeing but "God saw before creation, being Himself His own light (φωτὶ χρώμενος ἑαυτῷ)" (58). Lastly, Philo states that the idea that God "eats and is filled, rests awhile and after the rest has need again, and the accompaniments of this" are issues he "will not dwell upon" (59). The "accompaniments" which Philo does not want to dwell upon being, of course, the notion of God having to make use of a supposed excretory process.[463] Ultimately, all such notions are deemed by Philo to be "the mythical fictions (μυθοποιίαι) of the impious (ἀσεβῶν), who, professing to represent the deity (τὸ θεῖον) as of human form (ἀνθρωπόμορφον), in reality represent Him as having human passions (ἀνθρωποπαθὲς)" (59).

II.2.2.2 Beneficial to all: Reverence in fear or love but Reverence nonetheless (60-69)

So, where does this leave Moses when he "speak[s] of feet (βάσεις) and hands (χεῖρας), goings in and goings out in connexion with the Uncreated (τὸ ἀγένητον), or of His arming to defend Himself against His enemies?" (60). But most pressingly, it has to be asked why Moses spoke of God's "jealousy, His wrath, His moods of anger, and the other emotions similar to them, which he describes in terms of human nature (πρὸς δὲ ἔτι ζῆλον, θυμόν, ὀργάς, ὅσα τούτοις ὅμοια ἀνθρωπολογῶν διεξέρχεται)" (60),

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[462] Note that the German translation appears to have missed out this sentence!

[463] While Philo certainly thinks of the excretory process (see also Colson and Whitaker, *Philo: Volume III*, 485.), there has been some debate whether this thought might already be envisaged in the earlier part of the sentence, depending on whether the manuscript evidence is read as God "resting" or "relieving" himself. See on this Colson's remarks in the appendix (Ibid.) The conjecture made by Wendland and referred to by Colson has, however, been made in Paul Wendland, "Kritische und exegetische Bemerkungen zu Philo," *Rheinisches Museum für Philologie* 52 (1897): 480. and not volume 82 as erroneously stated by Colson. Cf. Dillon, Nikiprowetzky, and Winston, "Two Treatises," 306–7.

especially when passions such as these obviously stood in direct contradiction to what was considered to be god-fitting. Philo justifies this odd circumstance by arguing that Moses' aim (τέλος) in giving the laws was "to benefit all whom his work reaches (πάντας ὠφελῆσαι τοὺς ἐντυγχάνοντας)" (61). Who and how people derived benefit from this is then further explained by Philo. He again assumes there to be two types of people who are reached by Moses' laws which correspond closely to the two earlier kinds of people he had distinguished: There are the ones who have a "generously gifted nature" and who, "hav[ing] truth for their fellow-traveller", had been "admitted by her into the infallible mysteries of the Existent", thereby coming to the realisation not to "overlay the conception of God with any of the attributes of created being" (61).[464] Hence, those people's notion of God corresponds closely to the principle that "God is not as a man (οὐχ ὡς ἄνθρωπος ὁ θεός)" (62).[465] This is, as Philo again confirms, indeed the fitting understanding of God since he "is not apprehensible even by the mind, save in the fact that He is (ὁ δ' ἄρα οὐδὲ τῷ νῷ καταληπτὸς ὅτι μὴ κατὰ τὸ εἶναι μόνον)" (62).[466]

The other type of people are those who have a dense and dull nature (νωθεστέρᾳ μὲν καὶ ἀμβλείᾳ […] τῇ φύσει)[467] for their "early training has been mishandled" (63). This, of course, bears close resemblance to Plato's concerns in the *Republic* "where fables and myths are linked to the education received in infancy from the mouths of mothers and nurses."[468] Likewise, the mismanaged education of these simple people has resulted in a lack of "clear vision" and thus a "need [for] physicians in the shape of admonishers (ἰατρῶν δέονται νουθετητῶν), who will devise the treatment proper of their present condition" (63). Since these people are like "ill-disciplined and foolish slaves [who] receive profit (ὠφέλιμος) from a master who frightens them (φοβερὸς δεσπότης), for they fear his threats and menaces and thus involuntarily are schooled by fear (φόβῳ νουθετοῦνται)" (64), their treatment consists in "learn[ing] the untruth (τὰ ψευδῆ), which will benefit them (δι' ὧν ὠφεληθήσονται)" (64). This untruth, the lie these people are meant to be taught, is, of course, Philo's second principle that "God is like a man". Conceiving of God in this way would naturally entail supposing that God becomes angry and threatens people which in turn would result in mankind's fear of God compelling them to honour him by following his laws (67-68). Such a method of presenting lies to people is compared by Philo to "physicians [who] do not allow themselves to tell the truth to their patients" (65).[469] Hence, Moses

[464] See Dillon, Nikiprowetzky, and Winston, "Two Treatises," 308.
[465] Philo adds "nor yet is He as the heaven or the universe" (62) which is likely a jibe aimed at the Stoics (as assumed by Colson and Whitaker, *Philo: Volume III*, 485. But see Winston and Dillon, *Two Treatises of Philo of Alexandria: A Commentary on De Gigantibus and Quod Deus Sit Immutabilis*, 308; Dillon, Nikiprowetzky, and Winston, "Two Treatises," 308.).
[466] "For it is His existence which we apprehend (ὕπαρξις γὰρ ἔσθ' ἣν καταλαμβάνομεν αὐτοῦ), and of what lies outside that existence nothing (τῶν δέ γε χωρὶς ὑπάρξεως οὐδέν)" (62).
[467] Colson's translation – "whose natural wit is more dense and dull" – seems to not fully do justice to the focus on the people's φύσις in my opinion.
[468] Dillon, Nikiprowetzky, and Winston, "Two Treatises," 309.
[469] "if through the physician's deceit he expects the opposite, he will gladly endure everything with patience, however painful the methods of saving him will be" (66).

depicted “the supreme Cause (τὸ αἴτιον) as dealing in threats and oftentimes shewing indignation and implacable anger (ἀπειλαῖς καὶ ἀγανακτήσεσι καὶ ἀπαραιτήτοις ὀργαῖς)” since this was “the only way (μόνως γὰρ οὕτως) in which the fool can be admonished (ὁ ἄφρων νουθετεῖται)” (68).

Finally, Philo summaries his thoughts, asserting that with the two

> “maxims, "God is as a man (ὡς ἄνθρωπος)," and "God is not as a man (οὐχ ὡς ἄνθρωπος ὁ θεὸς)," he [sc. Moses; FG] has linked two other principles closely connected and consequent on them, namely fear and love (φόβον τε καὶ ἀγάπην)” (69).

These two – fear and love – Philo sees as the two possible ways of honouring God and finds either of them at the root of all the biblical laws (69).[470] Correspondingly, Philo maintains that “to love Him is the most suitable (τὸ ἀγαπᾶν οἰκειότατον) for those into whose conception of the Existent (περὶ τὸ ὂν) no thought of human parts or passions (μήτε μέρος μήτε πάθος ἀνθρώπου) enters, but who honour him in a god-fitting way for His own sake (ἀλλὰ θεοπρεπῶς αὐτὸ δι’ αὐτὸ μόνον τιμῶσι)”[471] as well as “[t]o fear is most suitable to the others (φοβεῖσθαι δὲ τοῖς ἑτέροις)” who perceive of God in unfitting ways, namely in anthropomorphic and anthropopathic ways (69). What Philo is saying here is that there are two ways of honouring God – through fear and love – and these are suitable for each particular type of person: the ones who conceive of God in a way that is fitting for God love him, whereas the ones who do not conceive of him in a way that befits him fear him. Thus, we can observe with Dreyer that the question over fittingness has been transferred from what befits God to what constitutes a fitting way for mankind to conceive of God.[472] Fitting conceptions of God lead to the love of God and unfitting conceptions lead to the fear of God.

II.2.2.3 Wrath and Mercy

Philo then returns to “the original question which caused us difficulty”, namely the part of *Gen* 6.7 where God said, “I was wroth in that I made them (ἐθυμώθην ὅτι ἐποίησα αὐτούς)” (70). At first it seems that Philo proceeds to explain this statement along the lines of his earlier reasoning, arguing that

> “wrath (ὁ θυμὸς), which is properly speaking a passion of men (κυριολογούμενον ἐπ’ ἀνθρώπων πάθος), is here used in a more metaphorical sense (τροπικώτερον), yet still correctly, of the Existent (ἐπὶ τοῦ ὄντος), to bring out a vital truth” (71).[473]

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470 “For I observe that all the exhortations to piety in the law (τὰς γὰρ διὰ τῶν νόμων εἰς εὐσέβειαν ὁρῶ παρακελεύσεις ἁπάσας) refer either to our loving (ἢ πρὸς τὸ ἀγαπᾶν) or our fearing (ἢ πρὸς τὸ φοβεῖσθαι) the Existent (τὸν ὄντα)” (69).
471 Modified. Colson translates: “who pay Him the honour meet for God for His own sake only” (69).
472 Dreyer, *Untersuchungen*, 132.
473 Modified.

From Philo's earlier reasoning, one would assume this vital truth to refer to the different levels of human conception of the divine and therefore assume Philo to label such a way of speaking as pedagogical. Yet, Philo understands this vital truth to be the demonstration

> "that all our actions by general consent (ὁμολογουμένως) are worthy of blame and censure, if done through anger or fear, or grief or pleasure, or any other passion (δι' ὀργὴν ἢ φόβον ἢ λύπην ἢ ἡδονὴν ἤ τι τῶν ἄλλων παθῶν)[474], but worthy of praise if done with rectitude of reason and knowledge (μετ' ὀρθότητος λόγου καὶ ἐπιστήμης)" (71).

This understanding is argued for by Philo by asserting that the biblical text speaks of God saying ""because I was wrathful, I made them (ὅτι ἐθυμώθην, ὅτι ἐποίησα αὐτοὺς)," not in the reverse order, "because I made them, I was wroth (διότι ἐποίησα αὐτούς, ἐθυμώθην)"" (72).[475] Philo dismisses the latter on the basis that it is does not befit God for it "would show change of mind or repentance (μετανοοῦντος), a thing impossible (οὐκ ἀνέχεται) to the all-foreseeing nature of God (θεοῦ φύσις)" (72). Yet, Philo is only able to argue for his former reading to be the case by inserting the ὅτι, that precedes and introduces the quotation, as an actual part of the quotation itself as well as understanding this first ὅτι in a causal sense and the second ὅτι in a factual sense, thereby asserting that it was because God was wrathful that he created them.[476] According to Philo, this statement serves as an example demonstrating "that wrath is the source of misdeeds (ὅτι πηγὴ μὲν ἁμαρτημάτων θυμός), but the reasoning faculty [the source; FG] of right actions (λογισμὸς δὲ κατορθωμάτων)" (72). This reading would therefore justify the destruction of mankind as something caused by themselves. However, Philo maintains that "God, remembering His perfect and universal goodness" decided not to fully destroy mankind (73), noting that "Noah found grace with Him [sc. God; FG]" (74). While God would be justly destroying mankind, his nature is ultimately shown to be defined by mercy, for "He tempers His judgement with the mercy (τὸν ἔλεον ἀνακίρνησιν) which He shews in doing kindness even to the unworthy (τῶν ἀναξίων)" (76).

Conclusion

In summary, we were able to see how Philo was intent to square his belief of a good and immutable God with the often unfitting depictions of God in the Jewish Scriptures. Since God was seemingly portrayed as anthropomorphic, anthropopathic, weak, and complicit in evil, Philo had to account for these unfitting instances in his exegesis of Scripture. In this endeavour Philo argued that Scripture maintained a fitting notion of God, showing Scripture to indicate that not God, but his powers were engaged in instances deemed to not befit God. Yet, Philo likewise maintained that God always remained

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[474] Modified. Colson has erroneously reversed the order of "anger" and "fear" in his translation.
[475] Modified.
[476] Cf. Leisegang, "Über die Riesen und Über die Unveränderlichkeit Gottes," 83, n. 4. Dreyer, *Untersuchungen*, 133.

in ultimate control. Besides, as the personal God of his Jewish faith and not an abstract principle, God freely chose to adhere to what he considered to befit himself and his goodness expressed itself in the biblical terms of God's loving kindness and mercy. Moreover, we found that Philo could also claim God's fitting depiction by a detailed examination of the text's individual words as well as by considering the intention of its author Moses. The examination of this latter aspect showed that in some cases Moses had depicted God in unfitting ways which, while not true, had, however, the purpose of imparting a god-fitting behaviour to all readers of Scripture and hence served an ulterior but superior purpose.

Chapter 5: Marcion's Use of the Principle of Fittingness

Introduction

Described as the "first-born of Satan" by his (near-)contemporaries[477], Marcion, who was mostly active in Rome around the mid-second century, quickly gained notoriety among Christians and was to be described by later scholars as one of the most influential 'heretics' of the second century, posing "the greatest challenge to Christian orthodoxy"[478]. And indeed, judging from the almost immediate and immense outpouring of literature directed against him, as well as the long-lasting existence of his own church, Marcion's influence can rightly be seen to have been extensive. Even today, some of the fundamental questions raised by him still persevere and rekindle old debates.[479]

More than any other, it was Adolf von Harnack's magisterial monograph – *Markion* – that proved to have the greatest and most lasting impact on the Marcion scholarship of the 20th century and only gradually more recent scholars have started to emancipate themselves from the spell of Harnack's account which had captivated many with its vivid portrayal and profound erudition. For Harnack, the point of departure and centre of Marcion's thought was clear, stating: "[d]er Ausgangspunkt der Kritik

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[477] Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer*. III.3.4. While this epithet is part of Polycarp's exclamation upon meeting Marcion, it is uncertain whether the supposed encounter between these two figures ever took place, and it is thus Irenaeus who should be seen as its originator.

[478] Hans Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion* (2nd ed.; Boston: Beacon Press, 1963), 137. However, Jonas continues his sentence, emphasizing the stimulating effect Marcion had on "Christian orthodoxy", stating: "or more precisely, his challenge more than that of any other "heresy" led to the formulation of the orthodox creed itself" (*ibid.*).

[479] These questions usually circle around the issue of the validity of the Old Testament for Christians due to the often perceived difference in character between the evil and wrathful Old Testament god and the loving and merciful New Testament god. Harnack had already raised this issue. That the question continues to be debated and elicit discussion can be seen in the theological controversy that resulted from Notger Slenczka's essay (Notger Slenczka, "Die Kirche und das Alte Testament," in *Das Alte Testament in der Theologie* (ed. Elisabeth Gräb-Schmidt and Reiner Preul; Marburger Theologische Studien 119; Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2013), 83–119.).

M.s an der Überlieferung kann nicht verfehlt werden: er war in dem paulinischen Gegensatz von Gesetz und Evangelium, übelwollender, kleinlicher und grausamer Strafgerechtigkeit einerseits und barmherziger Liebe andererseits gegeben."[480] As becomes evident from reading Harnack's account, Marcion is understood through a Lutheran-Pauline lens with its characteristic distinction between law and gospel. What emerges from this reading is a picture of Marcion as a (philological) biblicist and a strict Paulinist who was uninterested in philosophical speculation and had to be separated from "Gnosticism". With a few modifications this paradigm long reigned supreme. And scholars such as Barbara Aland, to take just one example, equally reasoned along these lines that the Pauline (or rather: the Lutheran) distinction between law and gospel had to be seen as the starting point of Marcion's thought.[481] Thereby, she follows Harnack's emphasis on the importance of Paul for Marcion's thinking.[482]

Moreover, in his emphasis that Marcion had to be understood as a man *sui generis*, Harnack denied almost any gnostic or philosophical influence on Marcion's thought, asserting that Marcion "als grundsätzlicher Biblizist und Gegner aller Philosophie kein philosophisch-theologisches System aufgestellt und nicht als Systematiker 'Prinzipien' gelehrt [hat]".[483] On the other hand, Harnack also inferred from Marcion's philological criticism that he was "ein gebildeter Mann […], also mindestens auch das übliche philosophische Wissen besaß", yet, Harnack immediately clarifies that this is not to negate Marcion's rejection of philosophy.[484] Indeed Harnack's portrayal of Marcion as a radical Paulinist who was unaffected by philosophical thought became the dominant paradigm in Marcion scholarship. Yet, it was not accepted without any objections by all scholars.

In his review of Harnack's *Markion*, Walter Bauer rejected the notion that Paul was the starting point for Marcion's thought, doubting that "M.[arcion] seinen guten Gott in den Paulusbriefen gefunden und daß er sich an ihnen in seinen Widerspruch gegen das AT und seinen Gott hineingelesen hat. Seine Gedanken müssen dem Heidenapostel zu gewaltsam aufgezwungen werden, als daß sie von diesem stammen könnten."[485] Likewise, scholars suggested against Harnack that a greater influence of

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[480] Adolf von Harnack, *Marcion: Das Evangelium vom fremden Gott (*printed with *Neue Studien zu Marcion)* (2nd ed.; Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1960), 30. Similarly p. 38*: "als sein [i.e. Marcion's; FG] L e h r e r kommt nur Paulus in Betracht. Von ihm ist er ausgegangen, in ihn hat er sich versenkt" (letterspacing in original).

[481] Barbara Aland, "Marcion/Marcioniten," *Theologische Realenzyklopädie* 22 (1992): 93. ("So bleibt also, den Ausgangspunkt für Marcions Grundüberzeugung vom Gegensatz von Gesetz und Evangelium […] von seinem einzigen Apostel Paulus her abzuleiten.").

[482] Note, however, her remarks on the "gnostic" influence on Marcion in contrast to Harnack (see Ibid., 98.). Cf. Harnack, *Marcion*, 30.

[483] Harnack, *Marcion*, 160. Despite the common statement that Harnack denied any and all influence of Gnosticism on Marcion, this needs to be qualified as in the existence of evil matter in Marcion's thought Harnack believes "den Einfluß zu erkennen, den er [sc. Marcion; FG] nach der Überlieferung von der syrischen Gnosis durch Vermittlung des Cerdo erlitten hat" (Ibid., 98.).

[484] Harnack, *Marcion*, 24, n. 1. ("Seine dezidierte Abneigung gegen die Philosophie […] spricht nicht dagegen").

[485] Walter Bauer, "Adolf von Harnack, Marcion: Das Evangelium vom fremden Gott," *GGA* 185 (1923): 7. See especially pp. 5-8, 11.

"gnosticism" as well as philosophical thought had likely to be assumed.[486] Indeed, long before Harnack's *Marcion*, Max Pohlenz had already noted the influence of philosophical thought on Marcion and consequently critiqued Harnack's account for its "völlige[…] Verkennung des philosophischen Einflusses" on Marcion.[487] While Harnack's account of the Old Testament creator as a just god had been the prevalent "standard" view among scholars of the 20th century, the more recent scholarly debate on Marcion has been particularly dominated by the suggestion that Marcion assumed the creator to be evil rather than just. Although this suggestion had already been made by Bauer in his critique of Harnack's portrayal of the justice of the Marcionite creator,[488] it was not until Winrich Löhr's 2002 article that renewed doubts over this fundamental feature of Harnack's account were raised.[489] These reflections culminated in Sebastian Moll's claim that Harnack's distinction between a just and a good God was indeed "one of the greatest misconceptions concerning Marcion's teaching"[490]; with Moll following the trajectory that understood the Creator-God to be evil rather than just.[491]

Taking up many of these criticisms, I will argue that Paul did play an important role in Marcion's thinking, but that he does not, however, represent the initial starting point for Marcion's theology. Rather, Marcion's starting point lies, as I will argue, in his reading of the scriptures – the "Hebrew Bible" – against the background of the philosophical concept of god-fittingness.[492] It was thus the concept of θεοπρεπής which led Marcion to draw an absolute distinction between the inferior Creator-God known from the Hebrew Scriptures and the superior, previously unknown God who had been newly revealed in Christ. The very use of the principle of fittingness as well as other instances demonstrate that Marcion was – contrary to Harnack's view – indeed influenced by philosophical concepts and arguments of his time.

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[486] Assuming a greater influence of gnosticism are, among many others, Ibid., 11. („die vielgestaltige und weitverzweigte Erscheinung der Gnosis […] von nicht zu unterschätzender Bedeutung gewesen ist".

[487] Pohlenz, *Stoa II*, 198. For Pohlenz's critique see Pohlenz, *Stoa I*, 410–11. Pohlenz had himself already noted the influence of the philosophical concept of *apatheia* on Marcion in his 1909 essay: Max Pohlenz, *Vom Zorne Gottes: Eine Studie über den Einfluß der griechischen Philosophie auf das alte Christentum* (Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments 12; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1909).

[488] Bauer, "Harnack," 8–11. Still prior to Harnack and Bauer, Wilhelm Bousset had postulated a Persian evil-good dualistic influence on Marcion, claiming that Marcion had simply "den absoluten orientalisch-persischen Dualismus und den Gegensatz des guten und des bösen Gottes auf den Gegensatz zwischen dem höchsten unbekannten Gott, dem Vater Jesu Christi und zwischen dem Gott des Alten Testaments übertragen." (Wilhelm Bousset, *Hauptprobleme der Gnosis* (Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des AT und NT 10; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1907), 109.)

[489] Winrich Löhr, "Did Marcion Distinguish between a Just God and a Good God?," in *Marcion und seine kirchengeschichtliche Wirkung / Marcion and His Impact on Church History* (ed. Gerhard May and Katharina Greschat; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2002).

[490] Sebastian Moll, *The Arch-Heretic Marcion* (WUNT 250; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 47.

[491] Ibid., 75. The distinction that "Marcion's first God is not just, he is evil" is seen by Moll as "one of the most important results of this chapter as well as of this entire study" (ibid.).

[492] I am thus in full agreement with Lieu's observation that in Marcion "[p]hilosophical presuppositions and the reading of texts work in dialogue with each other" (Judith M. Lieu, *Marcion and the Making of a Heretic: God and Scripture in the Second Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 324.

Of course, the influence of the principle of fittingness on Maricon's thought has not gone completely unnoticed by scholarship.[493] Although there has not been a dedicated investigation into this issue, some scholars have suggested that the principle of god-fittingness is likely to have played a role in Marcion's thought. The first such suggestion – to my knowledge – had been made in 1970 by Oskar Dreyer in a few brief remarks towards the end of his book on the principle of god-fittingness[494], gesturing towards its influence on Christian theology. The following year, Jörg Woltmann (1971), without referring to Dreyer's monograph, also acknowledged the role of the principle of fittingness in his exploration of the wider philosophical context of Marcion's thought.[495] Since then, the concept of fittingness has been at least mentioned in connection with Marcion's thought, yet often without any further explanation or examples.[496] The main exception to this is Gerhard May who by asserting that "Marcion made a distinction between the two gods because *he could not reconcile the anthropomorphic traits* of the Old Testament God *with the philosophical concept of an essentially good God*" implicitly acknowledged on many occasions the influence of the argument made by the principle of fittingness without explicitly naming the principle.[497] Yet, it is striking that the two most recent and highly influential full-scale studies on Marcion either acknowledge the influence of the principle of fittingness[498] but then "suggest that these problems did not constitute his [sc. Marcion's; FG] primary starting point, so much as reinforce and help offer a rationale for a position held on other grounds"[499] or simply claim that Marcion "has absolutely no concept of θεοπρεπές".[500] Hence, due to recent assessments such as these as well as the general lack of (especially English-language[501]) scholarship on this issue, it seems warranted to take another look at the influence of the principle of god-fittingness on Marcion. Additionally, I believe that

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[493] This is mainly German scholarship as will become clear from the following remarks.

[494] Of course, Max Pohlenz had already noted the influence of one aspect of the principle of god-fittingness, the demand for *apatheia*, on Marcion's thought, but did so without reference to the principle itself.

[495] Jörg Woltmann, "Der geschichtliche Hintergrund der Lehre Markions vom 'Fremden Gott,'" in *Wegzeichen: Festgabe zum 60. Geburtstag von Prof. Dr. Hermengild M. Biedermann, O.S.A.* (ed. Ernst C. Suttner and Coelestin Patock; Würzburg: Augustinus-Verlag, 1971), 15–42.

[496] For instance, both René Braun, in the introduction to his 1990 translation of book 1 of *Adversus Marcionem,* and Barbara Aland, in her 1992 *TRE* article, briefly mention the principle's likely influence on the thought of Marcion; yet, neither of them goes into further detail.

[497] Gerhard May, "Marcion in Contemporary Views: Results and Open Questions," *The Second Century: A Journal of Early Christian Studies* 6, no. 3 (1987): 145. (emphasis mine). Gerhard May, "Markion in seiner Zeit," in *Gerhard May: Markion: Gesammelte Aufsätze* (ed. Katharina Greschat and Martin Meiser; Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 2005), 5. However, despite his 1978 monograph in which he still appeared to be closer to Harnack in his opinion that "Marcion starts from Paul" (Gerhard May, *Creatio Ex Nihilo: The Doctrine of "Creation out of Nothing" in Early Christian Thought* (trans. A. S. Worrall; London: T&T Clark, 1994), 54.), Gerhard May is probably the scholar who most alluded to the principle in many of his publications.

[498] Lieu, *Marcion*, 349. Cf. *ibid*., pp. 358, 363.

[499] Ibid., 366. It is not entirely clear to me what Lieu takes these "other grounds" to be.

[500] Moll, *Marcion*, 154.

[501] The only essay in Anglo-American scholarship during the 20th century that I know of which drew attention to the principle of fittingness is the one by David Dungan. See David L. Dungan, "Reactionary Trends in the Gospel Producing Activity of the Early Church: Marcion, Tatian, Mark," in *L'Évangile Selon Marc: Tradition et Rédaction* (ed. Sabbe; 2nd ed.; Bibliotheca Ephemeridum theologicarum Lovaniensium 32; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1988), 179–202.

an investigation of the principle of fittingness might help move forward the more recent debate over the issue of whether Marcion assumed the Creator-God to be a just god or an evil god.

After a brief biographical sketch of Marcion which will already highlight the difficulty of our sources, I will begin by scrutinising our earliest sources for any evidence of an influence of the principle of fittingness on Marcion's thought. While we will be able to observe strong indications for such an influence in Irenaeus, it is not until Tertullian that we can detect explicit references to it.

I. Overview of Marcion's Life

One of the few facts that are widely attested for Marcion is that he was born in the region of Pontus.[502] Indeed, already in the last quarter of the second century the Christian Rhodo, a disciple of Tatian, is said to have called Marcion the "Pontic wolf" (*H.E.* 5.13.4).[503] Further specification provided by Epiphanius that Marcion hailed from the seaport city of Sinope is certainly possible but might be nothing more than a "learned guess".[504] Depending on how the sources are evaluated, Marcion's birth can be placed roughly to between AD 85 and 110.[505] Sometime between AD 136 and 144, Marcion will have left Pontus and settled in Rome. While some sources also ascribe a heretical pre-Roman history to Marcion, which included the story of Marcion leaving his native Pontus after being "excommunicated" by his father, the bishop of Sinope, for seducing a virgin, these sources do not hold up to critical examination.[506] Yet, it is plausible to assume that Marcion used to be a shipowner.[507] Once in Rome,

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[502] Justin, *1 Apol*. 26.5; 58.1; Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* I.27.2.
[503] Eusebius, *H.E.* 5.13.4. Already Justin, who in turn was Tatian's teacher, called Marcion a wolf in *1 Apol* 58.2.
[504] Winrich Löhr, "Problems of Profiling Marcion," in *Christian Teachers in Second-Century Rome: Schools and Students in the Ancient City* (ed. H. Gregory Snyder; Leiden: Brill, 2020), 109.
[505] Harnack, *Marcion*, 21, 14*-15*. based on Clement's report in *Strom.* VII.17.106-107 suggests as Marcion's date of birth approximately the year AD 85 or a little later (see, however, the critical remarks by Moll, *Marcion*, 38.). Moll himself dates Marcion's birth between AD 100 and 110, based on a psychological reading (Ibid., 26.), but in view of Clement's testimony leans more towards AD 100 (Ibid., 39.).
[506] While accusations of sexual transgressions are a well-known heresiological topos (see e.g. Jürgen Regul, *Die Antimarcionitischen Evangelienprologe* (Freiburg: Herder, 1969), 184.), the seduction of a virgin could also refer to the seduction of the "virgin church" by "heresy" as Harnack notes with reference to Hegesippus' remarks in Eusebius, *H.E.* 4.22.1 (Harnack, *Marcion*, 26*, with n. 1.). Regul has argued that there are two distinct traditions which are represented by Tertullian on the one hand and Epiphanius, Pseudo-Tertullian, and Filastrius on the other hand (Regul, *Die Antimarcionitischen Evangelienprologe*, 177–95.). Since the last three are commonly used to reconstruct Hippolytus' lost early third century *Syntagma*, Harnack ascribed these sources a high validity and traced many of their elements back to the *Syntagma* (Harnack, *Marcion*, 24*, with n.1. On the *Syntagma* see Richard Adelbert Lipsius, *Zur Quellenkritik des Epiphanios* (Wien: Braumüller, 1865).). Regul has questioned Harnack's arbitrary approach to the sources, noting that it is often "zweifelhaft, was man mit Fug und Recht auf Hippolyt zurückführen darf" (Regul, *Die Antimarcionitischen Evangelienprologe*, 185; pp. 185-187.). Also Moll casts doubt on which elements can be traced back to Hippolytus' *Syntagma* (Moll, *Marcion*, 35–36.).
[507] Cf. however, Lieu, *Marcion*, 56–57., who points to *Adv. Marc*. 1.2.1; 1.7.7; 1.18.4 and 5.1.2. where Tertullian uses his description of Marcion as a *nauclerus* to draw polemical paintings such as Marcion shipwrecking with his teaching (*Adv. Marc.* 1.2.1). Nonetheless, it is equally possible that Marcion was indeed a *nauclerus* and Tertullian simply used this fact for his biting remarks. See especially Gerhard May, "Der 'Schiffsreeder' Markion," in *Gerhard May: Markion: Gesammelte Aufsätze* (Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 2005), 57., who points out that Tertullian's remarks on Marcion's profession are rather civil in comparison to his remarks on

Marcion joined the Roman church[508] and made a sizeable contribution of 200000 sesterces to the Roman church.[509] However, sometime later Marcion "broke" with the Roman church and his money was returned to him.[510] In the past, Tertullian's computation in *Adv. Marc.* 1.19.2 led many scholars to believe the year AD 144 to be the date of Marcion's break with the Roman church.

While Tertullian first and foremost wants to demonstrate the posteriority of Marcion in comparison to the actual event of Jesus' appearance on earth, he also mentions that the Marcionites posit the same time between Christ and Marcion. Combining the mentioned 115 years and 6 and a half months with the aforementioned 15th year of Tiberius (= AD 29), a date between the *middle of 144 and the middle of 145* can be envisaged.[511] However, to which event – if one is envisaged at all – this date might refer to has been widely debated.[512] Since in *Adv. Marc.* 4.4.5 Tertullian speaks of the Marcion as the "[c]orrector apparently of a gospel which from the times of Tiberius to those of Antoninus had suffered subversion", I believe that the best guess is to link the date in question with the time it took for "the restitution of the pure gospel message by the work of Marcion."[513] However, whether this restitution might also coincide with Marcion's break or not cannot be determined. Nonetheless, Marcion "broke" with the Roman church and went on to start his own church which portrayed an increasing threat to the "orthodox" church(es) due to its rapid expansion. Further to Tertullian's repeated mentions that Marcion was "heretically" active during the reign of emperor Antoninus Pius (AD 138-161), calling him "an Antoninian heretic, impious under Pius (*Antoninianus haereticus est, sub Pio impius*)" (*Adv. Marc.* 1.19.2; cf. 4.4.5; 5.19.2), we can assume that Marcion's acme started in the 150s[514] and that he died between AD 160-165.[515]

Hermogenes' profession as a painter (*Adv. Herm.* 1.2; 2.1; 3.7; 36.1; 45.4) and that it is rather Marcion's origin from Pontus that attracts Tertullian's scathing polemics (cf. *Adv. Marc.* 1.1). Furthermore, Marcion's being a ship-owner would well account for the larger sum he gave to the Roman church.

[508] This is confirmed by Marcion in a letter written by himself and mentioned by Tertullian (*Adv. Marc*. 1.1.6; 4.4.3; *De carne* 2.4-5). Whether Marcion already held his "heretical" beliefs or was still an "orthodox" Christian when he joined the Roman church is disputed. For the former view see Harnack, *Marcion*, 22*; Moll, *Marcion*, 40–41. and for the latter Regul, *Die Antimarcionitischen Evangelienprologe*, 182–83.

[509] Tert. *Praescr*. 30.2; cf. *Adv. Marc.* 4.4.3. See also Moll, *Marcion*, 29. and see May, "Der 'Schiffsreeder' Markion." for a plausible account of Marcion being a *nauclerus*.

[510] Tert. *Praescr*. 30.2; cf. *Adv. Marc.* 4.4.3.

[511] Moll, *Marcion*, 34 with note 43, who rightly questions Harnack's certainty to date it exactly to July 144. (see Harnack, *Marcion*, 20*.).

[512] Harnack, *Marcion*, 20*. sees this date as Marcion's break with the "Catholic" church and the foundation of the Marcionite church.
Moll, *Marcion*, 35 takes the date to refer to Marcion's arrival in Rome. See Löhr, "Problems," 117 for all the problems that come with the aforementioned possibilities.

[513] Löhr, "Problems," 116. While Ibid., 117 goes on to raise objections to this option, which "would presuppose that the Marcionites did indeed accept the priority of the (corrupted) gospel tradition of their opponents and saw the work of their master as recovering the original gospel message from distortions and falsifications that had occurred early on", it is exactly this which I assume.

[514] Justin*, 1Apol.* 26.5; 58.1 mentions that Marcion is still alive at the time of writing (ca. AD 152) and Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer*. III.4.3 mentions that Marcion was active under the bishopric of Anicetus (AD 155-166).

[515] Harnack, *Marcion*, 16*. infers from Clement, *Strom.* VII.17.106-107 that Marcion might not have been alive during the reign of Marcus Aurelius (161-180) and dates Marcion's death to ca. AD 160, whereas Moll, *Marcion*,

II. Marcion according to the earliest sources

II.1 Justin

The earliest certain reference we have of Marcion and his theology is very sparse and comes from his Roman contemporary Justin Martyr who in his *1 Apology*, written in the early 150s, states that

> "Marcion, from Pontus, who even now is still teaching (καὶ νῦν ἔτι ἐστὶ διδάσκων) those he can persuade to consider some other (ἄλλον τινὰ), greater than (μείζονα) the creator God (τοῦ δημιουργοῦ θεοῦ). And with the help of the demons, he has persuaded many from every race of humankind to utter blasphemies, and he has made them deny (ἀρνεῖσθαι) God the Maker of this universe (τὸν ποιητὴν τοῦδε τοῦ παντὸς θεόν) and confess (ὁμολογεῖν) that some other (ἄλλον δέ τινὰ), being supposedly greater (ὡς ὄντα μείζονα)[516], made greater things[517] than/in comparison to this one (τὰ μείζονα παρὰ τοῦτον […] πεποιηκέναι)." (*1 Apol* 26.5).

The issue Justin takes with Marcion is twofold: Marcion teaches "some other (ἄλλον τινὰ)[518], greater than (μείζονα) the creator God (τοῦ δημιουργοῦ θεοῦ)[519]" and secondly Marcion makes people "deny (ἀρνεῖσθαι) God the Maker of this universe (τὸν ποιητὴν τοῦδε τοῦ παντὸς θεόν)" and "confess (ὁμολογεῖν)" the aforementioned greater God. Moreover, we learn that the greater God also has his own creation as he is said to have made something greater than the Creator-God.[520] Later in his *1 Apology*, Justin adds to this earlier testimony that Marcion not only announced "another, beside God the fashioner of all things" but also "another son (ἕτερον υἱόν)" (*1 Apol* 58.1). Thus, we solely learn from Justin that Marcion taught two different gods – the (by implication inferior) Creator-God of the Hebrew Scriptures and a greater God. These gods each have their own creation – the creation of the greater God being superior (and by implication the one of the Creator-God being inferior) – as well as their own sons.

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45. combines Clement's account with that of Irenaus, *Adv. Haer*. III.4.3 and assumes AD 165 as year of Marcion's death.

[516] Jörg Ulrich, *Justin: Apologien* (Kommentar zu frühchristlichen Apologeten 4/5; Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 2019), 286. notes that ὡς + participles denotes "eine nur rein subjektive Meinung" and translates the phrase as "als sei".

[517] *Pace* Minns/Parvis' construction of the text as ὡς ὄντα μείζονα, παρὰ τοῦτον ὁμολογεῖν *πεποίηκεν* and corresponding translation as "made (πεποίηκεν) them […] confess (ὁμολογεῖν) some other who is greater (ὡς ὄντα μείζονα), beyond him (παρὰ τοῦτον)" (26.5), we follow Ulrich to read with manuscript A (Parisinus graecus 450) ὡς ὄντα μείζονα, *τὰ μείζονα* παρὰ τοῦτον ὁμολογεῖν *πεποιηκέναι*, on which our modified translation is based. See Ibid., 286, with n. 78. for why Minns/Parvis' reasons in Denis Minns and Paul Parvis, eds., *Justin, Philosopher and Martyr: Apologies* (Oxford Early Christian Texts; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 151, n. 4. fail to convince.

[518] Following the reading suggested by Minns/Parvis, p. 151, n. 1. The reason is that Justin wants to deny the epithet "God" (which is found in the manuscripts and Eusebius) to Marcion's greater god and thus simply calls him ἄλλος τις.

[519] Influenced by middle-platonic philosophy, God is for Justin the Creator-God and thus labelled in Platonic terms as δημιουργός and ποιητής.

[520] Ulrich, *Justin: Apologien*, 286. This becomes more explicit in Tertullian, e.g. *Adv. Marc*. 1.15.1, 1.16.1. See on the topic of creation in Marcion especially May, *Creatio Ex Nihilo*, 58–59.

II.2. Irenaeus

The next time we hear about Marcion is 20 to 30 years later in Irenaeus' *Adversus Haereses* which offers us the first extensive account on Marcion.[521] Although Irenaeus' main opponents are the so-called "Gnostics", Marcion takes on a prominent role for him as he probably realised that Marcion posed "a very serious threat" to his church.[522] Indeed, while chapter 27 of book 1 is both the first time Irenaeus mentions Marcion as well as his most comprehensive section on him, there are several other passages where Marcion crops up again and again throughout *Adversus Haereses*. Considering the most important of these statements, we will try to assess whether already Irenaeus might bear witness to the influence of the principle of fittingness on Marcion's thought.

The first time Irenaeus mentions Marcion, the very first thing he tells us about Marcion is that he blasphemed (*blasphemans*) "the God who was proclaimed by the law and the prophets" (I.27.2).[523] The description "proclaimed by the law and the prophets" clearly indicates that the God of the Hebrew Scriptures is in view.[524] This God is not only understood as Creator-God (*mundi fabricator deus*)[525], but we are told that Marcion also labelled him the "World-Ruler (*Cosmocrator*)". Since the word κοσμοκράτωρ is a hapax legomenon in the New Testament, it is likely that Marcion took it from *Eph* 6.12 (understood as letter to the Laodiceans by Marcion).[526] The word itself suggests a close link between the world and its ruler: a link which we will investigate in more detail later. Moreover, Marcion is said to have believed Jesus had not come from the Creator-God but from "the Father who is above (*super*)" the creator (I.27.2).[527] Strikingly, Irenaeus does, however, not say anything else about this superior God but goes on to concentrate on Marcion's depiction of the creator.[528] According to Irenaeus,

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521 While Irenaeus is – as already indicated by the full title of his work "*Overthrow of knowledge falsely so called*" – mainly concerned with the so-called Gnostics, one of his main concerns is to prove how the two testaments – which come to be known as the Old and the New Testament –testify to the one and same God (cf. III.12.12-13) and not two distinct deities. The translation of books I and III is that found in Dominic J. Unger and rev. John J. Dillon, *St Irenaeus of Lyons: Against the Heresies: Book 1* (ACW 55; New York: Paulist Press, 1992); Dominic J. Unger and rev. M. C. Steenberg, *St Irenaeus of Lyons: Against the Heresies: Book 3* (ACW 64; New York: Paulist Press, 2012). The translation used for book II is the one found in John Keble, *Five Books of S. Irenaeus against Heresies: With the Fragments That Remain of His Other Works* (Oxford: James Parker, 1872). The respective Latin and Greek text is found in A. Rousseau and L. Doutreleau, *Irénée de Lyon: Contre Les Hérésies, Livre I* (SC 263–264; Paris: Cerf, 1979); A. Rousseau and L. Doutreleau, *Irénée de Lyon: Contre Les Hérésies, Livre II* (SC 293–294; Paris: Cerf, 1982); A. Rousseau and L. Doutreleau, *Irénée de Lyon: Contre Les Hérésies, Livre III* (SC 210–211; Paris: Cerf, 1974).

522 Lieu, *Marcion*, 47.

523 *blasphemans eum qui a lege et prophetis adnuntiatus est deus*.

524 Lieu, *Marcion*, 36.

525 The epithet itself is Irenaeus' as Lieu (Ibid., 35.) rightly notes, but that Marcion understood the Old Testament as creator is already known from Justin, and then later confirmed by Tertullian.

526 While Lieu believes that this epithet from *Eph* 6.12 "may well have been adopted by Marcion", she remains cautious, contemplating a possible assimilation of different heretics by Irenaeus since he "had already described the Valentinians as applying the same epithet to the devil" in *Adv. Haer*. I.5.4 (Ibid., 36.).

527 This expands on Justin's statement by designating the superior god as "Father (*pater*)" as well as explicitly connecting Jesus with him (*ab eo patre*), since Justin only mentioned that each god had his own son.

528 This is also noted by Lieu, *Marcion*, 38.

Marcion's blasphemy consisted in characterising the Creator as "the author of evil[s; FG] (*malorum factorem*), and desirous of war[s; FG] (*bellorum concupiscentem*)", as someone who "was inconsistent in his teaching (*inconstantem quoque sententia*) and contradicted himself (*contrarium sibi ipsum dicens*)" (I.27.2).[529] As Lieu rightly notes, this entire characterisation of the Old Testament God as an entity that is responsible for evil, bellicose, inconsistent, and self-contradictory naturally "presupposes an appeal to and considerable disquiet about the stories of the biblical God"[530]. Hence, we can assume that the scriptural account of the Creator is at the heart of the issue. It is, moreover, very notable that the attributes applied to the Creator are all considered unfitting for a deity according to the wider philosophical consensus of the time. Yet, while the text itself does not explicitly use vocabulary associated with the principle of god-fittingness, we will see that the principle is most likely envisaged, when considering further remarks by Irenaeus.

One of them is found towards the end of book 3, where Irenaeus comes to speak of the Marcionites,[531] who

> "Again, in order that they might take away from the Father the power of reproving and of judging, thinking that it is unworthy of God, and believing they have found a god who is good and free from anger, they asserted that one god judges and the other saves."
>
> *Rursus, ut increpativum auferrent a patre et iudiciale, indignum id Deo putantes et sine iracundia et bonum arbitrantes se adinvenisse deum, alterum quidem iudicare et alterum* [*quidem*] *salvare dixerunt* (III.25.2).

The fact that the Marcionites are said to have considered it "unworthy (*indignus*)" of God to be "judicial (*iudicialis*)" suggests that the principle of fittingness played a role in Marcionite thought. The passage seems, moreover, to indicate that the likely reason for why the Marcionites considered it unfitting for God to be "judicial" was that they perceived the notion of being a judge to be linked with a "proneness to anger or wrath (*iracundia*)". Since the notion of a God displaying wrath was not befitting the nature of a good and apathetic God, however, the Marcionites seem to have assumed another God who was "free from anger (*sine iracundia)*" and "good (*bonus*)", the very opposite of the Creator. Consequently, these two Gods were then each ascribed the corresponding task of either "judging (*iudicare*)" or "saving (*salvare*)": tasks that in the view of the Marcionites were befitting the respective nature of each God. That this initial division between a "judicial" and a "good" God goes back to Marcion, is confirmed by Irenaeus' succeeding statement that "[c]onsequently, Marcion, by dividing God in two (*dividens Deum*

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[529] Unger and Dillon, *Book 1* wrongly render singulars.
[530] Lieu, *Marcion*, 36.
[531] While the paragraph does not explicitly specify who "they" are, its argumentation seamlessly links with what is said about Marcion as well as the subsequent discussion on judgement, justice, and goodness in the succeeding paragraph.

in duo), asserting the one to be good (*bonum*) and the other to have judicial power (*iudicialem*), destroys God on both counts" (III.25.3).

However, neither the Marcionites, nor Marcion himself are said to have distinguished between a just and a good God. Rather, it is Irenaeus who introduced the concept of justice as a hermeneutical key to the issue in his consequent argument in order to retain his understanding of God being both "judicial/a judge" as well as "good".[532] Indeed, it is interesting to observe that Irenaeus does not return to directly address the Marcionite objection to god's wrath – an emotion and a negative one at that – which is present in god's being a judge, but rather decides to shift the discussion to the question of judgment more generally by introducing the overarching concept of justice.

The reason for this shift most likely lies in the fact that Irenaeus had himself argued against the Valentinians that passion and emotions were not fitting for God.[533] Attacking the Valentinian story of the fall of Sophia (wisdom), Irenaeus rejects the idea that the father's Wisdom could have been subjected to a state of passion (*in passione*) since sensations such as these "are foreign (*aliena*) and contrary (*contraria*) to Wisdom: they are not affections (*adfectiones*) of hers" (II.18.1). Hence, Irenaeus demanded the Valentinians to "no longer call Wisdom 'the Æon which suffered;' either the name or the suffering they must give up" (II.18.1). That the principle of fittingness is in the background of this rejection of passions in the divine (pleroma) is very likely. Indeed, it is made even more probable when observing the positive account of divine nature Irenaeus gives after his critique of the Valentinians "framing their descriptions [of god; FG] from human affections and passions and energies, while of God they know nothing", thereby wrongly "assign[ing] to Him the affections and passions of men" (II.13.3). Irenaeus goes on to rebuke this attribution of passions to God by insisting that "very distant is the Father of all from these affections and passions, which befall mankind" (II.13.3) and emphasises that God

> "is simple (*simplex*) and uncompounded (*non compositus*), and of like members, and Himself entirely (*totus*) like and equal to Himself: being as He is all Mind (*totus* […] *sensus*), and all spirit (*totus spiritus*), and all perception (*totus sensuabilitas*) and all thought (*totus ennoia*) and all reason (*totus ratio*), and all hearing (*totus auditus*), and all eye (*totus oculus*), and all light (*totus lumen*), and all over the fountain of all good things (*totus fons omnium bonorum*)" (II.13.3).

The obvious influence of Xenophanes on Irenaeus' description is unmistakeable. Most noticeable is of course the repetition of *totus*, mirroring Xenophanes' repetition of οὗλος in *fragment B24*, where he spoke of God as being "οὗλος ὁρᾶι, οὗλος δὲ νοεῖ, οὗλος δέ τ' ἀκούει". Irenaeus then ends this positive

[532] Tertullian will later pick up this argument. See below.
[533] This had already been observed by Max Pohlenz in his 1909 essay. See Pohlenz, *Zorn*, 23–24.

statement of God's nature by asserting that "such are the expressions concerning God, which suggest themselves to the devout and pious (*religiosis ac piis dicere de Deo*)" (II.13.3). Piety often included having a fitting understanding of the divine. Hence, it becomes clear that Irenaeus is himself utilising the principle of fittingness to counter the Valentinian story of passions in the divine (pleroma). It is therefore his own usage of the principle of god-fittingness which precluded him from engaging the fundamental concern that vexed Marcionites as utterly unfitting for God: the notion of divine passions. Instead, Irenaeus decided to defend the connected characteristic of divine judgement by introducing the overarching concept of justice into the discussion.

Contrary to the Marcionite distinction of a "judicial" and a "good" God, which had been derived via the exclusion of the characteristic of judging from God on the assumption that wrath was inextricably linked to this very task, a task that was not fitting for a good and passionless God, Irenaeus argued that if God was to be a just God – another common understanding of God as we had seen earlier – then his justice had to *necessarily* include both "judgement (*iudicium*)" *and* "goodness (*bonitas*)" (III.25.2).

Indeed, Irenaeus contends that a judicial God had to also be good if he wanted to be a just (*iustus*) judge since goodness was indispensable to pardon anyone deserving of a pardon. Likewise, a good God had to also be judicial since to otherwise indiscriminately bestow goodness on people, without also judging them, would be neither just nor good (III.25.2). Consequently, by upholding a distinction between a judicial and a good God to the exclusion of the other feature, the Marcionites, Irenaeus claims, would in effect "deprive both [i.e. Gods; FG] of intelligence and justice (*sensum et iustitiam*)" (III.25.2).[534] Ultimately, Irenaeus even claims that both features of proper justice – being judicial and good – are themselves necessary features of divinity, maintaining that if God were not judicial, he would be "deprived of something without which he is not God (*auferatur ei ne sit deus*)", just like "he who lacks goodness is not God (*deus non est cui bonitas desit*)" (III.25.3).

Moreover, Irenaeus emphasises that god is not only good but also "merciful (*misericors*) and patient (*patiens*)" and while he both "saves […] and judges" people, the justice displayed therein cannot be "proved cruel (*neque iustum immite ostenditur*) […] when goodness is supposed to precede and lead the way" (III.25.3). Lastly, in support of his view that judgement is an integral part of justice and is indeed a fitting characteristic for god, Irenaeus appeals to Plato's *Laws* to demonstrate that justice is inextricably linked to God and works in the form of vengeance (*iustitia ultrix*) (III.25.5).[535]

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[534] Modified translation. The Latin is "*utrorumque auferentes sensum et iustitiam*". *Utrorumque* is genitive plural and must refer to the two gods.

[535] *Leg*. 4.715e-716a. The Latin speaks literally of "justice as avenger (*iustitia ultrix*)". This is somewhat blurred in the translation by Unger and Steenberg, *Book 3*, translating "retributive justice", especially since it is this ancient link between justice and retribution mentioned by Plato – likely himself taking up Hesiod – that Irenaeus is keen to stress. Better is Keble's translation: "and on Him ever attends Justice, working vengeance on such as fall from the Divine Law". To what extent the Platonic quote actually supports a unity of God and justice could be debated: on the one hand, justice is inextricably linked to God, but, on the other hand, justice – as personified

Turning again to Marcion and his critique of the creator, we find further relevant remarks in a larger segment (IV.27-32.1) which claims an unnamed presbyter, who is mentioned by Irenaeus several times, as its source.[536] While the whole segment has often been understood to be of an anti-Marcionite nature, Moll has recently argued on good grounds that only the section in IV.28-30 is likely to be directed against Marcion.[537] In those chapters we can detect the presbyter defending the Old Testament God from various "things they stigmatize in God (*denotant in eo*)" (IV.28.3). These include his "judgment at that time on the unbelieving – how he smote the Egyptians […] and drowned [them] in the sea as they were following Israel" (IV.28.3), his hardening of Pharaoh's heart (IV.29.1), and his commanding Israel to take spoils from Egypt at the exodus (IV.30.1).[538] As is clear, the display of cruelty and violence, and the command of theft[539] are not fitting for a deity. And we can therefore assume that Marcion likely took an issue with Old Testament stories such as these on the grounds that they contained accounts of behaviour and characteristics not fitting for God.

III. Tertullian

This brings us to Tertullian. Tertullian's five volume *Adversus Marcionem* is not only the most extensive work we have on Marcion but also the first extant text that solely deals with Marcion's thought.[540] By the time Tertullian published his tome in its "third edition" around AD 207-212, Marcion had already been dead for circa 40 years.[541] For this reason, Tertullian naturally not only refers to Marcion himself

Justice – seems to be an independent entity. Irenaeus follows this with a quote from *Tim. 29e* to demonstrate that the creator is good and can thus not be jealous. While the denial of God's jealousy could well be Marcionite (see discussion below), it appears from the succeeding comments that Irenaeus aims at "Gnostics" and Valentinians.

[536] The presbyter is mentioned in IV.27.1,2,4; 28.1; 30.1; 31.1; 32.1. This presbyter must be distinguished from other the other presbyters that are mentioned in books II and V. See on these issues Moll, *Marcion*, 17–21. Regardless of who the presbyter is, the fact that Irenaeus appears to cite earlier tradition indicates that the information in this account will likely be close – if not contemporary – to Marcion's time.

[537] Ibid., 18–20. Moll does so by a comparison between the references found in this segment (e.g. the hardening of Pharaoh's heart) and those found in Tertullian. While such a comparison is open to much uncertainty since – as Moll himself initially points out– "defending the cruelties described in the Old Testament was not just an object for those fighting against Marcion", the phrase *contrario opponents* (IV.28.1) plausibly being an allusion to Marcion's *Antitheseis* makes the anti-Marcionite character of this section more likely. See on this Ibid., 20, with n. 45.

[538] Gerhard May, "Marcions Genesisauslegung und die „Antithesen"," in *Die Weltlichkeit des Glaubens in der Alten Kirche: Festschrift für Ulrich Wickert zum siebzigsten Geburtstag* (ed. Dietmar Wyrwa; Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche 45; Berlin: De Gruyter, 1979), 197; Moll, *Marcion*, 19. May also believes the story of Lot in IV.31 to be directed against Marcion as part of Marcion's critique of both the Old Testament God *as well as* "einer anstößigen Episode in der Geschichte der Patriarchen" (May, "Genesisauslegung," 196.). Moll, on the other hand, is probably right to exclude this story since "there is no passage in all the Fathers which would ever suggest that Marcion reproached any Old Testament figure for doing something bad, but always their God" (Moll, *Marcion*, 19.).

[539] See our earlier comments on Xenophanes' *frag*. B11 and B12 which detest the attribution of theft to the gods.

[540] The lost accounts prior to Tertullian that were exclusively directed at Marcion included a work by Justin (mentioned by Irenaeus in *Adv. Haer.* IV.6.2 and V.26.2 (preserved in the Greek by Eusebius, *HE*, 4.18.9) and Eusebius (*HE*, 4.11.8)), a letter by Dionysius of Corinth to the Nicomedians (*HE*, 4.23.4), Philippus of Gortyna (*HE*, 4.25), Theophilus of Antioch (*HE*, 4.24), Cf. Markus Vinzent, "Marcion's Gospel and the Beginnings of Early Christianity," *Annali Di Storia Dell'Esegesi* 32, no. 1 (2015): 68.

[541] The publication history of *Adversus Marcionem* is a complex one as Tertullian himself informs us at various places (see especially I.1.1-2). Summarising the most important points of René Braun's detailed account of this

but also to the Marcionites of his present day more generally.[542] This as well as the strong use of rhetoric and polemic employed by Tertullian prescribe caution when using his *Adversus Marcionem* to reconstruct Marcion's teaching. Nonetheless, it is equally the case that Tertullian's work is our most extensive as well as most important source for any detailed information on Marcion not only for its sheer length but also the fact that Tertullian had access to most, and possibly all, of Marcion's works. These included his *Euangelion* (see *Adv. Marc.* IV)*, Apostolikon* (*Adv. Marc.* V), and possibly the *Antitheses*[543], as well as a letter allegedly written by Marcion himself.[544] Moreover, besides drawing on Irenaeus, Tertullian might well have had access to many of the earlier works which had been written against Marcion[545] and had most likely obtained further information from his personal interactions with the Marcionites in his local Carthage.[546]

Following Harnack's emphasis that Paul not only deeply influenced Marcion but also displayed the starting point for his theology, many scholars often concurred that the "Ausgangspunkt für Marcions Grundüberzeugung vom Gegensatz von Gesetz und Evangelium […] von seinem einzigen Apostel Paulus her abzuleiten [ist]" and appealed to Tertullian's statement that "[t]he separation of Law and Gospel (*Separatio legis et evangelii*)" was "the primary and principal exploit of Marcion (*proprium et principale opus est Marcionis*)" in support of their view (1.19.4).[547] However, this is to read a Lutheran Pauline interpretation into the text. Not only does Tertullian nowhere mention that Marcion derived his distinction between law and gospel from Paul, but what Marcion is referring to is a distinction between texts, the Old Testament, the Law, on the one side and the New Testament, the Gospel, on the other side.[548] Hence, "law and gospel" are not theological and soteriological entities as a later Lutheran Pauline reading would have it and should not be taken as the starting point for Marcion's thought.[549]

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publication history (René Braun, *Contre Marcion Tome I (Livre I)* (SC 365; Paris: Cerf, 1990), 11–19.), we can note that after Tertullian had already dealt with Marcion at various occasions in his earlier work (e.g. *Praescr*. 30.1-3; 45.14), he wrote a single book exclusively directed against Marcion. This first edition of Tertullian's *Adv. Marc.* comprised of only one single book against Marcion, probably published around AD 203/204. Since it had, however, been "too hurriedly (*properatum*) produced" (1.1.1), Tertullian reworked it (around ca. AD 205/206), thereby likely dividing it into two books (with the first one dealing with the content of our current books I and II, and the second dealing with that of the current book III). Yet, a member of Tertullian's congregation, who was later to fall away, had "copied out some extracts very incorrectly" from Tertullian's revised version and illicitly published these (1.1.1). Trying to counteract the damage done, Tertullian set out to publish a definite version. This third and final edition (even though the "second edition" of unauthorized fragments had obviously never been intended for publication by Tertullian) divided the first book of the second edition into the current books I and II and was published around AD 207/208. These, now three books, were then followed by book IV around AD 209 and book V around AD 211/212, all of which then made up the five books of *Adversus Marcionem* we have today.

[542] Of course, already Irenaeus spoke of Marcion's followers, e.g. in *Adv. Haer.* III.12.12.

[543] May, "Genesisauslegung," 193–94. cautions whether Tertullian actually used the *Antitheseis* and if so to what extent.

[544] Tertullian refers to the letter at *Adv. Marc.* I.1.6, IV.4.3; *Carn*. 2.4.

[545] See for these now lost works the references given in footnote 540.

[546] May, "Genesisauslegung," 194.

[547] Aland, "TRE," 93. Note, however, her remarks on the "gnostic" influence on Marcion in contrast to Harnack (see Ibid., 98.). Cf. Harnack, *Marcion*, 30.

[548] Moll, *Marcion*, 77–78. For a detailed and extensive discussion see Lieu, *Marcion*, 71–75, 398–406.

[549] See already the initial critique voiced by Bauer as mentioned above.

Yet, while Paul did play an important part in Marcion's thought as we shall observe in due course, I will argue that it was not Pauline theology that represented the starting point for Marcion's reasoning, but his reading of the Hebrew scriptures through the lens of the philosophical principle of god-fittingness.[550] Consequently, I will also argue that it was his reading of the Old Testament against the principle of god-fittingness that drastically influenced Marcion's understanding of Christ.

Moreover, while Marcion is mainly a biblical theologian reading the text through the lens of the philosophical concept of god-fittingness, we will also detect a few instances where other common philosophical arguments had an influence on Marcion. While this does not make Marcion a professional philosopher, it highlights that he did indeed have a generic knowledge of common philosophical concepts.[551]

As we will come to see, Marcion concerned himself with a whole range of issues pertaining to the principle of fittingness. The two key criteria of god-fittingness – goodness and immutability – unsurprisingly played the major role for Marcion and he concerned himself with issues such as the existence of evil as well as divine emotions. Yet, we will notice that Marcion also took issue with several other unfitting characteristics which could be understood as limiting the perfection of the divine such as ignorance and cruelty. While we had already seen several indications of Marcion's use of the principle of fittingness in Irenaeus, we will encounter much more extensive and detailed evidence of the use of the principle of fittingness in Tertullian's account which, moreover, explicitly features the usage of the vocabulary related to fittingness. Although Tertullian had himself used the principle of fittingness and its vocabulary in previous writings, René Braun notes that Tertullian uses the terminology well over 30 times in *Adversus Marcionem* and rightly concludes that "c'est sans doute parce que son adversaire s'était servi lui-même de la forme négative de l'argument dans le procès qu'il faisait de la création et des anthropomorphismes du Créateur".[552] Indeed, as we will be able to notice, in his refutation of Marcion's theology, Tertullian entered a debate with Marcion on the two fundamental elements that constituted divine fittingness: namely, goodness and apatheia/ changelessness.

Books 1 and 2

In order to analyse how the principle of fittingness influenced Marcion's thought, we will focus our investigation chiefly on the first two books of Tertullian's *Adversus Marcionem* as these most clearly attest to the usage as well as function of the principle of fittingness in Marcion's thinking. In his first

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[550] I am thereby in full agreement with Lieu that "[p]hilosophical presuppositions and the reading of texts work in dialogue with each other" and that Marcion is best understood "within the intersection between philosophical positions and the reading of texts" (Lieu, *Marcion*, 324.).

[551] This has been acknowledged by the more recent publications which had also noted the principle of fittingness, such as Aland, "TRE," 94, 98; May, "Marcion in Contemporary Views: Results and Open Questions"; May, "Genesisauslegung"; May, "Markion in seiner zeit"; John G. Gager, "Marcion and Philosophy," *VC* 26 (1972): 53–59; Woltmann, "Hintergrund"; Dungan, "Reactionary Trends."

[552] Braun, *Marcion I*, 46.

book, Tertullian critiques Marcion's good God by focusing on Marcion's notion of goodness that underlies his thinking. As we will see, Tertullian accuses Marcion of championing a view of goodness so radical that it would result in illogicality as well as various deficiencies, which, Tertullian claims, would ultimately expose Marcion's notion of goodness, and thereby the goodness of the alien god, to be imperfect and thus no true goodness at all. Goodness was of course one of the primary attributes deemed fitting for a true God. Yet, the end of Book I and then Book II make it clear that Marcion's radical understanding of goodness – one that excluded many characteristics of the God described in the Old Testament – had been born out of a critique of the biblical Creator-God on the grounds of the principle of fittingness. And it is this Marcionite critique of the Creator-God which forms the focus of Tertullian's second book. We will see that it was the portrayal of the Creator in the Hebrew scriptures which had caught Marcion's attention and which he dismissed as falling short of the principle of fittingness. It was therefore against this Marcionite denigration that Tertullian sought to defend the Creator-God in his second book of *Adversus Marcionem*. Thus, while the two books each have a different focus, we are able to see how they relate to each other via the principle of fittingness: While Marcion believed the Old Testament account to show the Creator to be a malevolent deity, the alien God as revealed in Christ was his complete opposite, a radically good God whose nature excluded all the deficient characteristics of the creator. The Creator-God fell short of god-fittingness, whereas the God revealed in Christ was in full accordance with it. Against this view, Tertullian argued that the Creator-God's nature is in every respect becoming of a true God, whereas Marcion's account of his good God actually falls short of god-fittingness due to his radical understanding of goodness. While Tertullian agreed that goodness was a necessary attribute of God, he argued that Marcion's radical understanding of goodness led to his God falling short of god-fittingness in other areas.

III.1. Marcion's Starting Point – God-Fittingness?

We will begin by examining Tertullian's defence of the Creator-God in Book I of *Adversus Marcionem*, in order to uncover the Marcionite arguments that elicited this defence. Just like Justin and Irenaeus before him, Tertullian informs us that Marcion "presents us with two gods […]: the one the Creator, whom he cannot deny, which is our God: the other, whom he cannot prove, a god of his own." (1.2.1). Marcion is thus said to have introduced a further, previously alien, God in addition to the familiar Creator-God who is widely confessed and worshipped by Jews and most Christians. And it is this ditheism which Tertullian sees as the very core of Marcion's theology, stating that "[t]he principal, and consequently the entire, matter of discussion is one of number (*de numero*), whether it is permissible to suggest the existence of two gods" (1.3.1).

And it is the latter half of this statement that will concerns us as well as Tertullian: what was the reason for Marcion to have introduced two Gods and was he right in doing so? Tertullian goes on to suggest

that Marcion's ditheism was prompted by his pondering over the Lukan saying concerning the good and the bad tree (*GLk* 6.43) – "that neither does the good tree bring forth bad fruit nor the bad tree good fruit" (1.2.1) as well as "an unhealthy interest in the problem of evil—the origin of it (*unde malum*)" (1.2.2). These two concerns were supposedly combined when Marcion came across the Creator-God's statement in *Isa* 45.7 – "It is I who creates evil things" – from which he deduced that the Creator-God had to be equated with "the evil tree that creates evil fruit—namely, evil things in general" (I.2.2).[553] Furthermore, since Marcion perceived "in Christ as it were a different dispensation of sole and unadulterated benevolence, an opposite character to the Creator's, he found it easy to argue for a new and hitherto unknown divinity revealed in its own Christ" (I.2.3) who therefore had to be equated with the good tree bringing forth good fruit.

Interestingly, Tertullian informs us that besides using *Isa* 45.7, Marcion "had, from other arguments which make that impression on the perverse (*ex aliis argumentis, quae ita persuadent peruerso*), already assumed him [sc. the creator-god] to be the author of evil (*mali auctorem*)" (I.2.2). This reference to "other arguments" is, as I shall argue, a reference to Marcion' understanding of various instances in the Hebrew Scriptures as indicating the inferiority and unfittingness of the Creator-God. Indeed, Tertullian's remarks indicate, as I shall argue, that it was a strong focus on the principle of fittingness in Marcion's reading of the scriptures that proved fundamental to his theology. This suggestion might already be detected in Tertullian's subsequent comment that "the one God, whose existence he was forced to admit, Marcion has overthrown (*destruxit*) by slandering him (*infamando*) as responsible for evil (*de malo*): the other, whom he constrained himself to invent, he has set up (*construxit*) on a scaffolding of goodness (*de bono*)" (1.2.3). I shall argue that what Tertullian describes here as "slandering (*infamando*) him [sc. the Creator-God] as responsible for evil (*de malo*)" (1.2.3) is simply Marcion's exposition of the unfittingness of certain of the Creator-God's actions and characteristics as they are attested by the biblical text.[554] Moreover, the accusation of the Creator-God being responsible for evil is consequently only a part, albeit the most crucial one, of the wider debate over god-fittingness. Further aspects of this debate can especially be witnessed in Tertullian's defence of the scriptural passages which Marcion deemed not to befit a true God in Book II.

Correspondingly, the description of Marcion "set[ting] up (*construxit*) [sc. his new God; FG] on a scaffolding of goodness (*de bono*)" is simply the application of the inverse, the positive element of god-fittingness: divine goodness. However, as we shall see, Tertullian employs the argument of fittingness against Marcion, accusing him of an over-emphasis, a radicalisation, of the attribute of goodness to the

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[553] Ekkehard Mühlenberg, "Marcion's Jealous God," in *Disciplina Nostra: Essays in Memory of Robert F. Evans* (ed. Donald F. Winslow; Patristic monograph series no. 6; Cambridge, MA: Philadelphia Patristic Foundation, 1979), 106. speculates whether the order of *GLk* and Isa could have been the reverse.

[554] We will see, however, that there are also a few instances where Marcion's account owes more to philosophical argumentation rather than the biblical text.

extent that it conflicted with other attributes of the biblical Creator-God such as judgement which were therefore excluded by Marcion on the basis of their unfittingness. Yet, Tertullian defends them on the basis that they are both fitting as well as necessary for the maintenance of divine *justice*, another key attribute of God. Thus, in his *Adversus Marcionem* Tertullian engages with Marcion in a debate over god-fittingness: What should be considered as befitting a true God and what should not? While also considering aspects of Tertullian's response, our overall focus is on Marcion's use of the principle of fittingness and we will therefore focus on Marcion's critique of the Creator-God as it can be construed from Book II. As we shall see, the main drivers are of course the two key elements of Platonic god-fittingness: goodness and immutability, demanding the exclusion of evil and change. Since we had noted earlier that for Marcion "[p]hilosophical presuppositions and the reading of texts work in dialogue with each other"[555], it will come to no surprise that it is in Marcion's engagement with scripture that we observe the impact of the principle of fittingness. Following the structure of Tertullian's Book II, we can discern three larger themes concerning the nature of the Creator-God: the creator's unfitting part in the fall, the creator's unfitting role as judge, and unfitting features in the creator's character. However, already in various parts of Book I we can see that it is the debate about the concept of θεοπρεπής – what is fitting or worthy for a god – which appears to have been the source and catalyst for Marcion's ditheism. Tertullian enters into this debate, trying to demonstrate that the issues Marcion found to be *indignus* of God are in fact not so.

III.2. Book II - Marcion's Critique of the Unfitting Creator-God

In the prologue to his work, Tertullian had described Marcion as dismissing the Creator-God "by slandering (*infamando*) him as responsible for evil (*de malo*)" (1.2.3). And truly, when turning to Book II, we are able to witness that accusations such as this one, alongside many others, were levelled against the Creator-God. Unsurprisingly then, Marcion is accused of having made the Creator-God "a subject of discussion" as well as of "lay[ing] complaint against him" (2.2.3). Tertullian declares that these objections were along the lines of "these critics of divinity (*censores divinitatis*), who say, 'God ought not to have done that (*Sic non debuit deus*)', or 'He ought to have done this instead (*Sic magis debuit*)'" (2.2.4), suggesting that the Marcionite critique was directed against certain acts the Creator-God had been said to have committed. As will become obvious, the very acts in question were the ones described in the Jewish Scriptures.

While most of the Marcionite accusations were grounded in the biblical texts themselves, their delivery was sometimes influenced by common philosophical arguments of the time. But what they all had in common was, as I will argue, that they pointed out that the Creator-God's nature and deeds, as they were portrayed in the biblical account, fell short of what was considered to be god-fitting. Remarks by

555 Lieu, *Marcion*, 324.

Tertullian such as that the Creator-God ought to be seen as good, having a goodness that is eternal and "is such a goodness as is worthy of God (*bonitatem* […] *dignam* […] *Deo*" (2.3.2), already indicate that the Marcionites contended the Creator-God's goodness on the basis of god-fittingness. Thus, at the centre of the Marcionite critique was an exposition of the Creator-God which showed him to be an inferior entity who only bore the name "God" owing to the custom of having previously been labelled a God, yet in reality not meeting the requirements which distinguished a true God. Against this Marcionite reading of the biblical texts which exposed the unfittingness of the Creator-God, Tertullian mounted a defence in order to redeem the Creator-God's nature and deeds.

We shall now consider the various issues that Marcion critiqued, and Tertullian sets out to defend against this criticism. Tertullian discusses Marcion's criticism in three larger sections: the first of these is a debate over the Creator-God's implication in the existence of evil – particularly illustrated by the fall of his creation; the second considers the Creator-God's role as judge, focussing on features which are related to this role such as the exercise of punishments; the third section clusters together various stories of the Jewish Scriptures which were likely seen by the Marcionites as exemplifying the Creator-God's inconsistent nature. As we shall observe, all three of these areas were perceived by the Marcionites as attesting to the unfitting and thus inferior nature of the Creator-God. Consequently, Tertullian endeavours to show that this is not the case by exposing the deficiencies in the reasoning that had led Marcion to this conviction. We will analyse the three sections in the order as they are presented to us by Tertullian, while adding a few related instances from the other four books, in an attempt to unearth the particular Marcionite critique which lies behind each of Tertullian's refutations. This Marcionite critique is, as we will argue, rooted in an argument from fittingness and we are therefore able to uncover a whole range of debated issues which were commonly perceived as unfitting for God such as causing evil, being inconsistent, unknowing, and prone to emotions such as wrath and regret.

III.2.1. Genesis: The Created World and its Fall

III.2.1.1. The Fall

According to Tertullian, the Marcionites brought forth various "questions (*quaestiones*)" (2.5.1). One of these questions raised the issue of *unde malum*?:

> "If God is good, you ask, and has knowledge of the future, and also has power to avert evil, (*Si deus bonus et praescius futuri et avertendi mali potens*) why did he suffer the man, deceived by the devil, to fall away from obedience to the law, and so to die? For the man was the image and likeness of God, or even God's substance, since from it the man's soul took its origin. So, if being good (*bonus*), he had wished a thing not to happen, and if, having foreknowledge (*praescius*), he had been aware that it would happen, and if he had power and strength (*potens*) to prevent it from happening, that thing never would have happened which under these three conditions of divine majesty it was impossible should happen. But you conclude, as that did

happen (*evenit*), the very opposite is proved, that God must be assumed to be neither good (*neque bonum*) nor prescient (*neque praescium*) nor omnipotent (*neque potentem*): because inasmuch as nothing of that sort could have happened (*nihil tale evenisset*) if God had possessed these attributes (*si talis Deus*) of goodness and prescience and omnipotence (*bonus et praescius et potens*), it follows that it did happen (*in tantum ideo evenit*) because God is devoid of these qualities (*quia non talis Deus*)." (2.5.1-2).

Since the way in which the problem of evil has been expressed here exhibits a striking resemblance to the Epicurean phrasing of it, as can for instance be observed in Marcion's near contemporary Sextus Empiricus (*p.h.* 3.9-11)[556], John Gager suggested an Epicurean influence on Marcion's thought.[557] This might well find further support in Tertullian's accusations of Marcion being an Epicurean, labelling, for instance, Marcion's account of the alien good God as an attempt "to dignify by the name of Christ some God out of the school of Epicurus" (1.25.3).[558] However, while the Marcionite argument here does indeed exhibit parallels to the Epicurean phrasing of the problem of evil, Meijering has rightly pointed out that this type of argumentation was well-known at the time and also employed by non-Epicureans.[559] Moreover, the fact that comparisons of someone's thought to Epicureanism as well as explicit allegations of being an Epicurean were common polemical tropes against one's opponents at the time,[560] should give rise to further caution against any suggestion of a direct Epicurean influence on Marcionite thought.[561] Furthermore we should note that while the statement of the problem of evil is described in an Epicurean manner, it is imbedded within a scriptural framework: the account of humanity's creation and its subsequent fall in *Gen* 2-3. Since the fall had indeed occurred, the Marcionites contend that the creator had to be responsible for it in one way or another and had therefore been demonstrated to be deficient in at least one of his divine attributes: goodness, foreknowledge, or the power to avert the fall. In his attempt to solve this issue, Tertullian begins by highlighting that the creator does actually display

[556] Sextus does not explicitly attribute the argument to Epicurus, but in view of the resemblance to Lactantius, *De Ira Dei* 13.20-21, who ascribes the argument to Epicurus, its Epicurean provenance can be assumed. See on this Gager, "Marcion and Philosophy," 56–58.
[557] See Gager, "Marcion and Philosophy." Cf. especially pages 55-58. However, the close resemblance to the Epicurean form of the argument had already been observed prior to Gager by e.g. Victor Naumann, "Das Problem des Bösen in Tertullians zweitem Buch gegen Marcion: Ein Beitrag zur Theodizee Tertullians," *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* 58, no. 3 (1934): 338, n. 3. who, moreover, notes, with reference to Carneades in Cicero, *ND* 3.31, that the argument was also used in the Sceptic tradition.
[558] See furthermore: 2.16.2; 4.15.2.
[559] E. P. Meijering, *Tertullian contra Marcion: Gotteslehre in der Polemik* (Leiden: Brill, 1977), 38, 75.
[560] See e.g. Gager, "Marcion and Philosophy," 55; Lieu, *Marcion*, 58.
[561] We shall return to the question of Epicurean influence below.

all these characteristics[562] and suggests that the problem lies in the human condition, namely free will (2.5.5).[563]

Yet, it appears that the Marcionites read the creation account as further evidence for the Creator's responsibility for the fall. Reading *Gen* 1.26-27, the Marcionites agreed with most Jews and Christians that humankind had been made in the "image and likeness of God (*imaginem et similitudinem suam*)" (2.5.1). However, the Marcionites also assumed humankind to be "God's substance (*substantiam suam*), since from it the man's soul took its origin" (2.5.1). As we shall see, this understanding was based on a particular reading of *Gen* 2.7. And it was this reading which enabled the Marcionites to accuse the Creator-God of being directly responsible for humanity's transgression of his command and thus the subsequent fall. According to Tertullian the Marcionites understood

> "the Creator's very essence (*substantia creatoris*) […] to be capable of sin, since it was the soul (*id est anima*), which is the breath of God (*adflatus Dei*), that sinned when man sinned, and the corruption of the derivative cannot escape being referred back to the original whole." (2.9.1)

It thus appears that the Marcionites read the Creator-God's inbreathing of Adam in Genesis 2.7, his breathing of a living breath (πνοὴ ζωῆς, *Gen* 2.7 LXX) into the face of the human, as the very process which furnished the human with a soul (*anima*) and thereby established an ontological link between the creator's substance and the human soul (2.9). This ontological connection as well as the fact that it was the human soul that had sinned, enabled the Marcionites to trace the responsibility for the fall back to the soul's origin, ultimately assuming that it was the Creator-God who was responsible for the fall and that therefore the Creator's own substance had to be sinful in some way (2.9).

Tertullian dismisses this reading by drawing attention to the fine philological distinctions made in the scriptural text, which, he argues, while retaining humanity's likeness to God, upholds an ontological distinction between the two.[564] Since for the Marcionites the biblical account of the fall appears to have been a central text which showed the Creator-God to be responsible for the existence of evil, Tertullian

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[562] Tertullian argues that the creator's creating out of nothing (*ex nihilo*; 2.5.3) displays his goodness and power, while the prophets, the state of the universe (which had been preconceived prior to its creation), and the creator's warning against the consequences of disobedience attest to this foreknowledge (2.5.3-4).
Note, however, that Tertullian thinks that this creation, "even if derived from some raw material, as some people will have it, […] would have been made out of nothing, seeing that once they [sc. the creator's works] were not what they now are" (2.5.3).
[563] This is followed by Tertullian anticipating two possible objections by the Marcionites. Firstly, why did the creator give free will, knowing that it would lead to the fall? And secondly, why did the creator not intervene? (2.6-7).
[564] Tertullian resolves the Marcionite accusation by noting that the biblical text speaks of breath (*adflatus*) and not spirit (*spiritus*) (a distinction he took over from Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* V.1.3, 12.2 and has parallels in Philo, *Leg. Alleg.* 1.42 as Meijering, *Gotteslehre*, 111–12. with reference to Waszink points out). He argues that while god himself is spirit, his image and likeness is breath. Consequently, invoking the platonic concept of an *Urbild* and *Abbild* relationship, he argues that while breath and spirit are related, the former is only an image of the latter and as such "the image cannot in every respect be equated with the reality behind it" (2.9.3) (on this see Ibid., 112.) (see *Adv. Marc.* 2.9).

made sure to counter any potential arguments related to the wider creation and fall story, such as the creator being responsible for evil as he had created the Devil (2.10).[565]

The crucial point in the Marcionite reading was that the biblical text appeared to show the Creator-God to be responsible for the existence of evil. Since it was not fitting for a good God to be associated with evil in any way, whether allowing the existence of evil or being personally responsible for it, the scriptural account of creation and fall revealed for the Marcionites the character of the creator to not be befitting of a God.[566] Hence, while Tertullian's account indicates that the Marcionites were most likely aware of contemporary philosophical arguments, it is important to note that for the most part, the Marcionites appear to have based their critique of the Creator-God on the texts that primarily testified to him, namely the Hebrew scriptures.

III.2.1.2. The Created World

The Marcionites viewed the created world as an unfitting object for a God to have created. Tertullian informs us that the Marcionites argued that "it is unworthy of God (*indignum est deo*) to have made such and such a thing" (1.13.3) like the created world and generally assumed an "unworthiness of this world (*mundi indigno*)" (1.13.3). In response to his critique of the alien God's lack of a visible creation Tertullian can therefore imagine the Marcionites to only reply with an ironic and scathing comment, "shamelessly turn[ing] up their nose and set[ting] about the demolition of the Creator's works. 'A great work (*grande opus*), indeed,' they say, 'and worthy of a god, is this world (*dignum deo mundus*).'" (1.13.1-2). Yet, one might wonder why exactly the Marcionites presumed this created world to be unfitting for a true God. As will become clear, the reason for this was solely the fact that the creator was himself seen as an inferior entity whose nature was not befitting for a true deity, which, in return, made it evident that his creation was deficient as well. Conversely, the deficient creation evinced the creator's unfitting nature, thus reinforcing each other. More concretely, we can note three reasons why the created world was deemed unfitting.

Firstly, the world was seen as lacking divine providence. We find that the Marcionites are said to have despised the world's various small insects for their perceived uselessness and general nuisance (1.14.1, 17.1, 24.7)[567]. What probably lay behind this scorn against insects was a common philosophical type of argument which, by pointing to the uselessness and nuisance of insects, and thus an imperfect element of the world, sought to deny the existence of divine providence in the created world.[568] Hence, we can

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565 Tertullian argues that the angel who had become the devil did so by his own free will (2.10).

566 Lieu, *Marcion*, 343.

567 Adv. Marc. 14.1: "you put to scorn those tiny animals which the great Artificer has designedly made great in competence and ability". See for further references Harnack, *Marcion*, 270*. especially to Jerome, *Comm. in Isaiam* 7.18.

568 Meijering, *Gotteslehre*, 44–45. May, "Genesisauslegung," 192, n. 7. Makes reference to Braun, *Marcion I*, 162, n. 2. Braun states that the argument "provient sans doute de la polémique académicienne contre le stoïcisme". This needs to, however, be slightly refined as his reference to *SVF* 2.1048 is referring to Alexander of Aphrodisias,

once more observe that Marcion knew philosophical arguments and his critique had at times influences other than from the scriptural account.[569]

Secondly, another reason for the world's inferior character was seen in the way it had been created. Regarding the specifics of the world's creation, we find that Marcion believed the creator to have "constructed his world (*mundum*) of some subjacent material (*ex aliqua materia subiacente*), unbegotten and uncreated (*innata et infecta*), and co-temporal with the god (*contemporali deo*)" (1.15.4).[570] Moreover, we are told that Marcion "impute[d] evil to the material (*malum materiae deputans*)" (1.15.5).[571] Whereas Harnack regarded the idea of evil matter as the only point where Marcion had been influenced by "Gnosticism", namely through his alleged teacher Cerdo,[572] it is more likely that Marcion was influenced by contemporary Platonist debates about evil matter.[573] Yet, surprisingly it was not the fact that matter was seen as evil that had become the focus of Marcion's critique, for the existence of evil matter was not the reason for his attitude towards the world. Indeed, evil matter was probably not understood as a principle[574], nor was it used – as was done by many Platonists – to solve the problem of evil.[575] Indeed, already Harnack was surprised by the fact that "M.[arcion] von dieser Annahme [sc. the existence of evil matter], die er nicht weiter ausgeführt hat, weder bei seinen Exegesen noch bei seinen sonstigen Aussagen irgendwelchen Gebrauch gemacht, ja daß er u. W. außer bei der Schöpfung sonst die Materie nirgendwo auch nur genannt hat."[576]

While Tertullian's comments only positively attest to the fact that Marcion believed the creator to have created the world from matter (1.15.4), it may be that Marcion presumed the alien God to have created his invisible world without a dependency on matter and thus *ex nihilo*. However, since Tertullian makes

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a Peripatetic and not a Platonist, arguing against the Stoic Chrysippus. Braun's two further references are to Galen and Lactantius. Tertullian again uses himself Stoic arguments to defend divine providence in 1.14.1. See on this Pohlenz, *Stoa I*, 100. And the accompanying references he gives in Pohlenz, *Stoa II*, 56–57.

[569] May, "Genesisauslegung," 192.

[570] Tertullian happily seizes the opportunity to claim that according to their properties (and his own definition of what constitutes divinity; cf. 1.3.2) matter and evil must be understood as gods themselves (1.15.4-5), ultimately ridiculing Marcion as a polytheist who teaches the existence of 9 gods (1.15.6).

[571] The view of matter as evil is supported by Clement's comment noting that the Marcionites understood "nature to be bad, for it had been created from bad matter and by a just creator (φύσιν κακὴν ἔκ τε ὕλης κακῆς καὶ ἐκ δικαίου γενομένην δημιουργοῦ)" (*strom*. 3.(chp.3.).12.1, cf. 3.19.3; my translation). See also Harnack, *Marcion*, 97–98, 276*.

[572] Ibid., 98. See also Andrew Brian McGowan, "Marcion's Love of Creation," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 9, no. 3 (2001): 301.

[573] May, *Creatio Ex Nihilo*, 56–57, and the references mentioned on p. 56, n. 71.

[574] See for instance Ibid., 56. who states that "neither is matter simply the evil, ungodly principle, for alongside it Marcion still reckons with the devil as the author of evil". See, however, my further comments below.

[575] Ibid., 56–57. Contrariwise, Harnack believes Marcion to have introduced the notion of evil matter to exonerate the creator from evil. Harnack states: "Da ihm nämlich der Weltschöpfer nicht „schlecht" war, so bedurfte er auf alle Fälle neben ihm u n d z u s e i n e r E n t l a s t u n g eines schlechten Prinzips, und zwar gerade für den Anfang der Dinge, an dem der Teufel doch noch nicht auftreten konnte, da er nach biblischer Überlieferung selbst eine Kreatur Gottes ist." (spacing part of the original) (Harnack, *Marcion*, 98.) See also Adolf von Harnack, *Neue Studien zu Marcion (*for which see *Marcion: Das Evangelium vom Fremden Gott)*, n.d., 18–19.

[576] Harnack, *Marcion*, 98.

an argument from analogy in 1.15.4, this cannot be proven with any certainty.[577] There are then some indications that Marcion may have taken the Creator-God's use of matter as evidence of his being an inferior entity for it showed the creator's dependency on something else in his act of creation, thereby revealing him to be neither almighty nor a true God.[578]

Against the Marcionites' claim that this world does not befit a true god, Tertullian is able to himself utilise the principle of god-fittingness as well as the mere fact that the Marcionites still labelled the Creator a God to retort that "[c]onsequently the world is not unworthy of a god (*Ergo nec mundus deo indignus*). For God (*deus*) has made nothing which is unworthy of himself (*indignum se*)" (1.13.2). Besides other counterarguments[579], Tertullian points out that contrary to "the alleged unworthiness of this world, the name of which among the Greeks also means adornment and culture, not uncleanness" (13.3), the Greeks also assumed the elements to be God's or at least worthy of God (1.13.4-5).

We had already seen how Marcion made use of creation and fall, as narrated in *Genesis*, to demonstrate how the Creator was an inferior being that was responsible for evil by either not preventing it or inadvertently bringing it about in his own creation. Besides these instances, we only find a few more occurrences where Marcion referred to parts of the *Genesis* creation account and only two further citations of the Genesis text can be found. One of them was the Creator's command in *Genesis* 2.17 not to eat from the tree of knowledge and threatening death in return. This command appears to have been taken by the Marcionites to demonstrate that the Creator was cruel and malign since, despite knowing that humans would eventually transgress his command not to eat from the tree, he had still decreed death as the consequence of its transgression (2.4.5-6; 4.38.1).[580] The other reference Marcion made to *Genesis* was the Creator's question in Gen 3.9, 11, which asked for the whereabouts of Adam (2.25.1). Here the Marcionites understood the question as concrete evidence for the creator's ignorance "as though he did not know where the man was (*scilicet ignorans ubi esset*)" (2.25.1). Likewise, while not explicitly citing the corresponding text, the creator's question whether Adam's newly gained shame of his nakedness "was because he had eaten of the tree" is likely to have been read by the Marcionites as

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[577] May, *Creatio Ex Nihilo*, 58.

[578] Harnack, *Marcion*, 98, n. 2. (Matter shows for Harnack that "der Weltschöpfer ohne einen Stoff nicht schaffen kann (anders der andere Gott). Das führt auf ein Interesse, welches mit der Schlechtigkeit der Materie nichts zu tun hat."). May, *Creatio Ex Nihilo*, 57–58. also points to the difference between Elisha being dependent on matter (using water seven times) in his healing and Christ who had to only once use his word to effect healing (4.9.7) as a possible further indication of this notion (with reference to Harnack, *Marcion*, 276* and 282*.).

[579] Tertullian counters the Marcionite claims with his earlier argument that it is "much more unworthy (*quanto indignius deo est*)" of the Marcionite alien god "to have made nothing at all" (1.13.3) and, moreover, that at least humankind has to be recognised as a most worthy creation since after all the higher god came to their salvation (1.14.2).

[580] This becomes most clear in the context of Tertullian's discussion of a Lukan pericope where he follows his ironic picture of an "anti-marcionite Marcion [who] would have stood up and said, 'See a god supremely good, a god opposite of the Creator's doings! well aware that men were going to fall headlong, he himself put them on the edge of a precipice" with the words that "this is how they treat of [sic!] the Creator, in his law about the tree" (4.38.1). However, May, "Genesisauslegung," 193. seems to take the Marcionite critique to be directed against the ineffectiveness of the creator's law to prevent the fall.

the creator asking "as though he had any doubt about it (*scilicet incertus*)" (2.25.1). Thus, with Gerhard May we can note that Marcion was not interested in the *Genesis* creation account for its cosmology but for the stories that exposed the Creator-God to fall short of the standards of god-fittingness.[581]

III.2.2. The Creator as Judge

In a second section, Tertullian engages with another issue the Marcionites disparaged the Creator for: his being a judge. It appears to me that there are two concerns at play for the Marcionites. Chief among them were the functions attached to the Creator's role of judge, in particular the dispensation of punishments. These were perceived as cruel and harsh, ultimately aimed at harming mankind, as similarly the law on which these judgments were based testified. Secondly, the creator's display of judicial emotions as part of his being a judge were perceived as unfitting. As we shall see, Tertullian defends the Creator's being a judge by reframing the debate in the closely connected context of the concept of justice.

Continuing from his discussion of creation and the fall,[582] Tertullian narrates the various negative consequences which had resulted from the fall, such as hard physical labour and giving birth in pain (2.11.1-2) and notes that the Creator had "from the beginning been solely good, from thenceforth [sc. the fall] became a judge (*iudex*), stern (*seuerus*), and, since the Marcionites will have it so, cruel (*saeuus*)" (2.11.1). Indeed, what appears to have been at the heart of the issue for Marcion was the Creator's role as judge: a judge who is perceived as "stern (*seuerus*)" and "cruel (*saeuus*)" in his judgements and punishments. Marcion appears to have even pushed the issue so far that he apparently "accuse[d] the office of judge of being in kinship with evil (*iudicis statum ut adfinem mali arguere*)" (2.11.3). And it is in this very concern of Marcion's – the Creator's being a judge – which Tertullian identifies as the reason why Marcion had as a result "dreamed up another god (*alium deum*) whose sole attribute is goodness (*solummodo bonum*)" (2.11.3). The Marcionites probably took the severity of the physical evils, such as the mentioned physical and birthing labour, as indications of the Creator's being a cruel and stern judge in his punishments.

Against this, Tertullian argues that "the goodness of God came first (*prior bonitas Dei*), as his nature is (*secundum naturam*): his sternness came afterwards (*seueritas posterior*), as there was reason for it (*secundum causam*)" (2.11.2). Hence, Tertullian portrays some of the issues that could be perceived as either natural evil or cruel punishments as God's proper response to the fall of man: a response that is not cruel or capricious but stern and appropriate as it is based on a cause, man's fall. Moreover, Tertullian points out that the proper nature of this God is goodness (*bonitas*), whereas his sternness

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[581] Ibid., 197.: "kosmologische Fragen spielen nur am Rand eine Rolle, […] er [sc. Marcion; FG] greift die Handlungen und Verhaltensweisen des Demiurgen heraus, die Gottes nicht würdig sind, und glaubt damit zu beweisen, daß der Vater Jesu Christi ein anderer Gott ist.".

[582] Naumann, "Das Problem des Bösen in Tertullians zweitem Buch gegen Marcion: Ein Beitrag zur Theodizee Tertullians," 534. Notes the smooth transitions from the fall of creation to the issue of punishments.

(*severitas*) is merely a later accident. This is further explicated by maintaining that goodness is "ingenerate (*ingenita*)" to the Creator's nature, whereas his sternness is "accidental (*accidens*)" (2.11.2). Thus, Tertullian defends the physical evils by depicting them as reactionary punishments which had been occasioned by humanity's sin. All that is left is for Tertullian to defend the office of judge itself.

III.2.2.1 A Just Judge?

In his defence of the Creator's being a judge, Tertullian conducts his argument along the same lines on which Irenaeus had already defended the Creator against Marcion. As we had observed earlier, Irenaeus explicitly appealed to Plato for the traditional understanding that "the same God [is] both just and good (*eundem deum et iustum et bonum*), […] and Himself exercising judgement (*ipsum facientem iudicium*)" (*Adv. Haer.* III.25.5).[583] Similarly, while Tertullian first defends the Creator's being a judge by highlighting that judgement is necessary to maintain a moral order, he then shifts the discussion and reframes the argument as one over justice. He maintains that Marcion's rejection of the office of judge would consequently result in him "lay[ing] accusation against justice itself (*ipsam […] iustitiam accusare*) – for this it is that causes any man to be a judge (*quae iudicem praestat*) – classing it as one of the varieties of evil", which would lead Marcion to "include injustice among the subheadings of goodness" (*Adv. Marc.* 2.11.3).[584] The further consequence of such reasoning would be that "[j]ustice is an evil thing only if injustice is a good one" (2.11.4). This outcome is evidently absurd and thus by reframing the office of judge in the context of justice, Tertullian is able to charge Marcion with "postulat[ing] an opposition between two gods, counting out separately on the one side a good god (*deum bonum*) and on the other side a just one (*deum iustum*)" (2.12.1). However, as the course of Tertullian's dialectical argument shows, – and here I fully concur with Löhr's observation – it is Tertullian who introduces this distinction between a good and a just God as part of his reframing the argument in the context of justice. To quote Löhr's accurate observation:

> "There is no indication whatsoever that Tertullian argues against a Marcionite distinction between a good god and a just god. It is quite clearly Tertullian himself who brings up the topic of divine justice. […] he challenges the Marcionites to discuss the notion of justice itself. Tertullian's argument only works if it is precisely that what the Marcionites have so far failed to do."[585]

Having thus reframed the discussion, Tertullian only has to assert that "the Creator is both good and just (*tam bonus quam et iustus*)" (2.12.1) and show that justice is part of the Creator's nature. The latter is important, since Tertullian is aware that his earlier argument of the Creator's severity being in reaction

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[583] Irenaeus continues to cite *Laws* 715e-716a. See on this also *Rep* 380b.
[584] "When you express approval of a god who is no judge, it is not the God who is a judge whom you express disapproval of: you will be forced, no question of it, to lay accusation against justice itself – for this it is that causes any man to be a judge – classing it as one of the varieties of evil:" (2.11.3).
[585] Löhr, "Distinguish," 139.

to the fall and thus secondary leaves open the possibility for his opponents to pronounce the very office of judge and its justice as something secondary which had only been occasioned by evil (cf. 2.12.3).[586] He therefore goes on to claim that justice is "ingenerate in God (*ingentiam deo*)" (2.12.3) by embedding his argument in the scriptural context of the creation account (*Gen* 1-2), which he takes to demonstrate that the Creator's "goodness (*bonitas*) constructed (*operata*) the world", whereas "his justice (*iustitia*) regulated (*modulata*) it" (2.12.1).[587] Justice's role in creation was the separation of the various entities in the creation account, such as day and night, heaven and earth, man and woman (2.12.2). Thus, these primordial acts of justice, which are understood as "the Creator's judgements (*iudicia sunt creatoris*)", prove to Tertullian that justice "came into existence simultaneously with that goodness which is the origin of everything" (2.12.3).[588]

He then further connects justice and goodness by making the former the chaperone of the latter, restraining its free dispersal after the appearance of evil, assuring that the Creator's "goodness should be measured out according to each man's deserts, granted to the worthy, denied to the unworthy" (2.13.1).[589] As part of this role justice utilises judgment to condemn and punish, which is perceived by the Marcionites as an exercise of severity (*saeuit*), but which Tertullian claims to aid and "tend[…] to good, not to evil (*bono, non malo proficit*)" since "fear of judgement (*timor iudicii*) contributes to good, not to evil (*ad bonum, non ad malum confert*)" for it repels from the committing of evil and encourages the doing of the good (2.13.2; cf. 2.13.3). This demonstrates for Tertullian that, in full agreement with the principle of fittingness, "God [is] wholly good (*totus deus bonus est*), in that he is all and everything in favour of the good", which includes the judgments and punishments of his justice (2.13.4). Indeed, his "justice [is] even the plenitude of divinity itself (*iustitia etiam plenitudo est divinitatis ipsius*), [in] that it reveals God in his perfection (*exhibens deum perfectum*) both as Father (*et patrem*) and as Lord (*et dominum*)" (2.13.5). God as the father is attributed with qualities such as "clemency", "kindly authority", "loved from affection", while the opposing qualities – such as "discipline", "stern", "to be necessarily feared" – are ascribed to his being the Lord (2.13.5). The distinction Tertullian employs here to highlight that two distinct sides belong to the same God, in parallel, as he points out, to the commandments in Deuteronomy to both love as well as to fear the same God (cf. *Deut* 6.5; 5.29)

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[586] "So that you have no need to suppose that he could only be described as a judge after evil had appeared, and thus bring justice into disrepute as the outcome of evil." (2.12.3).
The latter part of Lieu's comment that Tertullian "swiftly modifies if not retracts this [i.e. his earlier statement in 2.11.1-2]" (Lieu, *Marcion*, 67.) seems slightly too strong and I follow Meijering who, while noting also a modification of Tertullian's earlier argument, draws a subtle distinction between severity and justice, arriving at the conclusion that while "Gottes Gerechtigkeit ungeworden ist", one can still assert "dass die Strenge, eine besondere Art der Gerechtigkeit, gegenüber der Güte sekundär ist." (Meijering, *Gotteslehre*, 121.) Thus, it would be more accurate to speak of a modification rather than a "retraction" of Tertullian's argument.
[587] Cf. also Tertullian's succeeding comment that "goodness had conceived them all, justice distinguished between them" (2.12.3).
[588] René Braun, *Contre Marcion Tome II (Livre II)* (SC 368; Paris: Cerf, 1991), 85, n. 3. is probably right to detect the Stoic idea of justice (as ordering element) in the background.
[589] Tertullian describes the activity of justice as "a service done to goodness (*procuratio bonitatis est*)" (2.13.2).

(2.13.5), are reminiscent of Philo's distinction of the different names of God which we had observed in our earlier chapter.

III.2.2.2. The Evil Creator?

In this context of Tertullian arguing that "[t]he same God smites, and also heals: he kills, and also makes alive: he brings down, and also raises up: he creates evils, but also makes peace" (2.14.1), we encounter further evidence of a Marcionite objection based on the reading of Scripture through the lens of fittingness. Tertullian wants to "answer the heretics", the Marcionites, who assert that the creator "himself claims to be the creator of evil things (*ipse se conditorem profitetur malorum*) when he says, *It is I who create evil things*" (2.14.1). That this verse of *Isa* 45.7 played a key role in the Marcionite critique of the Creator can be seen in the various references Tertullian makes to it (cf. 1.2.2; 1.16.4; 2.24.4; 3.24.1) as well as in the direct engagement he is about to engage in.

The Marcionites appear to have taken the verse at face value and hence as a literal self-description of the Creator as the maker of evils. According to the principle of fittingness it was obviously not conceivable for a true God to be the Creator of evils and, therefore, the Creator had to be an inferior entity, closely connected to evil, and not a true God. Since Tertullian's defence amounts to the affirmation that the evil things mentioned in *Isa* 45.7 are indeed "worthy of God (*Deo digna*)" (2.14.3), we can further assume that the principle of fittingness will have formed the background to the Marcionite critique of the Creator.

Tertullian explains the statement of *Isa* 45.7 in his usual skilful manner of dialectical arguing by first claiming the word *mala* in *Isa* 45.7 carries an "equivocation (*uocabuli communionem*) which mixes up in ambiguity two sorts of evils (*duas malorum species in ambiguitate turbantem*)", whereas for clarity one ought to "mak[e] a distinction between evils of sin and evils of punishments (*separatis malis delicti et malis supplicii*)" (2.14.2). While the devil is seen as the cause of the former, Tertullian emphasises that the Creator is only the maker of the evils of punishments. As such, Tertullian argues, punishments are "evils which appertain to a judge (*malis quae congruunt iudici*), which indeed are evil to those on whom they are inflicted, though on their own account they are good things (*ceterum suo nomine bona*) because they are just things (*qua iusta*), defensive of good deeds and hostile to sins, and in this respect worthy of God (*Deo digna*)" (2.14.3). Once again, we can observe how Tertullian uses the close link he had established between goodness and justice in order to prove that acts of punishment are not evil but just and hence good. Indeed, he pointedly puts the challenge to Marcion to dare "prove them [sc. the punishments] unjust (*proba ea iniusta*) […] because if they belong to justice they will no longer be evil, but good (*quia si iustitiae erunt, iam mala non erunt, sed bona*)" (2.14.3).[590] Additionally, if the

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[590] This is followed up by Tertullian listing various instances of divine punishment – for instance for the Fall, Egypt's oppression of the Jews, and disrespect for the prophet Elisha – challenging Marcion to prove them to be unjust (2.14.4).

Creator's judgements are reasonable ones, the same must be true for "severity (*seueritas*) also, and the acts in which severity pursues its course, must be accounted both reasonable and just (*rationi et iustitiae*)" (2.15.1).

Thus, Tertullian has shown that neither the Creator's being a judge, nor the dispensation of punishments related to this very role are to be perceived as unfitting for a God and it is therefore no good to "censure him for being a judge" (2.15.1). Hence, the only option left for the Marcionites would be to "convict him 'if you can' of being a bad judge" (2.15.1). Yet, possible objections such as the creator's punishment of generational sin are dismissed by Tertullian (2.15.1-3).[591]

III.2.2.3. Judicial Emotions

A further and central point of the Marcionite objection to the Creator's role as judge is raised in chapter 16. Tertullian had just defended the severity of the Creator's judgments by demonstrating that severity "is good because it is just, if indeed the judge is good – that is, is just" (2.16.1) and continues now to further allege that "also are the rest of those activities good by which the good work of good severity (*bonae seueritatis*) takes its course – whether it be anger (*siue ira*) or hostility (*siue aemulatio*) or ferocity (*siue saeuitia*)" (2.16.1). The reason why these emotions should be perceived as good is found in their being "debts owed to severity, as severity is a debt to justice" (2.16.1). Hence, by their partaking in this causal chain, which is ultimately linked to justice, these emotions attain their status as good emotions. Yet, as will become clear from the following discussion as well as several other comments made by Tertullian, emotions exhibited by God were of central concern to Marcion and represent a major component of his critique of the Creator. Again, in order to discern Marcion's critique, we will have to analyse Tertullian's arguments defending his understanding of the nature of God.

Tertullian argues that the Creator's being a "judge must not be held to reproach for the consequences of his judgeship" (2.16.1) and invokes the apt comparison of the role of a surgeon and his use of instruments: although a surgeon's instruments inflict pain, they are necessary for a surgeon to perform his good work (2.16.1). Hence, Tertullian reproaches Marcion for "admit[ting] that God is a judge, yet refus[ing] those emotions and feelings (*motus et sensus*) by which he exercises judgement (*per quos iudicat*)" (2.16.2).

Marcion's rejection of emotions displayed by God is, according to Tertullian, due to an Epicurean influence on Marcion, for which he reproaches him and emphasizes that "[o]ur knowledge of God comes to us from the prophets and from Christ, not from the philosophers or from Epicurus" (2.16.2). As we saw earlier, Epicurus thought of the gods living in the *inter-mundi* as apathetic beings and hence completely unconcerned with human affairs. Consequently, against such people who "allege that a god

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[591] It is certainly imaginable that this was an actual Marcionite objection as thinks Naumann, "Das Problem des Bösen in Tertullians zweitem Buch gegen Marcion: Ein Beitrag zur Theodizee Tertullians," 534.

takes no interest in anything", Tertullian points out that the Christian God does care for humanity: care to the very point "that for the purpose of man's salvation he has taken upon him the lowliness of human form" (2.16.3). Moreover, Tertullian accuses the Marcionites to have embraced from the Epicureans[592] "an assertion (*definitio*) of this sort – that if a God becomes angry or hostile or proud or embittered (*si Deus irascitur et aemulatur et extollitur et exacerbatur*), he will be liable to corruption (*ergo et corrumpetur*), and so must die (*ergo et morietur*)" (2.16.3). "In diesem Syllogismus gipfelt die Kritik Markions", as Max Pohlenz had correctly noted.[593] Yet, while Tertullian's claim that the Marcionites had adopted this syllogism from the Epicureans has been followed by most scholarship,[594] Max Pohlenz observed in his 1909 essay that the sceptic Carneades was the likely origin of this syllogism and that it had most likely been mediated to Marcion via its subsequent Stoic reception in a debate between Panaitios and Poseidonius.[595] Hence, we can once more observe that it was the principle of fittingness which lay at the very heart of Marcion's critique; namely, god-fittingness in its Stoic appearance which had, taking its origin from Plato's second topos of fittingness, declared apatheia as a key feature of god-fittingness.

Tertullian defends the Creator's display of emotions by attacking Marcion's reasoning and demonstrating that these emotions are different from human emotions and thus befitting the creator. He acutely perceives the core of the Marcionite argument to be that they "from things human form conjectures about things divine (*de humanis diuina praeiudicant*), and because in mankind passions (*passiones*) of this sort are taken to be of a corruptive character (*corruptoriae conditionis*), suppose that in God also they are of the same quality" (2.16.4). Against this, Tertullian argues that even though the description of human and divine emotions uses the same terminology, they are completely different since the substances – human and divine – to which they are applied are fundamentally different.[596] Indeed, Tertullian attacks Marcion for his inherent contradiction in designating the Creator as God, yet still assuming that "there is in God something human, instead of everything divine", something that should be impermissible for the designation as God (2.16.5). Moreover, the fact that man had been made

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[592] Tertullian does not directly mention the Epicureans as the originators of this definition. Yet, the movement of the passage seems to suggest this: Tertullian's mention of the Epicureans is followed by a reference to "the sentiments of those who allege that a god takes no interest in anything" (a more precise translation would be: "those who deny that god cares for anything (*qui nolunt deum curare quicquam*)", making it clear that these people deny providence), who are the origin from where (*inde*) the Mariconites had obtained this syllogism (2.16.2-3).
[593] Pohlenz, *Zorn*, 22.
[594] See Meijering, *Gotteslehre*, 76–79, 130., explicitly on page 79.
[595] Pohlenz, *Zorn*, 21–22. While Carneades' syllogism had God as its subject (Cicero, *ND* 3.32), the debate between Panaitios and Poseidonius was on the mortality of the soul (Cicero, *Tusc.* I,79-80). However, the reason for Pohlenz's rationale that Marcion was more likely influenced by the Stoic debate rather than Carneades seems to lie in the fact that he sees (rightly in my opinion) Marcion to also betray Stoic influence in other areas of his thinking.
[596] "Distinguish the substances, and assign to each its own sensations, as diverse as the substances demand, even though they are seen to make use of the same terminology." (2.16.4). Tertullian compares this to the anthropomorphic descriptions in the Jewish Scriptures, noting that there is an "unlikeness of divine body and human, though their members [sc. body parts; FG] are identical in name" (2.16.4).

in the image of God and not vice versa is skilfully used by Tertullian to demonstrate that Maricon is "highly inconsistent […] to put human characteristics in God rather than divine characteristics in man, and to clothe God with man's image rather than man with God's" (2.16.5).[597] This inference and projection from one's own characteristics to God's is, as Meijering had rightly pointed out, reminiscent of Xenophanes' argumentation in fragments B14 and B23.[598]

This link between God and mankind – mankind being the image of God – is evidenced in that the soul "has the same emotions and sensations (*motus et sensus*) as God has, yet not of the same quality as God has (*licet non tales, quales Deus*): in accordance with their substance both their actuality and their consequences (*et status eorum et exitus*) are far apart" (2.16.6). The key difference in the status of human and divine emotions is, according to Tertullian, that divine emotions are perfect since God, unlike mankind, is perfect.[599] Thus, God is not affected by the effect emotions have on humans and therefore "[h]e can be angry without <being shaken>, can be annoyed without coming into peril, can be moved without being overthrown" (2.16.7). Once again, this seems to recall a similar notion as expressed in Xenophanes' comments in fragments B25 and B26 which speak of God remaining in one place without moving, yet shaking all things by his mind.[600] Only in our case these considerations seem to have been applied to divine emotions: God can "perform" these emotions whilst not being affected by them.

Moreover, Tertullian contends that the reason for the creator's display of both positive and negative emotions rather than none is that there is a need for him to have "as many sensations as there are causes for them", ranging from "anger because of the wicked" to "generosity because of those who deserve it" (2.16.7). Nonetheless, as Tertullian had made clear, the Creator is not affected by these emotions since "[a]ll these he experiences in his own particular manner (*Quae omnia patitur suo more*), that manner in which it is seemly for him to experience them (*quo eum pati condecet*)" (2.16.7): the Creator-God experiences emotions in "his own particular manner" – *suo more* – a manner which necessarily befits (*condecet*) him. Lastly, Tertullian emphasizes the goodness of the Creator by illustration from some of the Creator's deeds and commands as presented in the biblical texts and urges Marcion to also consider this benevolent side of the creator (2.17.1-4).[601]

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[597] Implying that the latter would have been more probable as man is the image of God and not the other way around.
[598] Meijering, *Gotteslehre*, 131. One could, of course, add fragments B15-16.
[599] The same is true for positive emotions such as gentleness and mercy, displayed by both humankind and God, as Tertullian points out (cf. 2.16.6).
[600] This influence of Xenophanes appears to have gone unnoticed by commentators.
[601] Besides Old Testament references (2.17.2), the creator's goodness from his deeds is shown with reference to *GMt* 5.45 (2.17.1). The examples for his goodness as evidenced from his instructions include the second half of the ten commandments, the command to love one's neighbour, and further instructions that show the creator's philanthropy (2.17.4).

IV.2.2.4. The Unfittingness of the Law that undergirds the Judgements of the Creator

From there Tertullian turns his attention to an examination of the Creator's law (2.18-19), since the law seems to have been perceived by the Marcionites as a further indication of the inferiority of its lawgiver, the Creator-God (2.18.1), for it either demonstrated the cruelty of the law or its inconsistent character.

The *ius talionis*, the law of equal retribution, played an important role in the Marcionite argument as is evident from the fact that it featured as one of Marcion's *Antitheses* where it was contrasted with Christ's command to love one's enemy and turn the other cheek (4.16.2-7).[602] Tertullian defends the *ius talionis* by rejecting that its "intention is […] to give licence for the mutual exercise of injury", instead highlighting its true intention to be the "total restraint of violence […] through fear of retaliation immediately to follow" (2.18.1).[603] Hence, the Marcionites probably perceived the *ius talionis* as a cruel principle which only perpetuated the injustice committed in the first place and which therefore revealed the intention and character of the lawgiver to be of a cruel nature. Interestingly, the Marcionites were not alone in such an understanding of the *ius talionis*, which also featured in Greek legislation, for the contemporary rhetor Maximus of Tyre voiced similar concerns when he wrote:

> "What limit will there then be to the harm done? If the victims of wrongdoing take their revenge, the harm will for ever be transferred from one to the other and perpetuate itself, and one act of wrongdoing will follow another. […] For God's sake, look at what you have brought about! Justice compounded of wrongs! How far will the mischief go? Where will it come to rest? Don't you realize that this is an inexhaustible source of wickedness that you are opening up, that you are laying down a law that will lead the whole earth into harm?" (*Or*. 12.6).[604]

Secondly, the fact that the Creator's food laws "pronounce[d] unclean certain animals which ha[d] at other times received a blessing" by him was likely perceived by the Marcionites as testimony to the Creator's inconsistency and thus as a display of his unfitting nature, issues to which Tertullian will turn in the next chapters.[605] Here, Tertullian simply defends the food laws as an "exercise of self-restraint (*exercendae continentiae*)" aimed at stopping "gluttony (*gula*)", "lust (*libido*)", "lechery (*luxuria*)",

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[602] In 2.28.2 the *ius talionis* features in the context of Tertullian's Anti-*Antitheses* and it is discussed again in 4.16.2-7 in the context of – or rather in contrast to – *GLk* 6.27-31, Christ's command to love one's enemy and turn the other cheek.

[603] A more extended defence is given in 4.16.2-7. For Tertullian's differing views on the *ius talionis* in his other writings see the remarks in Meijering, *Gotteslehre*, 135–36.

[604] This as well as subsequent citation is from the translation of Michael B. Trapp, *Maximus of Tyre: The Philosophical Orations* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997).

[605] Winrich Löhr, "Die Auslegung des Gesetzes bei Markion, den Gnostikern und den Manichäern," in *Stimuli: Exegese und ihre Hermeneutik in Antike und Christentum: FS für Emst Dassmann* (ed. Georg Schöllgen and Clemens Scholten; JbAC, suppl. 23; Münster, 1996), 79.

"greed of money (*pecuniae ardor*)", and preparing mankind "for fasting in the service of God" (2.18.2).[606]

Thirdly, the sacrifices that had been instituted might have been critiqued by the Marcionites on the grounds that they appeared to indicate "as though God needed such things for his own sake (*sibi proprie desiderauerit*)" (2.18.3). The notion of God having a desire or dependence on anything was of course not becoming for a true God.[607] And Tertullian agrees that God is not in need of anything, pointing out that God had himself already made clear this very fact via the prophet Isaiah (*Isa* 1.11-12; *AM* 2.18.3). Rather, the demand for sacrifices was intended to accommodate people who were "prone to idolatry and transgression", in order to turn them to the true God and prevent them "from the sin of making images" (2.18.3).

Lastly, Tertullian argues that the law had been given not "because of its Author's hardness (*duritia*), but by reason of that supreme kindness (*summae benignitatis*)" (2.19.1). While Tertullian remarks that at a deeper level the law "is both spiritual (*spiritalis*) and prophetic (*propheticae*), and in almost all its concepts has a figurative (*figuratae*) significance" (2.19.1), he is aware that Marcion would not accept such an interpretation of the law and proceeds along a plain – *simplex*[608] – interpretation of the law, arguing that it is aimed at "tam[ing] the people's hardness" by "putting man under obligation to God" (2.19.1-2). Since the keeping of the law would lead to salvation, as Tertullian illustrates from the psalms[609], God's goodness "also appointed prophets who t[aught] of godly conduct (*Deo Digna*)" (2.19.2). This "godly", or rather god-fitting (*Deo Digna*) conduct intended "to remove wickedness from the soul, […] to depart from evil (*declinare a malo*) and to do good (*facere bonum)*, to seek peace and pursue it, to be angry (*irasci*) and not to sin (*non delinquere*) – that is, not persist in anger (*in ira non perseuerare*), nor be enraged (*siue saeuire*)" (2.19.2).[610] Since Tertullian has thus shown the law and the instructions of the prophets to be aimed at producing god-fitting behaviour in mankind, he has successfully provided "testimony to a God exceeding good (*Dei optimi*) […] certified both by his precepts of goodness (*praecepta bonitatis*) and by its rewards" (2.19.3).

III.2.3. The Inconsistencies and Contradictions of the Creator

This leads us to the third group of problems Tertullian alleges Marcion to have concerned himself with. This third section concerns itself with what can be perceived as divine inconsistency in the giving of commandments, in the treatment of certain people, and displaying evidence of limitation. As is already

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[606] Tertullian adds to this the humorous remark that "[n]o doubt the Creator is open to criticism for having deprived his own people of food, rather than the less thankful Marcionites" (2.18.2).
[607] See for references Meijering, *Gotteslehre*, 137.
[608] The text has the adverb *simpliciter*.
[609] Meijering, *Gotteslehre*, 138.
[610] Hence, we can observe an instance where Tertullian uses fittingness in an ethical sense, directed at mankind. Yet, it is God's goodness that initiates the attempt to make mankind more fitting to God through ethics.

obvious and we will investigate in more detail, all of these issues violate the principle of god-fittingness in one way or another.

III.2.3.1. Inconsistent Laws?

The first story Tertullian brings up is that of the Israelites' exodus from Egypt. When the Israelites left Egypt after 430 years of servitude (*Ex* 12.40), the biblical text informs us that the Creator instructed the Israelites through Moses to take gold and silver from the Egyptians upon their leaving Egypt (cf. *Ex* 3.22, 11.2, 12.35). This instruction amounted in Marcion's eyes to the Creator commanding the act of "damage, robbery of gold and silver (*fraudem illam et rapinam auri et argenti*)" (2.20.1) and thereby of something immoral.[611] Furthermore, the Marcionites appear to have noted that this instruction stood in complete opposition to the Creator's own commandment of prohibiting theft (5.13.6). Thereby, the biblical account of the Creator's instruction to take spoils from the Egyptians not only witnessed to the Creator's character being morally unworthy of a God, but also highlighted another feature not befitting the divine: a display of inconsistency. Indeed, Marcion clearly took issue with what he perceived of as the Creator's "inconsequence and inconsistency (*mobili et instabili*), alleging that his instructions are in contradiction (*contrarietates*) with one another" (2.21.1). Since the Old Testament law was understood as an expression of divine will, any instructions given by the creator which contradicted any of his own previous commandments would naturally be perceived as revealing him to be inconsistent in his character.

In his reading of the Hebrew scriptures, Marcion appears to have encountered many stories that testified to contradictions contained in the various commandments given by the Creator. For instance, the Creator's instruction of the Israelites to carry the ark around Jericho for seven days, and thus including the Sabbath, in order to capture Jericho (*Jos* 6.3f), stood in direct contrast to his earlier law forbidding work on the Sabbath, and was therefore taken by the Marcionites as clear testimony to the Creator's inconsistent nature (2.21.1).[612] Likewise, the Creator instructing Moses to create a brazen image of a snake and the existence of the golden Cherubim and Seraphim that formed a part of the ark of the covenant were taken as contradicting the commandment concerning idolatry which prohibited the making of images (2.22.1-2). These and other stories such as the Creator's prohibition of eating animals which had been formerly allowed for consumption (2.18.2)[613] or his prohibition of sacrifices originally instituted by himself (2.22.2-4) were taken as evidence for the Creator's inconsistent character. Furthermore, besides demonstrating the character of the Creator to not be god-befitting, Löhr makes the interesting observation that the inconsistent character of the Creator would have prevented his

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[611] See also 5.13.6.
[612] See *Ex* 20.8-11. Other examples include the making of images and sacrifices (2.22).
[613] See *Gen* 1.22,25 (blessing of animals) and *Lev* 11.1-19 and *Deut* 14.1-21 (declaring these animals unclean for consumption).

characterisation as a lawgiver who is “im positive Sinne ‘gerecht’ […], denn zur Eigenschaft der Gerechtigkeit gehört die Vorstellung einer zuverlässigen u[nd] beständigen göttlichen Ordnung”.[614]

III.2.3.2. Divine Regret or Divine Metanoia?

Moreover, the Creator’s acts of “disapproval (*reprobat*) of men previously approved of (*probatos*)”, such as Saul and Solomon, were seen by the Marcionites as evidence for the Creator-God being either “capricious […] or else that he is lacking in foresight” (2.23.1), both of which would not befit a God. Hence, Tertullian is naturally keen to argue that the Creator’s acts mentioned in these stories are in complete accordance with god-fittingness as “there is nothing more seemly in a good man or a good judge (*nihil tam bono et iudici conuenit*) than to reject men or promote them in view of their current deserts” (2.23.1). Indeed, Tertullian argues, that since the Creator is a just as well as a good judge his judgements are not dependent on his whims – and hence not inconsistent – but on the changing behaviour of the individuals who are “award[ed] exactly the recompense which each occasion requires” (2.23.3; cf. 23.1-3).

Closely related to the Creator’s subsequent disapproval of formerly elected figures is the issue of the Creator displaying repentance for his previous actions. The fact that the Creator is portrayed by the biblical text as showing regret over his decision to have made Saul a king[615], was apparently used by the Marcionites to argue that it “ow[ed] to caprice, or lack of foresight, or even to a recollection of <his own> wrongdoing, that the repented (*quasi proinde mobilitate uel improuidentia, immo iam ex delicti recordatione paeniteat*)” (2.24.1). Indeed, Tertullian accuses Marcion of having “made it a standing rule that repentance implies confession of some evil act or mistake (*paenitentiam confessionem sapere mali operis alicuius uel erroris*)” (2.24.1).[616]

Max Pohlenz made the important observation that the understanding of regret[617] which Tertullian ascribes here to Marcion, and then goes on to critique, is of Stoic provenance.[618] As he points out the position purportedly held by Marcion is described in ways similar to the Stoic definition of regret which has been transmitted to us via Stobaeus who writes that

> “regret is [a feeling of] pain [one has] about actions which have been performed, because [of the belief that] they were [moral] mistakes made by oneself; and this is a passion of the soul

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[614] Winrich Löhr, “Markion,” *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum* 24 (2012): 157.
[615] *1 Sam* 15.11, which Tertullian quotes.
[616] Tertullian notes that the Marcionites did not deny the creator’s foreknowledge since they acknowledged his divinity (2.24.2). And as Meijering notes, Marcion will have assumed foreknowledge to be an essential characteristic of divinity due to his usage of the Epicurean argument which presupposes this for its argument (cf. 2.5.1) (Meijering, *Gotteslehre*, 148.).
[617] Regret is the better translation of *paenitentia*. See on this James Warren, *Regret: A Study in Ancient Moral Psychology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022), 156–57, and the remarks on p. 161, n.4. Cf. also Robert Andrew Kaster, *Emotion, Restraint and Community in Ancient Rome* (Classical culture and society; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 66–83.
[618] First noted in his essay: Pohlenz, *Zorn*, 21–22. Cf. also Pohlenz, *Stoa I*, 410–11; Pohlenz, *Stoa II*, 198–99.

> which produces unhappiness and internal strife. For in so far as the regretful man loathes what has happened, to that extent he is angry at himself for having been responsible for these events."[619] (Stobaeus 2.7.11)

Regret was apparently linked with pain which again was one of the four passions.[620] Passion, of course, was connected to change and thereby fell short of god-fittingness.[621] Hence, the first century Stoic Seneca notes that while the "decision of a wise man cannot be changed (*negatis posse mutari*). How much more true this is in the case of a god (*quanto magis dei*)!" (Seneca, *Natural Questions*, 2.36).[622] It is therefore no surprise to observe that the Stoic denunciation of regret had proliferated in the second century and figures like Maximus of Tyre could likewise hold that both "[c]hange of mind and repentance are after all unbecoming to a good man, let alone to a god"[623], based on his reasoning that "change itself is defective. But God and deficiency are incompatible."[624] Hence, the biblical texts' description of the Creator changing his mind and regretting past actions was ample proof for the Marcionites that the Creator displayed characteristics which were not befitting of a god. Naturally, Tertullian denounced the Marcionites' reading of the biblical texts as "a base interpretation upon his repenting" (2.24.1).

As James Warren noted in his recent analysis of "regret" (of the above quoted passage from Stobaeus), the two factors which need to come together for there to be regret are "first, that the bad person performs actions that are mistaken and, second, that the bad person easily changes his mind."[625] Since Tertullian had already refuted the Marcionites' understanding of the Creator's deeds as evil, he begins his argument[626] by focussing on the first factor, maintaining that the Creator's regret has to be "understood as a reproach (*inuidiosam potius intellegi*), not an admission of error (*non criminosam*)" (2.24.2).[627]

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[619] Εἶναι δὲ τὴν μεταμέλειαν λύπην ἐπὶ πεπραγμένοις ὡς παρ' αὐτοῦ ἡμαρτημένοις, κακοδαιμονικόν τι πάθος ψυχῆς καὶ στασιῶδες· ἐφ' ὅσον γὰρ ἄχθεται τοῖς συμβεβηκόσιν ὁ ἐν ταῖς μεταμελείαις ὤν, ἐπὶ τοσοῦτον ἀγανακτεῖ πρὸς ἑαυτὸν ὡς αἴτιον γεγονότα τούτων· Translation is that of Arthur J. Pomeroy, ed., *Arius Didymus. Epitome of Stoic Ethics* (Texts and Translations 44; Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 1999).
[620] The four types of passion are: pain, fear, desire, pleasure (Diogenes Laertius, *AM* 7.110-111).
[621] See for instance Maximus of Tyre, *Or.* 5.3.
[622] Translation is that of Thomas H. Corcoran, *Seneca: Natural Questions, Books 1-3* (LCL 450; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971).
[623] Maximus of Tyre, *Or.* 5.3: μετατίθεσθαι γὰρ καὶ μεταγινώσκειν προσήκει μὴ ὅτι θεῷ, ἀλλ' οὐδὲ ἀνδρὶ ἀγαθῷ·
[624] "Consider the pliant individual who is given to changing his mind: if the change is from worse to better, then his original decision was defective; if on the other hand the change is from better to worse, then the change itself is defective. But God and deficiency are incompatible." (5.3). As is apparent, Maximus' reasoning follows Plato's argument and dismissal of divine change in the *Republic*.
[625] Warren, *Regret*, 130.
[626] The first brief objection raised by Tertullian, before this sustained argument, is that regret does not imply the existence of evil actions since also good actions can be regretted for another reason (2.24.1-2).
[627] Of course, this does not dismiss Marcion's general critique of divine passions as surely the creator being "envious (*invidiosus*)" still entails the existence of passion. An issue Tertullian will deal with later (for which see below).

Hence, Tertullian shifts the debate to the issue of the Creator's supposedly evil deeds which he had already refuted in the earlier chapters of Book II.

Taking the story of the Creator's cessation of destruction initially threatened against the Ninevites in the book of *Jonah* as an example of the Marcionite contention of divine regret, Tertullian attempts to invert the Marcionite argument by highlighting that the same text also speaks of God's goodness. Tertullian therefore concedes that the text states that "God repented of the wickedness which he had said he would do unto them" (2.24.2 = *Jonah* 3.10) but is also determined to point out that Jonah spoke of "God in terms supremely good, very slow to anger towards evil men, and most abundant in kindness and mercy" (2.24.3). This allows Tertullian to reproach Marcion for one-sidedly focussing on the text's mentioning of divine regret, without acknowledging the inherent contradiction posed by the text's likewise reference to the Creator's goodness. Invoking Marcion's use of the parable of the tree and its fruits, Tertullian asserts that Marcion should have been aware of the fact that in a deity that is "supremely good, the coexistence of wickedness is not possible" (2.24.3) and should therefore have acknowledged the contradiction contained with these statements, rather than using only one of them to argue his own case. While Marcion had simply used the text's mention of the Creator's regret of his planned "wickedness" as proof of the Creator's character and deeds not befitting a true God, Tertullian intends to tackle the problem contained within the scriptural account and is thereby portraying himself as the better interpreter who takes full account of the various statements contained within the scriptures.

As mentioned, Tertullian concedes to the Marcionites that "<the scripture> has used the word 'wickedness' – which one supremely good is incapable of", but then suggests that the solution to this impasse must be "some interpretation by which to understand the kind of wickedness which can have come to exist in one supremely good" (2.24.3). What Tertullian proposes is that "by wickedness (*malitiam*) in this context is signified (*significari*) not such as can be referred back to the Creator's nature (*non quae ad naturam redigatur creatoris*), as though he were evil (*quasi mali*), but to his authority, because he is a judge (*iudicis*)" (2.24.4). Tertullian thereby reverts to the issue of God's role as punishing judge he had discussed in earlier chapters and once again argues that the evils mentioned in passages which designate the Creator as maker of evils, mentioned are *Isa* 45.7 and *Jer* 18.11, have to be understood "not [as] evils of ill-doing but evils of vengeance (*non peccatoria, sed ultoria*)" which are indeed "fit and proper for a judge (*congruentium iudici*)" (2.24.4). Yet, while his argument might solve the question of evil divine deeds, Tertullian is aware that it does not solve the issue of divine regret and therefore imagines the Marcionites countering that his argument is only "finding excuse for wickedness under the name of justice" and does not resolve the issue at hand as it would still leave the creator "open to blame for having become repentant of an act of justice which ought not to have been repented of'" (2.24.6). It appears that Tertullian recognizes the difficulty posed by the Marcionite claim as he clearly realises that "inasmuch as God neither commits an evil act nor condemns a good one, there is in him no room for repentance of either good or evil" (2.24.7). Eventually, Tertullian attempts to

resolve the matter by highlighting the "special character" of divine regret – *aliam formam diuinae paenitentiae* – which, in contrast to human regret (*si non ad humanas condiciones eam referas*), is neither caused by "lack of foresight (*improuidentia*)" nor divine inconsistency (*leuitate*) but has "to be understood as neither more nor less than a simple reversal of a previous decision (*simplex conuersio sententiae prioris*)" (2.24.8). In support, Tertullian notes that the Greek word for regret – assumed is μετάνοια – "is not derived from confession of wrongdoing, but is a compound word signifying change of mind" which "in God […] is directed by the impact of facts, themselves subject to variation" (2.24.8).[628]

III.2.3.3. Further unfitting issues

In the subsequent two chapters (2.25-27) Tertullian engages with further scriptural passages which were perceived by Marcion "to be instances of pettiness (*pusillitates*) and weakness (*infirmitates*) and inconsequence (*incongruentias*)" which ultimately revealed the Creator's nature to fall short of fittingness (2.25.1; cf. 2.27.1-2). When the Creator wondered about the whereabouts of Adam in *Gen* 3.9, this appeared to the Marcionites "as though he [sc. the creator; FG] did not know (*Scilicet ignorans*) where the man was" (2.25.1). Hence, this episode portrayed the Creator to be ignorant, another characteristic which would not befit a true God. Tertullian defends this passage in the same way Philo had done (*leg. all.* 3.51-54)[629], by advancing a philological argument[630], insisting that "we ought to read this [sc. the Creator's question; FG] in no simple manner (*simplici modo*), not with an interrogative intonation (*interrogatorio sono*), […] but in an insistent and incisive and accusative tone (*impresso et incusso et imputatiuo*)", wherefore the creator's question did not betray his ignorance but was really a proclamation of his "reproof and […] sorrow" about Adam's deed (2.25.2).[631] That nothing can be hidden from God is evident for Tertullian (2.25.2-3), who proceeds to assert that God's "intention was that examples (*exempla*) should be set before us that it is better to confess sins than to deny them (*confitendorum potius delictorum quam negandorum*)" (25.3) and hence only "feigned (*simulabitur*)

[628] "As then, though described as evils (*mala*), they are no matter of disrepute in a judge, nor by being so described do they stigmatize the judge as evil (*malum*), so also 'wickedness (*malitia*)' in this context must now be understood as that which, deriving from those judiciary evils (*malis iudiciariis*), is along with them proper to a judge (*competat iudici*). Also among the Greeks occasionally 'wickedness (*malitiae*)' is written for discomforts and injuries (*pro uexationibus et laesuris*), not for acts of malice (*non pro malignitatibus*): and so it is in this passage." (2.24.4-5).
[629] Meijering, *Gotteslehre*, 151.
[630] See similarly *ieiun.* 6.7 where Tertullian interprets the question as threat (Ibid.).
[631] This connects closely to the second question whether Adam had eaten from the tree (*Gen* 3.11), which could be perceived "as though he [the creator; FG] had any doubt about it (*scilicet incertus*)" (2.25.1). However, as had been noted by Braun, *Marcion II*, 148, n. 4. It is unlikely that Marcion employed this passage and it is rather Tertullian who had introduced it in order to support his further argument of the creator being benevolent in providing Adam with "the opportunity of willingly confessing his sin, […] making it less grievous" (2.25.3). Meijering makes the interesting observation that both Irenaeus and Tertullian likely mention the condemnation of Cain, who had not repented of his fratricide, (2.25.5) since Marcion believes him, alongside the Sodomites and the Egyptians, to have been saved during Christ's descent to hell (Meijering, *Gotteslehre*, 153.; note that Meijering's references to Harnack appear to be off).

ignorance" (2.25.5) in order to provide humankind with the opportunity to make use of their freedom and repent of their sins (2.25.3-5).

Similarly, Tertullian pre-emptively discusses the case of Sodom and Gomorra (*Gen* 18.21), which the Marcionites could have used as another indication of God's ignorance or to "scorn the idea of God coming down, as though he were unable to carry out his act of judgment unless he were to come down" (2.25.6). Such possible objections again operate with the notion of fittingness, with both the Creator's ignorance as well as his having to move to the particular location where he intends to enact his will falling short of divine fittingness.[632] Employing the same argument as earlier, Tertullian rejects the former, noting that the statement (*Gen* 18.21) has "need for such an intonation (*sonus pronuntiationis necessarius*) as will give expression to a comminatory, not a deliberative, meaning (*non dubitatiuum sed comminatiuum exprimens sensum*)", hence not expressing a supposed ignorance of God but his condemnation (2.25.6).[633] The descent of God is vindicated by Tertullian by simply pointing out that the Marcionites cannot deny this fact as they would otherwise "be attacking your own god, no less: for he too came down, to accomplish what it was his will to do" (2.25.6).

Two further objections raised by the Marcionites were the fact that the Creator "swears by himself" (26.1) and that he displayed wrath in response to the Israelites worshipping the golden calf (=*Ex* 32.10; *AM* 2.26.3-4). The former was probably taken by the Marcionites as evidence for the Creator's ignorance and self-aggrandizement. We recall our earlier observation that an oath had to be sworn by something superior to oneself, which in the Marcionites' understanding would have been the good God, hence confirming the Creator's ignorance. To, moreover, swear by himself in this ignorant state would for the Marcionites amount to the Creator's self-aggrandizement for swearing by himself, on the (false) assumption of already being the highest, would be pointless and hence self-aggrandizing. Tertullian, however, is keen to expose the logical flaws in the Marcionite argument: the Marcionites cannot fault the Creator for swearing by himself since they themselves believe that "he did not know there was another god" (2.26.1; cf. 1.11.9). And neither was the Creator's swearing by himself pointless self-aggrandizement for there were always people who did not acknowledge the sole existence of the Creator, "in that age worshippers of idols, in our days also heretics" (2.26.2), the latter, of course, envisaging the Marcionites.[634] Indeed, Tertullian accuses Marcion directly to "have forced God to do this" act of swearing an oath by himself (26.2). Yet, it seems that Tertullian subconsciously recognises that the act of God swearing by himself carries an element of unfittingness nonetheless and hence declares that "there is nothing unworthy of God (*nihil Deo indignum* est) in that which causes men to

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[632] We are of course reminded of Xenophanes who also rejected it as unfitting for God to move and instead proposed a god who acted through his mind without movement.
[633] Moreover, Tertullian confronts the Marcionites regarding the descent of God: "you will be attacking your own God, no less: for he too came down, to accomplish what it was his will to do" (2.25.6).
[634] Hence Tertullian charges Marcion himself to be the very cause for the creator's oath: "it is you, Marcion, who have [sic!] forced God to do this: for even so long ago God had foreknowledge of you" (2.26.2).

believe in God (*quod efficit deo credere*)" (2.26.2). This statement in effect subjects the common notions of what is deemed to befit God to the superior objective of prompting faith in mankind. As we shall see shortly, Tertullian will explicate and justify this reframing of the principle of fittingness by the notion of God's saving love for mankind.

The last objection brought forth by the Marcionites is the fact of God's wrath. Wrath being, as we had seen earlier, another characteristic often understood to not befit mankind, let alone a true God. The biblical story of God reacting in anger to the construction of the golden calf and threatening Israel's destruction was likely taken by the Marcionites as "God ma[king] himself little even in the midst of his fierce anger (*pusillus deus in ipsa etiam ferocia sua*)" (2.26.3). Additionally, they presumed Moses to be "a better person than his own God – depreciating, yes and even forbidding, his wrath (*irae*)" by offering of himself in place of the Israelites (2.26.3). While Tertullian claims that this act of Moses was really a prefiguration of Christ "who intercedes with the Father, and offers his own soul for the saving of the people" (2.26.4), he clarifies that on the literal level this incident was intended by God for pedagogical purposes which show that "that the servant might be in a position to make this request of his Lord" and hence that one "might learn how much is permitted to one who has faith" (2.26.4).[635]

III.3.4. Tertullian's Christian Notion of God-Fittingness Against Marcion

Having vindicated the various scriptural examples the Marcionites adduced from the Old Testament from the accusation of attesting to the unfitting nature of the Creator, Tertullian's argument culminates in a final confutation of Marcion by challenging him with a decidedly Christian notion of god-fittingness. As Tertullian states himself, this final argument is aimed at refuting any type of examples the Marcionites might adduce "as petty and weak and unworthy (*pusilla et infirma et indigna*), with intent to drag the Creator down (*ad destructionem Creatoris*)" (2.27.1).

Firstly, Tertullian's argues that

> "God would not have been able to enter into converse with men except by taking to himself those human thoughts and feelings (*humanos et sensus et adfectus suscepisset*) by which (*per quos*) he might reduce (*temperaret*) the force of his majesty, which human mediocrity was utterly unable to bear, by virtue of a humility (*humilitate*), unworthy indeed of himself (*sibi quidem indigna*) but necessary for man (*homini autem necessaria*), and consequently worthy even of God (*ita iam Deo Digna*), since nothing is so worthy of God as the salvation of man (*quia nihil tam dignum Deo quam salus hominis*) ." (2.27.1)

The first thing to notice is the frequency of fittingness language as well as the appearance of its positive and negative form – *dignus* and *indignus* – in this paragraph, which once more confirms the centrality

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[635] Braun, *Marcion II*, 159, n. 4.

of the issue of god-fittingness in the debate between Tertullian and Marcion. Tertullian begins by recalling one of the central tenets of Marcion's critique: the Creator's display of "human thoughts and feelings (*humanos et sensus et adfectus*)" (2.27.1). Arguing in what looks from the outset like a standard argument of the kind we had witnessed so far, Tertullian contends that God's taking on of "human thoughts and feelings (*humanos et sensus et adfectus*)" constituted an integral part of God's *humilitas*, his self-debasement, a moderation of "the force of his majesty", so that he could meet and interact with mankind. However, in what first appears like a concession to Marcion, Tertullian acknowledges that for God to do so would be "unworthy indeed of himself (*sibi quidem indigna*)" (2.27.1), only to continue in the most striking way, affirming this act to be "worthy even of God (*ita iam Deo Digna*) since nothing is so worthy of God as the salvation of man (*quia nihil tam dignum Deo quam salus hominis*)" (2.27.1). Thus, Tertullian maintains that the ultimate norm to evaluate the god-fittingness of something consists in whether or not it promotes the "salvation of man (*salus hominis*)" (2.27.1); the salvation of man being the objective that most befits God. Tertullian is fully aware that this reasoning is overtly grounded in the Christian understanding of Christ's incarnation, death, and resurrection having the purpose of effecting the salvation of mankind and acknowledges that if he were to debate "with heathens", he would have had to "discoursed [sc. this issue; FG] at greater length" (2.27.2). And despite the fact that with arguments such as the one from fittingness Marcion advances a non-Christian philosophical argument, Tertullian can appeal to the fact that the Marcionites themselves hold the "belief that a god has dwelt in human shape and in all the rest of what belongs to man's estate" (2.27.2).[636] Hence, Tertullian can claim that the Marcionites are "confuted by virtue of [their] own creed" (2.27.2), reminding them of the fact that according to their own teaching their good and alien God had "l[aid] low the high estate of his majesty as to make it subject to death, even the death of a cross" (2.27.2). Since the Marcionites did apparently not object to this fact on the grounds of fittingness, they should clearly be able to "agree that to our God [sc. the Creator; FG] also some few pettinesses were not inappropriate (*nostro quoque deo aliquas pusillitates congruisse*), being in any case less intolerable than the" crucifixion Marcion's good God had endured (2.27.2). Furthermore, since the crucifixion of Christ as well as the "pettinesses (*pusillitates*)" of the Creator could evidently both be considered to not befit God, Tertullian is able to claim that "the Christ who was made the sport of men's passions belongs to that same God whose human appearances and activities are the object of your [sc. the Marcionites'; FG] reproaches", and hence Christ and Creator have to belong together (2.27.3). Tertullian then goes even further and maintains that it was Christ and not the Creator who appeared to and spoke with the patriarchs and prophets (2.27.3).[637] According to Tertullian, Christ "is the Son of the Creator (*Filium*

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[636] The result is, Tertullian argues, that the Marcionites "are confuted by virtue of [their] own creed" and should not require "further persuasion that God has in fact made himself conformable to human condition" (2.27.2).
[637] As rightly pointed out by most commentators, this was a common understanding in the early church. Cf. Justin, *1Apol* 63, *Dial*. 56-62; Theophilus, *Ad Aut.* 2.22; Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer*. III.6.1 (and many more); Tertullian, *Adv. Prax*. (14-)16; etc. (see Ernest Evans, ed., *Tertullian: Adversus Marcionem* (trans. Ernest Evans; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972), 161, n. 1; Meijering, *Gotteslehre*, 158; Braun, *Marcion II*, 162, n. 1.). Tertullian advances

Creatoris), his Word (*sermonem eius*) whom by bringing him forth from himself (*quem ex semetipso proferendo*) he caused to be his Son (*filium fecit*) […], reducing him (*diminuens illum*) a little below the angels" in order to come into contact with mankind (2.27.3).[638] Hence, it was Christ and not the Creator to whom "these <acts and experiences> which you disapprove of as human" have to be attributed and "who comes down <to inquire into Sodom>, who asks questions <of Adam and of Cain>, who makes request <of Moses>, and swears with an oath" (2.27.4). Thus, Tertullian understands the various Old Testament stories in which the Creator-God appeared in somewhat human ways to be acts of Christ who was preparing himself for his incarnation and its consequences. Accordingly, these anthropomorphic stories of the Creator-God, who was in fact really the Christ-Logos, had the purpose, as Pohlenz aptly puts it, of "the pre-school through which the Logos of God prepared himself for his wandering and suffering here on earth".[639] Since it was thus the Christ-Logos who appeared in all of the Old Testament theophanies – or rather Christophanies – Tertullian is able to claim that

> "all the (attributes and activities) you [sc. the Marcionites; FG] make requisition of as worthy of God (*Deo digna*) are to be found in the Father (*habebuntur in Patre*), inaccessible to sight and contact (*inuisibili incongressibilique*), peaceable also (*et placido*), and, so to speak, a god philosophers can approve of (*philosophorum deo*)" (2.27.6),

whereas on the other hand,

> "all the things you repudiate as unworthy (*indigna reprehenditis*), are to be accounted to the Son (*deputabuntur in Filio*), who was both seen and heard, and held converse (*et uiso et audito et congresso*), the Father's agent and minister (*arbitro Patris et ministro*), who commingles in himself man and God (*miscente in semetipso hominem et deum*), in the miracles God (*in uirtutibus deum*), in the pettinesses man (*in pusillitatibus hominem*), so as to add as much to man as he detracts from God." (2.27.6).

Tertullian's statement might at first look like a concession to Marcion but unlike Marcion he does not assume two Gods with differing natures, one god-fitting and the other not, but assumes a duality within God by integrating the unfitting elements into God, be it only in the Christ-Logos. However, for Marcion to denounce these human traits of the Christ-Logos as unfitting is objected to by Tertullian on

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scriptural support for this claim by maintaining that "the Father has become visible to no man is the testimony of that gospel which you share with us, in which Christ says, *No one knoweth the Father save the Son*" (=*GLk* 10.22) (2.27.4) as well as the fact that "[i]t was he [sc. the Christ-Logos; FG] also who in the Old Testament had already declared, No man shall see God and live, thus pronouncing that the Father cannot be seen (*Patrem inuisibilem*), while with the Father's authority and in his name he himself was the God who was seen (*erat deus qui uidebatur*), the Son of God. So too among us God is accepted in the person of Christ, because in this way also he belongs to us." (2.27.5).

[638] As Meijernig notes Tertullian is here referencing *Ps* 8.5 which had been applied to Christ in *Hebr* 2.9. Cf. *Adv. Prax.* 23.5 (Meijering, *Gotteslehre*, 158.).

[639] Pohlenz, *Zorn*, 27–28. „Sie sind die Vorschule, mit der Gottes Logos sich für seinen Wandel und sein Leiden hier auf Erden vorbereitete".

the aforementioned premise that these are part of the divine plan for the salvation of mankind and thereby fitting for God. Thus, Tertullian attacks Marcion for "despis[ing] a God of that sort", namely one that has anthropomorphic traits, and questions whether Marcion actually holds to the central Christian claim "that God was crucified" (2.27.7).

Conclusion

As our discussion of Marcion through the lens of his critics – in particular Tertullian – has shown, at the core of Marcion's theology was an argument from fittingness. It was Marcion's reading of the Old Testament against the background of the concept of god-fittingness which formed the starting point for his theology. Hence, when encountering the God portrayed in the Old Testament's stories through the notion of god-fittingness, Marcion found this God to be wanting. The nature and deeds of this God fell short of what was considered to befit a true God. This God was described as evil, wrathful, cruel, and of an inconsistent character and hence utterly different to the good and peaceful god proclaimed by Christ who conformed to what was deemed to befit a true God. As a result, Marcion assumed there to be two gods that were utterly opposed to each other: one inferior and one superior. Against this view, Tertullian rejected Marcion's arguments from fittingness, pointing out that it contained inadequate conceptions of justice and goodness, and maintained that Marcion's reasoning exhibited logical mistakes. Ultimately, Tertullian challenged the idea of what should be considered god-fitting by subjecting the very notion to the core of the Christian message: the salvation of mankind effected through the incarnation and death of Christ.

Chapter 6: Ptolemy

Introduction

In this section my main argument is that Ptolemy's discussion of the nature of the law and the lawgiver in his *Letter to Flora* is heavily influenced by the principle of fittingness and has to be understood against the background of Marcion's thought in particular. While Ptolemy repudiates Marcion's denigration of the Old Testament law and the Old Testament God, whom Marcion believes to be an evil and unjust Demiurge, he acknowledges Marcion's objections to the Old Testament law and its implications for the nature of God but attempts to resolve them by a careful exegesis of the law.

Ptolemy's inquiry of the law and lawgiver is conducted through the hermeneutical lens of the sayings of the Saviour, whereas the argument itself is conducted by the application of the principle of fittingness. This argument from fittingness ultimately requires Ptolemy to introduce a further figure as the lawgiver in order to account for the unique nature of the Old Testament law. Thus, his meticulous exegesis allows Ptolemy to take Marcion's objections seriously, while rejecting his consequences and portraying himself as the better and more careful exegete.

I will begin by giving a brief introduction to the figure of Ptolemy as well as a brief outline of the structure and themes of his *Letter to Flora*. Secondly, I will investigate Ptolemy's use of the argument from fittingness to reject commonly held competing views on the lawgiver and creator of the world. Thirdly, I will examine Ptolemy's careful evaluation of the nature of the Old Testament law on the basis of the principle of fittingness. This will, fourthly, be followed by a consideration of the lawgiver and the necessity of his introduction on the basis of an argument from fittingness. Lastly, I will end with some closing remarks and a summary situating my findings in the broader context.

I. Ptolemy and Flora

In the 33rd chapter of his *Panarion*, a work against various "heresies", the fourth century bishop Epiphanius of Salamis, informs his readers of the teaching of the Ptolemaeans, the followers of the alleged Valentinian Ptolemy.[640] While Epiphanius's remarks largely represent a paraphrasing account

[640] We cannot discuss here any of the at times very complex questions relating to Ptolemy being a Valentinian, a pupil of Valentinus, or how the system found in Irenaeus' *Adv. Haer.* I.1-8.4 might relate to Ptolemy or be that of his pupils. For these issues see especially Einar Thomassen, *The Spiritual Seed: The Church of the "Valentinians"* (Nag Hammadi and Manichaean studies 60; Leiden: Brill, 2006), 9–22, 119–29, 494. Hippolytus describes Ptolemy, together with Heracleon as belonging to the "Italic" school – usually labelled "Western" school – of Valentinians which are alleged to have to disagreed with the "Eastern" school over the nature of Jesus' body (*Ref.* 6.35.6). See on this Ibid., 39–45. For Valentinus, the different Valentinian doctrines and their developments see generally the work by Christoph Markschies, *Valentinus Gnosticus? Untersuchungen zur valentinianischen Gnosis mit einem Kommentar zu den Fragmenten Valentins* (Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 65; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1992); Thomassen, *Seed*; Ismo Dunderberg, *Beyond Gnosticism: Myth, Lifestyle, and Society in the School of Valentinus* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008).

of Irenaeus' *Adv. Haer.* 1.12.1-3, he provides us with a unique and invaluable text: *Ptolemy's Letter to Flora*, the only primary source we have of Ptolemy.

How this letter was preserved and ended up with Epiphanius we do not know, and one can only speculate with Langerbeck whether it might initially have been preserved as part of martyrdom acts which eventually ended up in the hands of Epiphanius.[641]

With the earliest definite mention of Ptolemy appearing in Irenaeus' *Adversus Haereses* (*Adv*. *Haer*. I, *praef.* 2), we can assume as the letter's *terminus ante quem* the writing of Irenaeus' *Adversus Haereses* which is usually dated to around AD 180.[642] There is, however, the possibility that a reference in Justin Martyr's *Second Apology* might allow for not only an earlier but also more precise dating of Ptolemy. It was Adolf von Harnack who first suggested the possible identity between a certain Ptolemy mentioned in Justin's *2Apol* and the Ptolemy who penned the *Letter to Flora*. In his *2Apology* 2.1-20, Justin Martyr recounts the story of an unnamed Christian woman whose teacher Ptolemy was executed, along with two others, under Quintus Lollius Urbicus, the urban prefect (*praefectus urbi*) of Rome from 146 to 160,[643] on the charge of being Christian. The context that had led to these events lay in a dispute over a divorce between the Christian woman and her pagan husband. Subsequent scholars have highlighted the parallels between the two Ptolemys: both the letter as well as the martyrdom are set in Rome,[644] both figures are called Ptolemy,[645] are teachers,[646] and are likely of higher learning.[647] Additionally, when considering the unnamed woman and Flora, we can note that both will likely have

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[641] Hermann Langerbeck, "Zur Auseinandersetzung von Theologie und Gemeindeglauben in der römischen Gemeinde in den Jahren 135-165," in *Aufsätze zur Gnosis* (ed. Hermann Dörries; Abhandlungen der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen, philologisch-historische Klasse 3/69; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1967), 174. This view would assume the identity between the author of the *Letter to Flora* and the Christian martyr of the same name mentioned in Justin's *2Apol*. On this issue see below.
[642] See, however, more recently, Chiapparini who dates the writing of the *Grande Notice* to around AD 160-165. Giuliano Chiapparini, "Irenaeus and the Gnostic Valentinus: Orthodoxy and Heresy in the Church of Rome around the Middle of the Second Century," *Zeitschrift Für Antikes Christentum / Journal of Ancient Christianity* 18, no. 1 (2014): 110.
[643] Minns and Parvis, *Apologies*, 42.
[644] Gerd Lüdemann, "Zur Geschichte des ältesten Christentums in Rom. I. Valentin und Marcion. II. Ptolemäus und Justin," *Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der Älteren Kirche* 70, no. 1–2 (1979): 101. Another indication that Ptolemy may have been located in the Western Empire is Ptolemy's agreement with the Western text in instances like GMt 5.39 and 12.25 (Adolf von Harnack, *Der Brief des Ptolemäus an die Flora. Eine religiöse Kritik des Pentateuch im 2. Jahrhundert*, Sitzungsberichte der königlich preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften (Berlin, 1902), 530, n. 1. Nonetheless, the Western text is not exclusively found in the West of the Empire.
[645] Langerbeck, "Auseinandersetzung," 174; Lüdemann, "Geschichte," 102, with n.45. The evidentiary value of this fact has, however, been rightly questioned by Christoph Markschies, "New Research on Ptolemaeus Gnosticus," *Zeitschrift für antikes Christentum* 4, no. 2 (2000): 248, with n. 96.
[646] Lüdemann, "Geschichte," 101.
[647] Ibid. Lüdemann points to the artful composition of the *Letter to Flora* and the fact that Justin's Ptolemy will most likely have been educated himself since he was teaching a rich Roman lady whose wealth is evidenced by her servants and her husband's travel to Alexandria. Cf. Ibid., 101, n. 42.

been members of the wealthier higher social class.[648] A social class in which Christianity was just beginning to gain more followers.[649] In light of these facts, Gerd Lüdemann rightly asked "why of all things, around the same time within a class in which Christianity was meagrely represented at best, two different Christians with the same name appear in an at least similar position".[650] While obviously neither an identity between the two Ptolemies nor Flora and the unnamed woman can be conclusively proven, the above indicators suggest a possibility.[651] If we were to assume this identity to be the case, we would have to assume AD 153/154 as the *terminus ante quem* for the writing of the *Letter to Flora*.[652] Yet, regardless of the truth of this, all the characteristics regarding the status and education of Ptolemy and Flora, the possibly unnamed woman, we had observed earlier remain valid and important points irrespective of the question of identity.

I.1. The Letter, its Structure and Themes

I.1.1 The Structure and Main Themes of the Letter

The Letter thematically falls into two related segments. The first deals with the question of the nature of the Old Testament law, whereas the second considers the person of the lawgiver, his nature and relationship to other figures in the text. The use of the dihairetical method determines the structure of much of the argument. [653]

The *Letter to Flora* begins with Ptolemy raising the topic of Mosaic law to Flora and noting that many people have "discrepant opinions about it" (3.1), and it can be assumed that Flora had therefore asked Ptolemy for some clarification on the matter. The reason for these discrepant opinions is seen by Ptolemy as a lack of "accurate knowledge either of the Lawgiver himself or his commandments" (3.1). And it will be these two issues – the nature of the law and the nature of the lawgiver – which are the main subject of the subsequent discussion of Ptolemy's letter.

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[648] For Flora this can be seen in her having Ptolemy as her private teacher as well as Ptolemy's positive comments in *Letter to Flora* 3.1 and 7.2 regarding Flora's intellectual capabilities which indicate that she is likely a well-educated person. For the unnamed woman see the preceding footnote.
[649] Lüdemann, "Geschichte," 101, n. 43 with reference to Friedländer and Andresen. The first evidence of a Roman Christian in the highest circles of society may have been the daughter of a *consul suffectus*, Pomponia Graecina, around the year AD 57. See Peter Lampe, *From Paul to Valentinus: Christians at Rome in the First Two Centuries* (trans. Marshall D. Johnson; 1st Fortress Press ed.; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 196–97. However, Lampe calls it only "a very uncertain possibility" (p. 196). On the particular interest towards Christianity (as well as Judaism) and its proliferation among Roman upper-class women see Ibid., 146–47.
[650] Lüdemann, "Geschichte," 101, n. 43. Lüdemann notes that the likely objection of Justin's later denunciation of the Valentinians as false Christians in *Dial* 35.6 does not have to speak against an identification of the two Ptolemys since Justin could either have changed his mind in the interim years between the writing of the *Apology* and the *Dialogue* or he might not have considered Ptolemy to be a Valentinian. Cf. Ibid., 103, n. 51.
[651] In support of an identity are among others Lüdemann, "Geschichte," 100–111; Dunderberg, *Beyond Gnosticism*, 90–92.
Unconvinced of the identity are among others Markschies, "Research," 246–49; Thomassen, *Seed*, 494.
[652] For this dating of Justin' *Apology* see Ulrich, *Justin: Apologien*, 59–60.
[653] Löhr, "Auslegung des Gesetzes," 80–81, with n. 12; Markschies, "Research," 230–32.

In the first part of the letter, Ptolemy introduces and subsequently dismisses two commonly held and opposing views on the identity of the lawgiver (3.2-7): the belief that the law "was given by our God and Father" and the opposing view that "it was given by our adversary the devil, the author of corruption" (3.2). This is followed by an examination of the law, conducted via the dihairetical method. Ptolemy begins, in a first dihairesis, to triply divide the law (4.1-14). The result shows that while one part of the law is divine, it also contains human additions. The two human parts had been added by Moses and the elders of the people respectively. In a second dihairesis (5.1-6.6), Ptolemy proceeds to further scrutinize the divine part of the law which is shown to likewise exhibit a tripartite nature: There is the pure law, the Decalogue, which had been fulfilled by the Saviour (5.1; 5.3; 6.1), the "law intermingled with injustice", which is the *ius talionis*, which the Saviour abolished (5.1; 5.4-7; 6.2-3), and the "typical portion of the Law", the ceremonial and ritual laws, which the Saviour transformed (5.2; 5.8-15; 6.4-6). Lastly, in a third dihairesis (7.1-7), Ptolemy examines the nature of the lawgiver who is presented as an intermediate God since his nature places him between natures of the perfect and good Father and the evil and unjust Devil. This intermediate figure is also the Demiurge, the creator of the world, and his nature is characterised by a particular lower kind of justice in parallel with his law. His nature is further scrutinised in relation to that of the Devil and the perfect God. The letter is then concluded by the mention of a remaining open question and the opportunity of further insight for Flora regarding these issues (7.9-10).

As has become obvious from this overview, the main themes are the nature of the law and the nature of the lawgiver. These were two areas with which Marcion had taken issue in particular. As we had seen in the previous chapter, Marcion viewed the Old Testament law as displaying a lower wicked "justice" which in turn led him to assume the nature of its lawgiver, the Demiurge, to be characterised by this wickedness. Moreover, Marcion understood the Old Testament to attest to the inconsistent nature of the Demiurge. Since neither wickedness nor inconsistency were fitting attributes of divinity, Marcion assumed a sharp contrast between the good, benevolent, strange new God who had been proclaimed by Christ and the wicked and unjust Demiurge of the Old Testament. It is with this particular understanding of the law and its lawgiver that Ptolemy took issue and which he attempted to rectify in his letter.

II. The Law and Creation are neither the Devil's nor the Perfect Father's (3.1-6)

Ptolemy begins his argument that the false views in circulation regarding Mosaic law were occasioned by an apparent lack of "accurate knowledge either of the Lawgiver himself or his commandments" (3.1) by presenting and refuting two false but commonly held views. According to him, some people believe that the law "was given by our God and Father", whereas others hold the view that "it was given by our adversary the devil, the author of corruption" (3.2). Strikingly, Ptolemy adds the remark that the people who take the Devil to be the lawgiver, moreover, "ascribe the creation of the world to him (τὴν τοῦ

κόσμου προσάπτουσιν αὐτῷ δημιουργίαν), calling him the father and maker of this universe (πατέρα καὶ ποιητὴν τοῦτον λέγοντες εἶναι τοῦδε τοῦ παντός)" (3.2).[654] The first view is usually understood as one held by Christians as well as Jews, whereas the second one is commonly thought to be Marcion's.[655] However, since Marcion attributed neither the origin of the law nor the creation of the world to the Devil, scholars usually assume that Ptolemy "simplifies both positions for didactic reasons […] [and] gives an ideal-type reconstruction of two positions which both were, from his point of view, equally absurd."[656] We shall return to this question of whether a Marcionite position is in view or not in our discussion below.

The outline of these false opinions is followed by their refutation, which is conducted in a well-structured manner and following the same order of their initial introduction (3.4-6). The first view – that the lawgiver is the "God and Father" (3.2) – is refuted in 3.4, beginning with Οὔτε γὰρ (3.4). The second view – assuming the Devil to be the lawgiver – is rejected in 3.5, beginning with the words Οὔτ' αὖ πάλιν (3.5). Equally, a refutation of the additional notion that credited the Devil with the creation of the world is provided in 3.6. I shall argue that Ptolemy uses the principle of fittingness in all three of these refutations to which we shall now turn.

II.1. The Law does not Befit a Perfect God (3.4)

Ptolemy argues that "[i]t is evident, since logical" that the lawgiver cannot be "the perfect God and Father" by advancing two observations which both rest on an argument from fittingness and are explicated over the course of the letter (3.4).

Firstly, Ptolemy argues that the perfect God cannot have been the lawgiver since the law was "imperfect (ἀτελῆ) and in need of fulfilment by another person (τοῦ ὑφ' ἑτέρου πληρωθῆναι ἐνδεῆ)" (3.4). While Ptolemy will later elaborate on the background of this view, namely the Saviour fulfilling the law, it is clear that Ptolemy is advancing an argument from fittingness by highlighting the diametric opposition between the "imperfect" nature of the law and the "perfect" nature of God. It is from this opposition that Ptolemy suggests that the perfect God cannot have been the lawgiver. The implicit premise underlying Ptolemy's claim that a perfect God could not have given an imperfect law is an argument from fittingness which is based on the Platonic notion that like only begets like.[657] Ptolemy even explicitly refers to this notion himself towards the end of the letter when he, contemplating the nature of the perfect and good God, mentions that "it is the nature of the good (τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ φύσιν) to beget

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[654] As has been observed several times, the Devil is here ascribed not only the creation (δημιουργίαν) of the world (τοῦ κόσμου), but also given the well-known epithet of the Demiurge found in Plato's *Timaeus* 28c. See for example Markschies, "Research," 234–35. We will return to this issue below.
[655] Lüdemann, "Geschichte," 106–7, with p. 107, n. 63 for further references.
[656] Markschies, "Research," 234.
[657] For references see Winrich Löhr, "La doctrine de Dieu dans la lettre à Flora de Ptolémée," *RHPR*, no. 75 (1995): 189, n. 58. "La deuxième question évoque l'argument platonicien qu'il est dans la nature du bien créer des biens semblables." (p. 189).

(γεννᾶν) and bring forth (προφέρειν) its like and its own kind (τὰ ὅμοια ἑαυτῷ καὶ ὁμοούσια)” (7.8). Therefore, the argument implicit in Ptolemy’s statement is that ascribing an imperfect law to a perfect God whose nature could only have brought forth a perfect law is violating the principle of fittingness. Secondly, the further reason given by Ptolemy to demonstrate that the law could not have been given by the perfect God is found in the fact that the law supposedly

> “contains ordinances (προστάξεις) inappropriate (ἀνοικείας) to the nature (φύσει) and intention (γνώμῃ) of such a God” (3.4).[658]

While at this point Ptolemy leaves it completely open which particular “ordinances (προστάξεις)” of the law he envisages as unfitting (ἀνοικείας) for the “nature (φύσει) and intention (γνώμῃ)” of the perfect God, the later discussion reveals this to be the *ius talionis*, the law of equal retribution (cf. 5.4-5).

II.2. The Law does not Befit the Devil (3.5)

Having thus excluded the perfect God as lawgiver by appeal to the principle of fittingness, Ptolemy continues his argument (Οὔτ’ αὖ πάλιν) (3.5) with a refutation of the second opinion which assumes the Devil to be the lawgiver. Once again, Ptolemy advances an argument from fittingness, considering the nature of the proposed lawgiver in comparison to that of the law. He argues that anyone who

> “attribute[s] to the iniquity of the adversary (τῇ τοῦ ἀντικειμένου ἀδικίᾳ) a Law which abolishes iniquity (<τὸ> ἀδικεῖν ἀναιροῦντα) […] cannot draw inferences – in accordance with our Saviour’s words, ‘A house or city divided against itself cannot stand.’” (3.5).

The main thrust of Ptolemy’s argument is, just as in 3.4, that there ought to be a fitting correspondence between the nature of the law and the nature of the lawgiver.[659] As becomes apparent in the subsequent discussion, the law “which abolishes iniquity” is the *ius talionis* (cf. 5.4-5). And since its intention is to abolish injustice,[660] it is not fitting, Ptolemy argues, to assume it had been introduced by the Devil as the Devil’s nature is characterised by injustice and therefore a law that restricts injustice cannot have been introduced by him.

Ptolemy further substantiates his argument by quoting a saying of the Saviour: “A house or city divided against itself cannot stand” (3.5). This saying is similar to one of Jesus’ sayings found in *GMt* 12.25.[661]

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[658] 3.4: Οὔτε γὰρ ὑπὸ τοῦ τελείου θεοῦ καὶ πατρὸς φαίνεται τοῦτον τεθεῖσθαι (ἑπόμενος γάρ ἐστιν), ἀτελῆ τε ὄντα καὶ τοῦ ὑφ’ ἑτέρου πληρωθῆναι ἐνδεῆ, ἔχοντά τε προστάξεις ἀνοικείας τῇ τοῦ τοιούτου θεοῦ φύσει τε καὶ γνώμῃ.

[659] This finds implicit support in Williams’ translation which appears to acknowledge the continuation of the argument from 3.4 and therefore inserts “is it appropriate“ into his translation of 3.5: “Nor, again, <is it appropriate> to attribute to the iniquity of the adversary a Law which abolishes iniquity”.

[660] In which way the *ius talionis* is understood to “abolish iniquity” will be discussed below.

[661] While Standhartinger (Angela Standhartinger, “Ptolemaeus und Justin zur Autorität der Schrift,” in *Ein neues Geschlecht? Entwicklungen des frühchristlichen Selbstbewusstseins* (ed. Markus Lang; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2014), 137, with n. 72.) is right in her observation that the Saviour’s statement quoted by Ptolemy in

There it appears in the context of Jesus being accused by the Pharisees of being in league with the Devil due to successfully conducting an exorcism (cf. *GMt* 12.24). Jesus refutes this allegation by pointing out the logical error contained within the Pharisees' accusation (*GMt* 12.25-29). To do so, he invokes as the conditional premise for his argument the well-known[662] experience that a kingdom or house containing internal divisions will not last. Jesus then demonstrates the Pharisees' accusation to fall short, for "[i]f Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself" which would result in the downfall of his kingdom (*GMt* 12.26). Since it is assumed, however, that the kingdom of Satan is still standing, the Pharisees' accusation must be false. Thus, by quoting these words of the Saviour, Ptolemy's applies the logic of Jesus' reasoning to his own argument. Since the Devil is characterised by iniquity, it would not be fitting for him to introduce a law that "abolishes iniquity" (3.5), just like Jesus had already shown that it would not be fitting for the Devil to assist in exorcisms either.

II.3. The Creation does not Befit the Devil (3.6)

As we had seen in our earlier discussion, there were many Greco-Roman as well as Jewish and Christian figures who thought of creation – the creative act as well as the created product itself – as something not befitting a transcendent good God. While various modest options were taken by these intellectuals to resolve this issue, it was also possible to take a more radical solution which simply did not ascribe creation to a good God or similar benevolent entity but ascribed it to an inferior or even unashamedly evil entity.

Having dismissed the view of the Devil as lawgiver, Ptolemy continues with a blunt refutation of the accompanying radical opinion of the evil Devil as creator of the world. In order to disprove the notion of the Devil as the creator of the world, Ptolemy appeals to the authority of scripture. This time, however, he appeals not to the words of the Saviour but quotes from the words of "the apostle (ὁ ἀπόστολος)" (3.6). Ptolemy states:

> "And further, depriving the liars beforehand of their unfounded wisdom, the apostle says that the creation of the world is […][his own; FG][663], that all things were made by him and without him nothing is made (Ἔτι τε τὴν τοῦ κόσμου δημιουργίαν <αὐτοῦ>[664] ἰδίαν λέγει εἶναι τά τε

3.5 (οἰκία γὰρ ἢ πόλις μερισθεῖσα ἐφ' ἑαυτὴν ὅτι μὴ δύναται στῆναι) resembles parts of both *GMt* 12.25 (πᾶσα βασιλεία μερισθεῖσα καθ' ἑαυτῆς ἐρημοῦται καὶ πᾶσα πόλις ἢ οἰκία μερισθεῖσα καθ' ἑαυτῆς οὐ σταθήσεται) as well as *GMk* 3.24-25 (καὶ ἐὰν βασιλεία ἐφ' ἑαυτὴν μερισθῇ, οὐ δύναται σταθῆναι ἡ βασιλεία ἐκείνη· καὶ ἐὰν οἰκία ἐφ' ἑαυτὴν μερισθῇ, οὐ δυνήσεται ἡ οἰκία ἐκείνη σταθῆναι), it should be noted that the reading ἐφ' ἑαυτὴν is attested for *GMt* 12.25 by Codex Bezae as Harnack had pointed out. Moreover, Harnack points out that Ptolemy's μὴ δύναται στῆναι for *GMt*'s 12.25 οὐ σταθήσεται "ist lediglich als eine gedächtnismässige Unsicherheit zu beurtheilen". See Harnack, *Brief des Ptolemäus*, 529.

[662] For Greek, Roman, and Jewish attestations of this idea see Udo Schnelle and Manfred Lang, eds., *Neuer Wettstein. Texte zu den Evangelien und zur Apostelgeschichte, Band 1. Teilband 1.2-2, Texte zum Matthäusevangelium, Matthäus 11-28* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2022), 61–64.

[663] See the subsequent footnote on this issue.

[664] Williams follows this emendation and translates "the world is <the Saviour's>". The conjecture is that of Holl and has been retained in the edition of Gilles Quispel, *Ptolémée: Lettre à Flora: Analyse, Texte Critique,*

> πάντα δι' αὐτοῦ γεγονέναι καὶ χωρὶς αὐτοῦ γεγονέναι οὐδὲν ὁ ἀπόστολος, προαποστερήσας τὴν τῶν ψευδηγορούντων ἀνυπόστατον σοφίαν), and that creation is the work of a righteous God who hates iniquity, not of a god of corruption (καὶ οὐ φθοροποιοῦ θεοῦ, ἀλλὰ δικαίου καὶ μισοπονήρου)" (3.6).

What the apostle had asserted was that "that the creation of the world (τὴν τοῦ κόσμου δημιουργίαν) is his own (ἰδίαν), that all things (τά τε πάντα) were made by him (δι' αὐτοῦ γεγονέναι) and without him nothing is made (χωρὶς αὐτοῦ γεγονέναι οὐδὲν)," (3.6). Since the phrase "all things were made by him and without him nothing is made" (3.6) is an almost exact quotation of *GJn* 1.3, the apostle in question is no one else than the author of the *Gospel of John*. Furthermore, already Holl and Harnack had detected a further Johannine reference, assuming the word "ἰδίαν" to most likely allude to the Logos' coming into his own (εἰς τὰ ἴδια ἦλθεν) in *GJn* 1.11.[665] Additionally, Tuomas Rasimus recently highlighted that the phrase – "the creation of the world (τὴν τοῦ κόσμου δημιουργίαν) is his own (ἰδίαν)" – should also be understood as containing "a paraphrase of verse 10"[666] of the *Gospel of John* where ὁ κόσμος δι' αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο (*GJn* 1.10) conveys the Logos to be the agent of creation. Further support for a reference to *GJn 1.10-11* is found in Rasimus's observation that the "apostolic quotation is divided into two parts by the article τε preceding both parts of the quotation (i.e. 10-11 and 3), and this suggests that also the first part (10-11) is meant to be an actual quotation from John, albeit a free one."[667]

Having established the content of Ptolemy's Johannine quotation, there are two remaining questions that need to be answered in order to understand how this appeal to the Johannine text is supposed to demonstrate that creation should neither be understood in negative terms nor be seen as the work of the Devil. Namely, to whom is this Johannine reference meant to apply and does the principle of fittingness play a role within this argument?

II.3.1. The Johannine references: who is the creative agent?

The question of reference is probably the most debated issue in recent discussions of *Ptolemy's Letter to Flora*. Just prior to our paragraph in question, Ptolemy had refuted the opinion that the Devil is the lawgiver with a quotation from *GMt* 12.25, ending the paragraph 3.5 with the words ὁ σωτὴρ ἡμῶν ἀπεφήνατο (3.5). He then continues – as can be seen in the use of Ἔτι – to challenge the related assumption that the Devil is, additionally, the creator of the world (3.6). This is achieved by an allusion

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Traduction, Commentaire et Index Grec (2nd ed.; SC 24; Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1966), 52. However, Löhr, "La doctrine de Dieu," 181 has demonstrated that it has to be rejected and is followed by most recent commentators in this decision. Cf. Markschies, "Research," 240, n. 65. Herbert Schmid, "Ist der Soter in Ptolemäus' Epistula ad Floram der Demiurg? Zu einer These von Christoph Markschies," *Zeitschrift für Antikes Christentum* 15, no. 2 (2011): 257, n. 41. I concur and translate "ἰδίαν" as "his own".

[665] See also Lüdemann, "Geschichte," 108, n. 73. Most recently Tuomas Rasimus, "Ptolemaeus and the Valentinian Exegesis of John's Prologue," in *The Legacy of John: Second-Century Reception of the Fourth Gospel* (ed. Tuomas Rasimus; Leiden: Brill, 2010), 150.

[666] Rasimus, "Ptolemaeus," 150.

[667] Ibid.

to *GJn* 1.10-11 and a quotation of *GJn* 1.3, both of which contain unspecified references, namely, the word ἰδίαν and the two instances of αὐτοῦ. The Johannine references are then followed by the statement that "creation is the work of a righteous God who hates iniquity, not of a god of corruption (καὶ οὐ φθοροποιοῦ θεοῦ, ἀλλὰ δικαίου καὶ μισοπονήρου)" (3.6). We therefore find two possible referents for the Johannine ἰδίαν and the two instances of αὐτοῦ in the immediate context: they can either be understood as anaphoric references to the Saviour whose words Ptolemy had just quoted in 3.5 or as cataphoric references to the "righteous God who hates iniquity" and to whom creation is ascribed right after the allusion and quotation from the *Gospel of John* (3.6). Additionally, it should not be forgotten that we also have the Johannine Logos as the demiurgic agent in the quoted text, and we can therefore assume an equation of the demiurgic Johannine Logos with either of the two possible referents just mentioned, the Saviour or the righteous God.

The more recent debate has been ignited by a proposal by Christoph Markschies which argues that "[t]he context of the phrase philologically leaves no doubt that the 'creator of the universe' mentioned in the Johannine text 'is identical with the σωτήρ'" and that a "grammatically definite connection of the demiurge and the σωτήρ" has to be assumed.[668] Hence, Markschies considers the σωτήρ mentioned at the end of 3.5 to be the referent of ἰδίαν as well as the two instances of αὐτοῦ in 3.6, thus making the σωτήρ the demiurgic agent mentioned in the Johannine passages. Furthermore, since the *Gospel of John* assumes the Logos to be the subject of the verses quoted by Ptolemy, Markschies suggests that this "citation of John does not only indicate the identity of the demiurge and the σωτήρ (saviour), but also the identity of the λόγος with these two."[669] Up to this point, we can agree with Markschies.

However, Markschies also assumes that the phrase at the end of 3.6 – "creation is the work of a righteous God who hates iniquity, not of a god of corruption" is simply a further description of the Johannine demiurgic agent, whom Markschies simply calls "demiurge", and whom he had just identified with the Saviour. As we will show, however, this cannot be the case. Rather, this reference refers to a different entity who is distinct from the Saviour, the just Demiurge. Since Markschies, however, understands this phrase as a further description, he identifies the Saviour not only with the Johannine demiurgic Logos but also with the just Creator-God mentioned here.[670] Markschies, then proceeds to consider all of the later descriptions of this just God in the letter and believes the saviour-demiurge to be "set off against the 'complete god and father' to whom 'goodness' is attributed. Thus, the soter-demiurge is a God of second order."[671]

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[668] Markschies, "Research," 240. If I understand Markschies correctly, he understands the word "demiurge" to refer to the *creating entity present in the Johannine text*. This figure is, however, as we will argue, different from the Demiurge, the just God, mentioned in the rest of the text.
[669] Ibid., 241.
[670] Markschies writes: "The σωτήρ, who created the universe, is then described as a "just god who hates evil" (3,6: ἀλλὰ δικαίου καὶ μισοπονήρου)." Ibid.
[671] Ibid.

This reading has, however, been rightly critiqued by Rasimus and Schmid who have both demonstrated that several statements in the letter speak against an equation of the Saviour and the just God mentioned at the end of 3.6.[672] This is demonstrated by the close relationship of the Saviour and the perfect God (3.7; 7.5); the latter of whom is utterly distinct from the just Demiurge (7.6).[673] Since the lawgiver is – as Ptolemy reveals towards the end of the letter – the just Demiurge (7.3-5), especially statements that illustrate the relationship between the Saviour and the law are indicative of a distinction between the Saviour and the just Demiurge. The Saviour is said to have abolished one part of law, namely the *ius talionis* (5.1; 5.7; 6.2), which is said to not have befitted his nature (5.1), as well as to have fulfilled another part of the law, namely the decalogue (5.1; 5.3; 6.1).[674] Assuming an identity between the Saviour and the Demiurge, the latter of whom Ptolemy clearly considers to be the lawgiver, it appears rather unlikely that the Saviour would have either abolished or fulfilled his own law. While Markschies is right to take the references of the demiurgic agent, the Johannine logos, namely the ἰδίαν and the two instances of αὐτοῦ, to refer to the Saviour mentioned in 3.5, he is wrong to read the phrase speaking of a "righteous (δικαίου) God who hates iniquity (μισοπονήρου)" (3.6) as a further description of this demiurgic Saviour-Logos. Rather, the just God mentioned here is a separate entity who is also credited with creation, both here as well as in 7.4. It therefore appears that Ptolemy ascribes a role in creation, demiurgic agency, to the Saviour-Logos, while at the same time also stating that "creation is the work of a righteous God": a God who is distinct from the Saviour-Logos (3.6). Hence, since both of these figures are ascribed a role in creation but cannot be the same person, the remaining question is how we have to conceive of their relationship in the process of creation. Since Ptolemy does not give us any further clues in this regard in his letter, we will have to look at other Valentinian texts for some insights.

II.3.2. Heracleon – A Parallel Account of Creation

The first to adduce further examples of Valentinian cosmology was Quispel. He had, moreover, also noted the fact that "dans la première partie de cette phrase le Christ est nommé comme créateur du monde et que, dans la seconde partie, c'est Iahvé qui est appelé créateur du monde."[675] Realising that at a surface level "la phrase soit incomprehensible"[676], he attempted to explain the process of creation with reference to other accounts of Valentinian cosmology, ultimately claiming that "*la création du monde est l'œuvre du Christ et de Iahvé"*.[677] Although Quispel's assessment is correct, the texts adduced by him as well as his explanation are not precise. Among the texts cited by Quispel are two reports by Irenaeus (*Adv. Haer.* I.4.5; I.8.5) as well as two passages from the Valentinians Theodotus (*Exc.* 45.3)

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[672] Rasimus, "Ptolemaeus," 150. And especially Schmid, "Soter."
[673] Schmid, "Soter," 263–67.
[674] Rasimus, "Ptolemaeus," 150; Schmid, "Soter," 263–67.
[675] Quispel, *Ptolémée: Lettre à Flora: Analyse, Texte Critique, Traduction, Commentaire et Index Grec*, 77. ("in the first part of this sentence Christ is named as creator of the world and that in the second part it is Yahweh who is called creator of the world").
[676] Ibid. ("the sentence is incomprehensible").
[677] Ibid., 78. ("the creation of the world is the work of Christ and Yahweh"). Italics in original.

and Heracleon (*frag.* 1).[678] Whilst all these texts do indeed deal with cosmology, Quispel meshed together various – at times distinctly different – versions of Valentinian interpretation of the Johannine prologue and speaks more broadly of a "mythe valentinien de la création du monde" which posits three demiurgic agents.[679] Whether Ptolemy assumed such a tripartite cosmological scheme needs, however, to remain open "since he nowhere in the *Letter* alludes to the myth of Sophia".[680]

Moreover, the only one of the texts adduced by Quispel that can count as an accurate parallel to Ptolemy's interpretation given in his *Letter to Flora* is the fragment by Heracleon.[681] The Valentinian Heracleon wrote a commentary on the *Gospel of John,* parts of which have been preserved due to Origen's engagement with Heracleon's interpretation in his own commentary on John.[682] There Origen informs us that Heracleon

> "understands "all things were made through him" in a peculiar way when he says, "The one who provided the creator with the cause for making the world (Τὸν τὴν αἰτίαν παρασχόντα τῆς γενέσεως τοῦ κόσμου τῷ δημιουργῷ), that is the Word (τὸν λόγον ὄντα), is not the one 'from whom (ἀφ' οὗ),' or 'by whom (ὑφ' οὗ),' but (ἀλλὰ) the one 'through whom (δι' οὗ)', taking what has been written contrary to the customary usage of the phrase" (*frag.* 1 (= Origen. In Jo. II 14:102).[683]

The distinction of causes that Heracleon draws in this comment might appear strange to us now but was in fact a common philosophical distinction of the causes present in the process of creation. What is now often termed as "prepositional metaphysics" simply designated the philosophical "use of prepositional phrases to refer to the various causes".[684] While the search for causes had been going on long before Plato and Aristotle, it was especially these two thinkers who had a major impact on aitiology. Aristotle had equated causes with principles (cf. *Metaph.* V 1.1013a16) and postulated four causes: the material (τὸ ἐξ οὗ γίνεταί), the formal (τὸ εἶδος καὶ τὸ παράδειγμα), the efficient (ἡ ἀρχὴ τῆς μεταβολῆς ἡ πρώτη

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[678] Ibid., 77–79.
[679] Ibid., 77–78, quote on p. 77. ("Valentinian myth of the creation of the world"). See on this issue Ansgar Wucherpfenning, *Heracleon Philologus: Gnostische Johannesexegese im zweiten Jahrhundert* (WUNT 142; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002), 120, n. 79. Moreover, as Wucherpfenning rightly pointed out *Adv. Haer*. I.4.5 is actually an exegesis of *Col* 1.16 and not *GJn* 1.3.
[680] Thomassen, *Seed*, 123. (italics in original).
[681] Thomassen also wants to accept *Exc*. 45.3 as a parallel (Ibid., 123.). But already Elaine Pagels demonstrated that *Exc*. 45.3 displays a different interpretation of *GJn* 1.3. (Cf. Elaine H. Pagels, *The Johannine Gospel in Gnostic Exegesis: Heracleon's Commentary on John* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1973), 23–35, see also the helpful table on p. 35.).
[682] On the question whether Heracleon is a Valentinian see Michael Kaler and Marie-Pierre Bussières, "Was Heracleon a Valentinian? A New Look at Old Sources," *H. Theolo. Review* 99, no. 3 (2006): 275–89.
[683] The translation is found in Ronald E. Heine, *Origen: Commentary on the Gospel According to John: Book 1-10* (Fathers of the Church Series 80; Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1989), 121. Origen goes on to say: "For if the truth of things were as he understands it, it would have had to be written that all things have been made by the Word through the creator, and not contrariwise through the Word by the creator".
[684] Boys-Stones, *Platonist Philosophy*, 89.

ἢ τῆς ἠρεμήσεως), and the final cause (τὸ οὗ ἕνεκα) (*Metaph. V 2,* cf. *Phys*. II.3).[685] Although "Aristotle d[id] not associate prepositional phrases with the causes in a technical way", he used "prepositional phrases in association with two causes: the material cause is 'the from which' (τὸ ἐξ οὗ) and the final cause is 'the on account of which' (τὸ οὗ ἕνεκα)."[686]

Returning to Heracleon, we can now see how he understands the Johannine prologue. Heracleon reads the prologue in the philosophical context of prepositional metaphysics, associating the Logos with one cause and rejecting his ascription with two other causes. The two causes rejected are "from whom (ἀφ' οὗ)" and "by whom (ὑφ' οὗ)". The rejecting of the prepositional phrase "from whom (ἀφ' οὗ)", excludes the Logos from being the material cause.[687] And the exclusion of the "by whom (ὑφ' οὗ)" denies the Logos being the efficient cause.[688] While the association of the Logos with the prepositional phrase "through whom (δι' οὗ)" would usually suggest an instrumental role of the Logos, this is not the case. Rather, Heracleon understands the Logos to be "[t]he one who provided the creator with the cause for making the world (Τὸν τὴν αἰτίαν παρασχόντα τῆς γενέσεως τοῦ κόσμου τῷ δημιουργῷ)". Hence, the "δι' οὗ" is taken to refer to the Logos' role of providing "the cause (τὴν αἰτίαν)" for the world's creation. The actual instrument through which the creation of the world is conducted is, however, the Demiurge.[689] As we had seen in our earlier section, it was widely known from the *Timaeus* that it was the goodness of the Demiurge which had prompted the Demiurge to create the world by imposing order (*Tim.* 29de). Consequently, the assertion that it was indeed the Logos who had caused the Demiurge to create, resulted, as Wucherpfenning had rightly observed, in the identification of God's goodness and the Logos and the fact that "die Erlösung, die durch den personifizierten Logos, den σωτήρ, bewirkt wird, der Erschaffung der Welt vorgeordnet [wird]."[690] This reading of δι' οὗ is, however, immediately critiqued by Origen who points out that such an understanding of δι' οὗ is "contrary to the customary usage of the phrase (παρὰ τὴν ἐν τῇ συνηθείᾳ φράσιν)".

Furthermore, Heracleon believes that

> "[t]he Word himself did not create (ἐποίει) as though under the impulse of another (ὑπ' ἄλλου ἐνεργοῦντος), that the phrase, 'through him (δι' αὐτοῦ),' should be understood in this way,"" but

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685 For Aristotle's causes see: *Phys*. 2.3 (194b-95a): 2.7 (198a); *Metaph*. 1.3.1 (933a-b); 5.2.1-3 (1013a-b): *APo*. 2.11 (94a 20-24). They are discussed in *Phys*. 2.3-9 (194b-200b). See Gregory E. Sterling, "Prepositional Metaphysics in Jewish Wisdom Speculation and Early Christian Liturgical Texts," *SPhiloA* 9 (1997): 220–21; Friedemann Buddensiek, "aition," ed. Christoph Horn and Christof Rapp, *Wörterbuch der antiken Philosophie* (München: C.H. Beck, 2008).

686 Sterling, "Prepositional Metaphysics in Jewish Wisdom Speculation and Early Christian Liturgical Texts," 221.

687 Wucherpfenning, *Heracleon Philologus*, 145–46.

688 Ibid., 146–47.

689 Ibid., 147–51.

690 Ibid., 150. "Die Güte Gottes ist mit dem Logos identifiziert. Damit wird die Erlösung, die durch den personifizierten Logos, den σωτήρ, bewirkt wird, der Erschaffung der Welt vorgeordnet.".

> another created (ἕτερος ἐποίει) under his impulse (αὐτοῦ ἐνεργοῦντος)" (*frag*. 1 (Orig. In Jo. II 14:103).

As Wucherpfenning has shown, Heracleon differentiated between ποιέω and ἐνεργέω. The former denotes the direct working on matter, whereas the latter is of Aristotelian provenance and denotes the unmoved mover's initiating act of creation.[691] To be sure, both actions are part of the process of creation. The difference, however, lies in the extent to which each agent is physically involved in the creative process. The Logos, Heracleon argues, cannot be the direct creator of the world but is only the originator who initiates the process of creation which is conducted by another agent, the Demiurge.

However, the reason why Heracleon does not suppose the Logos to be the instrument in creation is based on the principle of fittingness. This can be witnessed in *frag*. 11 where Heracleon explains the fact that the Saviour was unable to work in Capernaum (*GJn 2.12*) by noting that

> "Capharnaum means these most remote places of the cosmos (ταῦτα τὰ ἔσχατα τοῦ κόσμου), these material realms (ταῦτα τὰ ὑλικὰ) into which he descended. And because the place is alien (διὰ τὸ ἀνοίκειον), he says, he is not said to have done or said anything in it."[692]

The concern that is in the background is the view which saw matter as something utterly distinct and unfitting for a transcendent God to interact with. Thus, it was not fitting to believe that the transcendent God could engage with transient and material matter.[693] With Heracleon's understanding of *GJn* 1.3 in mind, we can return to Ptolemy's *Letter to Flora*. Now, Ptolemy's initially strange sentence that declared that "the creation of the world is his own" – that is the Saviour's – and that "all things were made by him and without him nothing is made" (3.6), while also stating that "creation is the work of a righteous God" – who is not the Saviour – becomes comprehensible. Just like in the case of Heracleon, the Saviour and the Demiurge probably formed a "strukturierte Handlungseinheit" in the process of creation: the Saviour providing the Demiurge with the cause to create and the Demiurge executing this prompt.[694]

II.3.3. The Argument from Fittingness in 3.6

As we have observed, in order to refute the idea that it was the Devil, the "god of corruption (φθοροποιοῦ θεοῦ)" (3.6), who had created the world, Ptolemy invoked Johannine passages which ascribed a role in creation to the Saviour-Logos, thereby excluding the Devil from being the creator. However, I argue that in the background is also an argument from fittingness. This argument is found in Ptolemy's allusion to *GJn* 1.10-11 in his loose paraphrase of these verses in 3.6. The paraphrase reads "the creation of the world was his own (τὴν τοῦ κόσμου δημιουργίαν ἰδίαν)" (3.6). It distils the thought of the world's creation in *GJn* 1.10 – "the world came into being through him (ὁ κόσμος δι' αὐτοῦ

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[691] Ibid., 151–56.
[692] *Frag*. 11 (Orig. In Jo. X 11:48).
[693] Wucherpfenning, *Heracleon Philologus*, 61–64, 148–50.
[694] The phrase is that of Ansgar Wucherpfenning. See Ibid., 158–60.

ἐγένετο) – into "τὴν τοῦ κόσμου δημιουργίαν" and combines it with an allusion to *GJn* 1.11a – "He came to what was his own (εἰς τὰ ἴδια ἦλθεν)" – which is encapsulated in the word "ἰδίαν". Generally, the word ἴδιος can be translated as "one's own" as well as "appropriate". This latter rendering denotes fittingness and is hence very close to words such as οἰκεῖος.[695] Moreover, the opposite of ἴδιος is ἀλλότριος, a word which – while generally meaning strange or foreign – we will also encounter later in the text with its additional aspect of denoting unfittingness (cf. 5.1).

Considering that both preceding arguments used arguments from fittingness to dismiss false views regarding the lawgiver (3.4-5), it appears likely that Ptolemy might have continued his argument along the same lines – arguing from fittingness – in his attempt to dismiss the Devil as the creator of the world. This allows us to read ἴδιος as denoting fittingness if it were to make for a convincing reading overall. And indeed, it does. By quoting *GJn* 1.3 Ptolemy already demonstrated that the Saviour-Logos played a role in creation – "all things were made by him (δι' αὐτοῦ γεγονέναι) and without him nothing is made" (3.6) – but by additionally alluding to a combination of *GJn* 1.10-11, Ptolemy also made it clear that the act of creation was an act befitting the Saviour – τὴν τοῦ κόσμου δημιουργίαν ἰδίαν (3.6).

II.3.4. Creation, Providence, and its Cause

Furthermore, Ptolemy is also keen to emphasise the benevolent character of the Demiurge's providence. Something he is explicitly asserting against people who believe the evil Devil to be the creator of the world. He contends that such people "do not grasp the cause/reason of the Creator's providence (τῆς προνοίας τοῦ δημιουργοῦ μὴ αἰτίαν λαμβανομένων) and are blinded, not only in the eye of the soul, but in the eye of the body as well." (3.6)[696] As we can see, Ptolemy speaks more specifically of the cause/reason of the Demiurge's providence as well as more broadly the manifestation of this providence in the created world. We shall see that the two are clearly linked.

In the first part, Ptolemy states in effect that the providence of the Demiurge has an αἰτία, a cause.[697] Now, this is of course reminiscent of Ptolemy's understanding of *GJn* 1.3 as a joint creative act of Saviour-Logos and Demiurge for which we had argued above. There we had drawn on Heracleon who had understood *GJn* 1.3 in a likewise manner. Heracleon spoke of the Saviour-Logos as "[t]he one who provided the creator with the cause for making the world (Τὸν τὴν αἰτίαν παρασχόντα τῆς γενέσεως τοῦ κόσμου τῷ δημιουργῷ)" (*frag*. 1). While the word αἰτία was not present in Ptolemy's discussion of *GJn*

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[695] See for a close use of both words for example Clement, *Protrep*., 6.68.3: "ὁμολογοῦσιν ἕνα τε εἶναι θεόν, ἀνώλεθρον καὶ ἀγένητον τοῦτον, ἄνω που περὶ τὰ νῶτα τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ἐν τῇ ἰδίᾳ καὶ οἰκείᾳ περιωπῇ ὄντως ὄντα ἀεί".

[696] Modified. Williams: "take no account of the Creator's providence" (3.6).

[697] The creator whose providence Ptolemy mentions here is the aforementioned just Demiurge. Not only has he just been mentioned, but only he is labelled δημιουργός in the letter.
Moreover, only in the Johannine references is the Saviour ascribed δημιουργία. But never is he described as δημιουργός. Another indication of the Demiurge being the one referred to is that we can witness his providential care for humankind in his giving of further legislation.

1.3, it is now mentioned in his discussion of the Demiurge's providence. There are two intriguing observations we can make from this. Firstly, the notion that there exists an αἰτία for the Demiurge's providence lends further support to our earlier reading of Ptolemy's understanding of *GJn* 1.3 as the creative act of the "strukturierte Handlungseinheit" of Saviour-Logos and Demiurge. Not only are we informed that the Demiurge has an αἰτία for his providential actions – thus implying two causes in any providential act – but this also makes it likely that he had an αἰτία in creation as well since creation and providence are closely linked areas. Secondly, Ptolemy takes issue with his opponents not grasping the cause of the Demiurge's providence. From the overall context we can assume that the Saviour-Logos is likely the cause of the Demiurge's providence.

In the second part, Ptolemy remarks that people who hold to the view that "a god of corruption" (3.6) is the creator are "blinded, not only in the eye of the soul, but in the eye of the body as well" (3.6). The first half of this statement – "blinded, not only in the eye of the soul" – follows on from the first part that spoke of the αἰτία of the Demiurge's providence and is therefore likely a reference to it. Hence, Ptolemy appears to suggest that it naturally follows that anyone who does not intellectually perceive the cause of the Demiurge's providence to be the Saviour-Logos is intellectually blind, blind "in the eye of the soul". Leading on from this, the second half of the statement – "but in the eye of the body as well" – appears, on the other hand, to suggest that these people are not only intellectually blind but also physically blind. The idea Ptolemy invokes here is the common notion that the creator and his goodness can be perceived – by physical observation – from the created world itself.[698]

Hence, as these people do not acknowledge the – according to Ptolemy – benevolent condition of the created world which testifies to a benevolent Demiurge, they must be physically blind. We shall return to the question of benevolent providence when we consider the law of the Demiurge. What remains for now is the question of who these people Ptolemy pictures here might have been.

II.3.5. The Proponents of the Devil as Creator and Lawgiver (3.2; 3.6)

It is likely – as we will argue – that the opponents envisaged by Ptolemy's arguments in 3.6 are Marcionites. While Marcion did not believe the Devil to either be the giver of the law or the creator (cf. 3.2), Ptolemy does not speak of the Devil but of a φθοροποιὸς θεός, "a god of corruption" in 3.6. Since, however, the Devil had also been described as "the author of corruption (φθοροποιοῦ)" (3.2) it is likely

[698] The notion is expressed in the Old and New Testament, e.g. *Isa* 40.26; *Ps* 8.3, 19.1-2; *Rom* 1.20. See also various (near-)contemporary texts such as Cicero, *Tusc. Disp*., I.28, Apuleius, *De Mundo*, 24, and Theophilus of Antioch, *Ad Autoly*., I.5: "God cannot be seen by human eyes but is seen (βλέπεται) and apprehended (νοεῖται) through his providence and his works (διὰ δὲ τῆς προνοίας καὶ τῶν ἔργων αὐτοῦ)." (translation is that of Robert M. Grant, *Theophilus of Antioch: Ad Autolycum* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970). Cf. Quispel, *Ptolémée: Lettre à Flora: Analyse, Texte Critique, Traduction, Commentaire et Index Grec*, 79; Eduard Norden, *Agnostos Theos: Untersuchungen zur Formengeschichte religiöser Rede* (Leipzig: B. G. Teubner, 1923), 25–28.

that Ptolemy envisaged the same figure in 3.6, for both the Devil and the god mentioned here share the same characteristics.

One could surmise what might have been the basis for Ptolemy's oscillation between these two terms. As we have seen earlier, in Tertullian's discussion of Marcion's interpretation of *2 Cor* 4 we observed that Marcion took the Pauline reference of "the god of this world" to refer to the Old Testament Demiurge.[699] However, both Paul and Tertullian assume the reference of "the god of this world" to refer to the Devil (Tert., *Adv. Marc.* 5.11.9-11; 5.17.9).[700] This, together with the ways in which Marcion described the Demiurge in negative terms, might have led Ptolemy to state that Marcion assumed the Devil to be the Creator-God and would explain why Ptolemy can describe Marcion's Demiurge both as God as well as Devil. In reality, it must be assumed that for Marcion the Old Testament Demiurge was actually not a "real" God anymore as he did not display any god-fitting features.

Returning to the issue of creation, we can also assume Marcion to be in the background here. As we had seen, Marcion viewed the created world in a negative light. The alien good God revealed in Christ had nothing to do with this material creation; be it the physical world itself or humankind as created beings. The world was the realm created and ruled by the Demiurge and the pre-existing matter he used in the creation of the world was thought of as evil (cf. Tert. *Adv. Marc*. 1.15; Clem. Al. *strom*. 3.19.4).[701] Consequently, the Marcionites believed about Christ – as Irenaeus informs us – that "neither was the world made by Him [sc. Christ; FG]; nor did He come to His own things, but to those of another (*neque mundus per eum factus est, neque in sua venit, sed in aliena*)" (*Adv*. *Haer*. III.11.2).[702] Ptolemy's invocation of *GJn* 1.3 and 1.10-11 therefore aimed to show that Christ did indeed play a role in creation and that creation was fitting to him and not something strange and unfitting.[703] Interestingly, Irenaeus employs *GJn* 1.11, as recent commentators have highlighted, in the same way Ptolemy does.[704] Arguing against the Marcionites, Irenaeus cites *GJn* 1.11, "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not (*In sua propria venit, et sui eum non receperunt*)", to show that Marcion is mistaken to deny the creative role of Christ and to denigrate the world as someone else's creation (*Adv*. *Haer*. III.11.2).[705]

Also, Ptolemy's judgment that those "who take no account of the Creator's providence" are "blinded, not only on the eye of the soul, but in the eye of the body as well" (3.6) can be seen to attack a Marcionite view on providence and creation, against which he stresses that the world has rather been constituted in a providential way. The Marcionites certainly did not attribute providence to the Demiurge but rather

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[699] See Löhr, "Markion," 159.
[700] Ibid.
[701] Ibid.
[702] See Rasimus, "Ptolemaeus," 151–52.
[703] That Ptolemy might be countering Marcion with his citation of *GJn* 1.3 had already been suggested by Martin Hengel, *Die Johanneische Frage* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1993), 38.
[704] Wucherpfenning, *Heracleon Philologus*, 119, 127; Rasimus, "Ptolemaeus," 151–52.
[705] Cf. also *Adv*. *Haer*. V.18.3.

saw the world as an unhospitable world (*Adv. Marc.* 1.14). Thus, it is likely that Ptolemy encounters a view that holds that the world cannot be fitting for a good God but can only be the product of an inferior or even evil creator. While this view would certainly fit Marcionites, it would also fit many other Christian groups and we will have to consider the letter as a whole to establish its likely opponents.

III. The Challenges and Ptolemy's Account of the Old Testament Law

After refuting these false viewpoints on the lawgiver and creator, Ptolemy ends by remarking that to either assume the perfect God or the Devil as lawgiver is to have "completely missed the truth" (3.7). According to him, some people have come to hold such mistaken views by their "ignorance of the God of justice", whereas others by their "ignorance of the Father of all, whom none but the only One who knows him has come and made known" (3.7). The first of these remarks likely refers to Marcionites who characterise the Old Testament God as a cruel Demiurge who is the creator of evils, whereas the second reference probably refers to Christians who believe that the God and Father revealed by Christ is the Old Testament God who is the lawgiver and creator. As we will see, Ptolemy is mainly concerned with the first conviction – likely a Marcionite one – and will go on to argue that the Old Testament God is not a cruel and evil Demiurge but a just God. Moreover, Ptolemy will show that the nature of the law as well as the lawgiver should not be seen in the negative light as it is by Marcionites.

Lastly, Ptolemy sets out his goals for the rest of the letter: He will "describe both the nature (ποταπός τις εἴη) of the Law itself (αὐτόν τε τὸν νόμον) and the person by whom it was given, the lawgiver (τὸν ὑφ' οὗ τέθειται, τὸν νομοθέτην)" (3.8). Moreover, Ptolemy also specifies the method by which he will proceed: he will give "proofs […] from the words of our Saviour (ἀποδείξεις ἐκ τῶν τοῦ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν λόγων)" for the things he is about say (3.8). The words of the Saviour are indeed given the highest authority since it is alone by these (δι' ὧν μόνον) that one can be "guided to the perception of the truth (ἐπὶ τὴν κατάληψιν τῶν ὄντων)" of all that is (3.8).[706]

Ptolemy turns to deal with the difficult issue of Old Testament law. Marcion had denigrated the Old Testament law as unfitting for a true God and ascribed it to the cruel rule of the Creator. Moreover, Marcion had pointed out the antithetical character of Christ's stance towards the law which he believed to demonstrate the law's unfitting as well as antithetical character. Since Marcion's theology and his ensuing view of the law were embraced by many Christians – as is witnessed by the rapid growth of the Marcionite churches and the resulting threat Marcionite Christianity posed to other Christian communities – Ptolemy had to engage with Marcion's views of the law and the lawgiver in a way that took the challenges posed by Marcion seriously. As we will see, Ptolemy acknowledged the Marcionite contention that the Old Testament law contained some inconsistencies within it. However, he challenged

[706] Williams translates "τῶν ὄντων" as truth. While correct, we will see that there are indications of a higher, metaphysical realm, the things that truly are, hence my addition of "all that is".

Marcion's resultant theology which postulated a cruel, unjust and intentionally contradictory Demiurge as the lawgiver.

Rather, Ptolemy argued that the law originated from a providential God who reacted to humanity's frailty as best as he could. Since this God's nature was, however, not good but only just, his law was of an inferior justice, which – while just – was also mixed with evil. Nonetheless, the lawgiver was not to be blamed for the fact that the law contained evil parts since the intention of his law was a just and providential one and had been given to the best of his ability. Moreover, other parts of the law were acknowledged to play a typological role, whereas again others were pure and not intermixed with evil but still lacked perfection. The newness of Christ in relation to the Old Testament law is also preserved as the Saviour is shown to have abrogated, perfected, and transformed the different parts of the law.

III.1. The First Dihairesis: Taking Marcion Seriously, Solving Contradictions, Blaming Humans (4.1-13)

In order to argue this case, Ptolemy carefully advances his theory of a tripartite division of the law, which claims that "the whole of that Law (ὁ σύμπας ἐκεῖνος νόμος) which is contained (ὁ ἐμπεριεχόμενος) in the five books of Moses (τῇ Μωσέως πεντατεύχῳ) has not been made by one legislator (οὐ πρὸς ἑνός τινος νενομοθέτηται) [...] not [...] by God alone (οὐχ ὑπὸ μόνου θεοῦ)" (4.1).[707] Indeed, Ptolemy states that not only had certain parts of the law "been made by men (ὑπ' ἀνθρώπων)" (4.1), but, moreover, maintains that "the words of the Saviour (οἱ τοῦ σωτῆρος λόγοι) teach us that it is triply divided (τριχῇ τοῦτον διαιρεῖσθαι)" (4.1). This tripartite division consists of the law of God, that of Moses, and that of the elders of the people.

III.1.1 The Law of Moses is not the Law of God

While most commentators only reproduce Ptolemy's tripartite division of the law and mention some parallels, it was Almut Rütten who first raised the possibility that in showing one section of the Pentateuchal law to not be of divine origin but to originate from Moses himself, Ptolemy might be in conversation with Marcion.[708]

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[707] This is the first occurrence of the word πεντάτευχος in Greek literature. See Löhr, "Auslegung des Gesetzes," 80, n. 14.

[708] Almut Rütten, "Der Brief des Ptolemäus an Flora: Ein Beispiel altkirchlicher Gesetzesauslegung in Auseinandersetzung mit Marcion," in *Christlicher Glaube und religiöse Bildung: Frau Prof. Dr. Friedel Kriechbaum zum 60. Geburtstag am 13. August 1995* (ed. H. Deuser and G. Schmalenberg; Gießener Schriften zur Theologie und Religionspädagogik 11; Gießen, 1995), 60. Dunderberg noted that divorce was discussed as one of Marcion's *Antitheses* but did not make anything of it (Dunderberg, *Beyond Gnosticism*, 88.). More recently, Jorgensen has taken up Rütten's observation in his study of the early reception of the *Gospel of Matthew*, see David W. Jorgensen, *Treasure Hidden in a Field: Early Christian Reception of the Gospel of Matthew* (Studies of the Bible and its reception Volume 6; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016), 221–32. Löhr and Standhartinger do not discuss the possibility of Ptolemy targeting Marcion in this section. Neither do Quispel and Markschies, who only point out parallels, in particular to the *Pseudo-Clementines*. Also, Verheyden, the most recent commentator, does not mention Marcion in this context. Cf. Löhr, "Auslegung des Gesetzes," 80–81; Standhartinger, "Ptolemaeus

Rütten highlighted that the issue of divorce formed a part of one of Marcion's *Antitheses*, which, according to Marcion, attested to the "contrast between law and gospel, between Moses and Christ (*diversitatem legis et evangelii, Moysi et Christi*)" (Tert. *Adv. Marc.* 4.34.1).[709] While Tertullian reports this statement in the context of his discussion of divorce in *GLk* 16.18, Theodor Zahn established that, based on Tertullian's mention of *GMt* 19.8 in *Adv. Marc*. 4.34.2 and evidence from Origen, it was probably the Matthean divorce pericope (*GMt* 19.3-8) which had inspired Marcion's conception of his antithesis on divorce and was likely discussed in the *Antitheses*.[710] Indeed, while Marcion generally dismissed the *Gospel of Matthew* as a heavily distorted account, containing numerous false additions of the Judaizers such as *GMt* 5.17, he was nonetheless influenced by some of its content.[711]

We can, therefore, assume that Ptolemy engaged Marcion's understanding of *GMt* 19.3-8 in his first dihairesis. Since Marcion viewed the Matthean divorce pericope, in which Christ had seemingly abolished the law of the inferior demiurge, as testimony to his radical distinction between the two Gods, Ptolemy dismissed Marcion's reading of this pericope. Of course, Ptolemy had to admit the fact that the pericope contained a stark contrast. However, while Marcion supposed this contrast to be between the inferior Creator and Christ, Ptolemy denied that the pericope supported such a reading and that the contrast was situated on a different level, namely that between the divine lawgiver and that of Moses.

To prove his claim that a part of the Pentateuchal law originated from Moses, Ptolemy quotes a saying of the Saviour, close in form to *GMt* 19.8,6, in which the Saviour contrasts Moses' institution of the bill of divorce[712] to God's initial act of joining man and woman (4.4).[713] The words of the Saviour show that Moses' legislation on divorce stands in contrast to God's law since "from the beginning it was not so" (4.4). Hence, in Ptolemy's view this saying of the Saviour clearly proves that the Saviour himself had differentiated between the law of God which forbids divorce on the one hand and the law of Moses that permits divorce on the other hand (4.5). However, these were not simply two different – ἕτερος – laws[714]

und justin," 137–38. Markschies, "Research," 236; Quispel, *Ptolémée: Lettre à Flora: Analyse, Texte Critique, Traduction, Commentaire et Index Grec*, 23–24, 84–85. Joseph Verheyden, "Attempting the Impossible? Ptolemy's *Letter to Flora* as Counter-Narrative," in *Telling the Christian Story Differently: Counter-Narratives from Nag Hammadi and Beyond* (ed. Sarah Parkhouse and Francis Watson; London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2020), 109–10.

[709] Rütten, "Brief," 60. "Danach hat Marcion die Scheidungsfrage zum Gegenstand einer seiner Antithesen gemacht und zu Lk 16,18 bemerkt: „Vides diversitatem legis et evangelii, Moysis [sic!] et Christi".

[710] Theodor Zahn, *Geschichte des Neutestamentlichen Kanons: Erster Band: Das Neue Testament vor Origenes* (Erlangen: A. Deichert, 1889), 669–70. Cf. Jorgensen, *Treasure*, 222–24. Who speaks of a „reading by Marcion that incorporates into his *Antitheses* this Matthean pericope as additional proof of the discrepancy between law and gospel. (Ibid., 224.).

[711] Zahn, *Geschichte des Neutestamentlichen Kanons: Erster Band: Das Neue Testament vor Origenes*, 666–71.

[712] Ptolemy probably envisages *Deut* 24.1.

[713] "Ἀπ' ἀρχῆς γὰρ οὐ γέγονεν οὕτως. Θεὸς γάρ, φησί, συνέζευξε ταύτην τὴν συζυγίαν, καὶ ὁ συνέζευξεν ὁ, ἄνθρωπος», ἔφη, «μὴ χωριζέτω» (4.4). Strangely, Markschies believes the reference of κύριος to be the Saviour. Markschies, "Research," 240. The reference of God's initial act of joining man and woman is *Gen* 2.23-24.

[714] ἕτερον μὲν <τὸν> τοῦ θεοῦ δείκνυσι νόμον, […] ἕτερον δὲ τὸν τοῦ Μωυσέως (4.5).

but Ptolemy explicitly states that Moses had "giv[en] a law contrary to God's (ἐναντία τῷ θεῷ νομοθετεῖ)" (4.6).

Moreover, Ptolemy informs us of what had caused Moses to legislate in the first place: it was "because of the hardness (τὴν σκληροκαρδίαν) of their [sc. the Jews'; FG] hearts" (4.5; cf. 4.4). And so Ptolemy suggests that we ought to consider "Moses' purpose (τὴν τοῦ Μωυσέως γνώμην)", his intention, for legislating (4.6; cf. 4.10). He gave this additional law "not of his own choice (οὐ κατὰ προαίρεσιν […] τὴν ἑαυτοῦ) but of necessity (κατὰ ἀνάγκην), owing to the frailty (ἀσθένειαν) of those for whom the laws were made" (4.6). Thus, since the Jews were too weak to keep the commandments due to their hard heartedness and would ultimately be "risking being turned further to wickedness (πλέον εἰς ἀδικίαν) and consequent destruction (εἰς ἀπώλειαν)" (4.7), Ptolemy revealed Moses to be a caring lawgiver in legislation contrary to God's law.

In summary, while Marcion was inspired by this pericope to attest to a sharp contrast between law and gospel and thus the Old Testament Demiurge and the good God proclaimed by Christ, it is against the radicality of this Marcionite contrast that Ptolemy is arguing. He argues that the words of the Saviour revealed the contrast to rather be between Moses' own law and God's law.

III.2. The Second Dihairesis: The Different Parts of Divine Law

In his second dihairesis (5.1-6.6), Ptolemy proceeds to further scrutinize the divine part of the law, which is shown to be likewise "divided into some three parts (διαιρεῖται εἰς τρία τινά)" (5.1). According to him the divine law

> 5.1: […] is divided into the pure legislation (τὴν καθαρὰν νομοθεσίαν) with no admixture (ἀσύμπλοκον) of evil (τῷ κακῷ), which is properly termed the "law" which the Saviour came not to destroy (καταλῦσαι) but to fulfil (πληρῶσαι). (For that which he fulfilled was not foreign to him (οὐ γὰρ ἦν ἀλλότριος αὐτοῦ ὃν ἐπλήρωσεν) <but was in need of fulfilment>, for it was incomplete (οὐ γὰρ εἶχεν τὸ τέλειον).)
>
> It is also divided into law mixed (συμπεπλεγμένον) with inferior matter and injustice (τῷ χείρονι καὶ τῇ ἀδικίᾳ), which the Saviour abolished (ἀνεῖλεν) as incongruous with his nature (ἀνοίκειον ὄντα τῇ ἑαυτοῦ φύσει).
>
> 5.2: And it is divided also into the typical and allegorical (τὸ τυπικὸν καὶ συμβολικὸν) legislation in the image (κατ' εἰκόνα) of things that are spiritual and excellent (τῶν πνευματικῶν καὶ διαφερόντων). This the Saviour transformed (μετέθηκεν) from the perceptible and phenomenal (ἀπὸ αἰσθητοῦ καὶ φαινομένου) into the spiritual and invisible (ἐπὶ τὸ πνευματικὸν καὶ ἀόρατον).

The three parts of the divine law are structured according to what Ptolemy perceives as the Saviour's stance towards each of them. The three stances the Saviour takes towards the law are: "fulfil" (πληρεῖν), "abrogate" (ἀναιρεῖν), and "transform" (μετατιθέναι). The Saviour's means of dealing with the different types of law depend on their degree of fittingness with his nature. Hence, it is in this way that the issue of fittingness forms the crucial hermeneutical lens for Ptolemy's evaluation of the divine law.

In 5.3-15, Ptolemy then goes on to explore which particular Old Testament law corresponds to each of the three parts of divine law he had just distinguished and summarises his findings once more in 6.1-6. According to Ptolemy, the divine law consists of the "pure law", which is embodied in the Decalogue and had been fulfilled – πληρεῖν – by the Saviour (5.1; 5.3; 6.1), the "law intermingled with injustice", which is the *ius talionis* and which the Saviour had abolished – ἀναιρεῖν – (5.1; 5.4-7; 6.2-3), and the "typical portion of the Law", the ceremonial and ritual laws, which the Saviour had transformed – μετατιθέναι – (5.2; 5.8-15; 6.4-6).

Let us turn to my argument. As we had seen in the previous chapter on Marcion, Marcion understood the Old Testament law as displaying the wicked nature of its lawgiver, the evil Demiurge. Especially the *ius talionis* was understood as indicative of his wicked and cruel nature. Christ on the other hand, was believed by Marcion to have come in opposition to the Demiurge, with the mission of abolishing his wicked law. Moreover, as we had observed earlier, it was likely Marcion's reading of the opposition between Christ's teaching and the Old Testament law expressed in the Matthean antitheses which had given rise to Marcion's own *Antitheses*. In order to make his reading work, Marcion had dismissed the crucial hermeneutical preface to the Matthean antitheses in which Jesus had made clear that he had not come to abolish the law but to fulfil (πληρεῖν) it (*GMt* 5.17). But not only did Marcion dismiss this preface but even accused "judaizing" Christians to have inserted it in the first place.[715]

While I argued that, in his first dihairesis, Ptolemy was countering Marcion's claim that there was an opposition between law and gospel, I argue that in his second dihairesis Ptolemy engaged with the Marcionite claim just sketched: that the Old Testament law testified to a cruel and wicked lawgiver. Ptolemy had already ascertained that the law could not have been given by the perfect God since it was – due to its need for fulfilment as well as its nature (3.4) – imperfect and therefore unfitting to have been given by the perfect God. However, Ptolemy was even more concerned to safeguard the law as well as its lawgiver from a negative assessment such as Marcion's which ascribed the law to an evil and cruel lawgiver. I argue that the principle of fittingness functioned as the crucial hermeneutical tool in Ptolemy's nuanced assessment of the divine law. Moreover, it is argued that it was his reasoning from the principle of fittingness which required Ptolemy to introduce a third figure as the lawgiver: the just

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[715] See Zahn, *Geschichte des Neutestamentlichen Kanons: Erster Band: Das Neue Testament vor Origenes*, 666, n. 1 for all the references in Tertullian. As Zahn and Harnack point out, later Marcionites even took up *GMt* 5.17 in inverted form. See Harnack, *Marcion*, 80.

Demiurge. We shall now consider in more detail how the principle of fittingness forms the basis of Ptolemy's evaluation of the divine law.

III.2.1. The Pure Law – The Decalogue (5.1; 5.3; 6.1)

The first part of the divine law Ptolemy distinguished as the "pure legislation (καθαρὰν νομοθεσίαν) with no admixture (ἀσύμπλοκον) of evil (τῷ κακῷ)" (5.1). This law he also describes as the one part of the divine law "which is properly (κυρίως) termed the 'law'" (5.1). Ptolemy sees this pure law embodied in the Decalogue (ἡ δεκάλογος), the "ten commandments (οἱ δέκα λόγοι)" (5.3).[716]

Using *GMt* 5.17 as hermeneutical tool, Ptolemy states that "the Saviour came not to destroy but to fulfil" the pure law (5.1). For Ptolemy the application of the Matthean verse to the Ten commandments – the pure law – indicates that they "were in need of fulfilment (πληρώσεως) by the Saviour, for though (καίπερ) they contained the legislation in its pure (καθαρὰν) form they lacked perfection (μὴ ἔχοντες δὲ τὸ τέλειον)" (5.3).[717] Ptolemy's logical chain of reasoning is obvious: The fulfilment of the law shows that it initially lacked something; the lack of something means that it was not perfect; therefore, what the law lacked was perfection.

Speaking of the Saviour's fulfilment of the pure law, Ptolemy states "that which he [sc. the Saviour; FG] fulfilled was not foreign (ἀλλότριος) to him "but was in need of fulfilment", for it was incomplete (οὐ γὰρ εἶχεν τὸ τέλειον)" (5.1). While the word ἀλλότριος means "strange" in its basic sense, it can further be understood as the "opposite to οἰκεῖος"[718] as well as "*alien* i.e. not of the nature of, opp. ἴδιος τῆς οὐσίας"[719], hence indicating a notion of unfittingness, along the lines of "unfitting" and "unsuitable". Thus, Ptolemy employs the language of fittingness once again and points out that the pure law was "not unfitting" to the nature or character of the Saviour. This is a puzzling statement since Ptolemy just told us that the pure law is imperfect. Would this imply that the Saviour is likewise imperfect? This is unlikely, as it would seem impossible for an imperfect Saviour to perfect an equally imperfect law. Moreover, we have to assume that the Saviour is indeed perfect since he is the son of the perfect good God and it is the nature of the good to beget like (cf. 7.8). How then are we to understand that the pure but imperfect law is not unsuitable to the perfect nature of the Saviour? We will return to this question once we have dealt with the *ius talionis* and can discern both laws in a synopsis.

How then does the Saviour fulfil the pure law? In his later summary of the three parts of divine law (6.1-6), Ptolemy declares that the pure law – the Decalogue – was fulfilled by the Saviour's antithetical commandments given in the Sermon on the Mount.[720] The laws of the Decalogue – explicitly mentioned

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[716] As Standhartinger points out, this is the first time ἡ δεκάλογος is used in the early church. See Standhartinger, "Ptolemaeus und justin," 138, with n. 81.
[717] Modified. Williams translates "μὴ ἔχοντες δὲ τὸ τέλειον" as "were incomplete".
[718] LSJ, s.v. "ἀλλότριος".
[719] G. W. H. Lampe, "A Patristic Greek Lexicon," *Ἀλλότριος* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961).
[720] Rütten, "Brief," 65.

are the fifth (prohibiting murder), the sixth (forbidding adultery), and the eight commandment (to not to bear false witness) – were fulfilled since they “are included in his [sc. the Saviour’s; FG] prohibition of anger, lust, and oaths” (6.1), which are the respective antitheses from the Sermon on the Mount (*GMt* 5.21,27,33). I contend that this fulfilment of the law is likewise its perfection.[721] As we will come to observe in our engagement with the *ius talionis* and have already observed in the case of Moses and the issue of divorce, humankind is prone to transgress the law. The reason for this is the fact that the root cause of all evil is not addressed properly. As I will argue, the root of all evil are the human passions in which humanity has been entrapped since its fall. Hence, the new laws given by the Saviour – that is the antitheses of the Sermon on the Mount – directly engage the core of the evil that the Decalogue attempts to prevent. Thus, instead of prohibiting the act of murder, the Saviour forbids the cause of murder – anger – instead of prohibiting adultery, the Saviour prohibits its source – desire – and instead of prohibiting the bearing of false witness, the Saviour prohibits the inclination to swear an oath on something at all (6.1). These commandments fulfil and perfect the pure law as they now address the actual root cause of the problem of human transgression: human passion. Moreover, we will see that the typical and allegorical law is related to this thought.

III.2.2. The Ius Talionis

The ”law intermingled with injustice (συμπεπλεγμένος τῇ ἀδικίᾳ)” is the *ius talionis*, the law of equal retribution, and Ptolemy devoted a substantial amount of space to its discussion. The reason will most likely have been the fact that it played a major role in Marcion’s argument.[722]

The reason why the *ius talionis* is seen as a ”law intermingled with injustice (συμπεπλεγμένος τῇ ἀδικίᾳ)” is that “the second offender does no less (οὐδὲν γὰρ ἧττον) of an injustice (ἀδικῶν ἀδικεῖ) and commits the same act, changing it merely in its order (τῇ τάξει μόνον διαλλάσσων)” (5.4). While the actions prescribed by the *ius talionis* are plainly seen as unjust (cf. 5.4), Ptolemy can still maintain that the *ius talionis* itself “was and is just, though owing to the frailty of its recipients it was given in violation of the pure law” (5.5) and goes on to call the giving of the *ius talionis* “a matter of necessity” since the one

> “who opposed even the one murder by saying, ‘Thou shalt not kill’ was an unwitting victim of necessity” when he introduced the “murderer to be murdered in retaliation, making a second law” (5.6).

How is this to be understood? It appears that Ptolemy is dealing with two issues here. The first one derived from the words of the Saviour which Ptolemy had quoted earlier. In his effort to prove the

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[721] Most commentators leave the question unanswered. For example Standhartinger, “Ptolemaeus und justin,” 138 (“Was damit [sc. Vollkommenheit; FG] genau im Blick ist, bleibt offen“). Likewise, Verheyden, “Attempting the Impossible,” 112, (“Ptolemy has nothing further to say about what fulfilment would mean").
[722] Harnack, *Marcion*, 90, 280*-281*.

difference between the law of God and the traditions of the elders, Ptolemy had quoted the first half of *GMt* 15.4, which was the fourth commandment of the Decalogue, the pure law, which required one honour one's parents. The second part of the verse, however, continued with the assertion that God demanded death for anyone who would break this commandment. Since this prescription of murder – as Ptolemy evidently did not differentiate between the death penalty and murder[723] – stood, however, in sharp contrast to the fifth commandment of the Decalogue, which prohibited murder, it seemed like there was a contradiction within the divine law: God's prohibition of murder as well as his demand for it. The second issue Ptolemy faced was the nature of the *ius talionis* as well as that of its legislator. Philosophical discourse at the time understood the *ius talionis* as merely a perpetuation of injustice.[724] And Marcion went even further to regard this perpetuation of injustice as an expression of the vengeful nature of the legislator, the Demiurge.

In his attempt to engage both of these issues, Ptolemy found a solution by simply adding to the *ius talionis* ("eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth") "and the retribution of a murder with a murder" (5.4).[725] This allows Ptolemy to set the *ius talionis* in contrast to the pure law of the Decalogue which in its fifth commandment forbids murder. The *ius talionis* could now be understood as law that was meant to deter people from transgressing the pure law, the Decalogue, by threatening retribution. Moreover, the only reason why the *ius talionis* had been given was that the Jews were too weak to the keep the Decalogue and therefore required this deterrent. Hence, Ptolemy was able to show that the nature of *ius talionis* was – despite containing evil and unjust actions – as a whole a just one since its intent and the intention of its legislator was aimed at preventing the transgression of the Decalogue. Moreover, this also demonstrated how God was able to demand murder despite also prohibiting it. Thus, both the nature of the *ius talionis* and its lawgiver were just but the law was born out of necessity – the need for a deterrent to prevent transgression – and this necessity entailed the institution of a law which despite being just contained unjust and evil actions.

Ptolemy had therefore successfully argued that the *ius talionis* was not evidence of an evil and vengeful law and legislator but was just. Nevertheless, since it contained elements mixed with evil, it was "not in accord with the nature and goodness of the Father of all" (5.5), it was unfitting for the nature of the Father who is ultimately good and perfect and has a superior justice. Still, since the *ius talionis* aims at preventing transgression of the pure law, that is doing evil, Ptolemy briefly contemplates whether it could not after all be a law that is "perhaps appropriate" to the nature of the Father, but then corrects himself and points out that this law "is rather a matter of necessity", since it was prompted by the weakness of humankind (5.6). Consequently, even though the *ius talionis* is a just law, its imperfect

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[723] Rütten, "Brief," 62.
[724] Standhartinger, "Ptolemaeus und justin," 139.
[725] While Ptolemy's expansion of the elements of the *ius talionis* is not mentioned by commentators such as Jorgensen and Markschies, "Research.", it is by Rütten, "Brief," 62.

justice and being mixed with evil, was neither fitting for the nature of the Saviour nor for that of the Father. Thus, the Saviour "abolished this portion of the Law" (5.7; cf. 6.2) for it "was annulled by the Saviour through its opposites (ἀνῃρέθη ὑπὸ τοῦ σωτῆρος διὰ τῶν ἐναντίων)" (6.2). More precisely, the Saviour's command to turn the other cheek ended the *ius talionis* since "opposites have the property of cancelling each other (6.3). Thus, Ptolemy was able to take Marcion's claim seriously that the Old Testament law was not only unfitting for the good God but also revealed the nature of a vengeful and evil creator, and that Christ had come to abolish it. Ptolemy did indeed take some of Marcion's observations onboard. Nevertheless, he strongly modified and toned down other aspects. The Saviour did not abrogate the Old Testament law as a whole but only a particular part. Moreover, this law was itself, despite containing the demand for evil and unjust actions, just in its intention, and was not witnessing to a vengeful but rather a just legislator, whose law only contained these negative elements due to necessity.

III.2.3. The third part of divine law

The third part of the divine law, which Ptolemy had identified as the "typical (τὸ τυπικὸν) and allegorical (συμβολικὸν) legislation" (5.2; cf. 5.8), is more concretely identified by him as the "laws of sacrifices, circumcision, the Sabbath, fasting, the Passover, the feast of the unleavened bread and the like" (5.8), namely what is commonly called the ritual law.

The reason why Ptolemy believes these laws to be "typical (τὸ τυπικὸν) and allegorical (συμβολικὸν) legislation" is that he understands them to be "in the image (κατ' εἰκόνα) of things that are spiritual (πνευματικῶν) and excellent (διαφερόντων)" (5.2; cf. 5.8). The laws are therefore "images and allegories (εἰκόνες καὶ τὰ σύμβολα)" of a higher reality which they – by virtue of being images ("κατ' εἰκόνα"; 5.2; 5.8) of it – are mirroring. As such these laws "were indicative of other things" and "were rightly performed as long as the truth was not here" (6.5). However, with the arrival of the truth things changed. It is clear that for Ptolemy the Saviour is this truth.[726] And with his arrival these laws were "transformed (μετέθηκεν) from the perceptible (αἰσθητοῦ) and phenomenal (φαινομένου) into the spiritual (τὸ πνευματικὸν) and invisible (ἀόρατον)" (5.2).

How exactly this transformation has to be understood is also elucidated by Ptolemy. He appears to conceive of two aspects of these laws: their visible performance on a physical level and their higher embrace on a spiritual level. Now that the truth has appeared "[o]utwardly (τὸ φαινόμενον) and in bodily (<τὸ> σωματικῶς) observance", these laws "were abrogated (ἀνῃρέθη) [as accomplished; FG]

[726] Since 5.2 explicitly states that it was the Saviour who transformed the typical and allegorical laws and we read later that these laws "were transformed when the truth appeared" (5.9), the Saviour and truth are certainly linked in some way. Still, the Saviour and truth could still be two distinct entities. However, as Harnack already observed that in 6.6 "in dem Ausdruck *οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ* sich *αὐτοῦ* auf *ἡ ἀλήθεια* zurückbezieht" (Harnack, *Brief des Ptolemäus*, 527, n. 3 (italics in original). This is obscured by Williams' translation who translates the αὐτοῦ as "the Saviour's".

(ἐκτελεῖσθαι) but spiritually (τὸ πνευματικὸν) they were adopted (ἀνελήφθη), with the names remaining the same but the things altered (ἐνηλλαγμένων)" (5.9). Thus, the laws had been "transformed (μετέθηκεν)" (5.2; cf. 5.9; 6.4) from an observance on the physical level to one on the spiritual level.

Ptolemy goes on to give some examples of how the Saviour transformed these laws: actual physical sacrifices had become sacrifices of "spiritual hymns, praises, and thanksgiving, and of charity and acts of kindness to our neighbours" (5.10), physical circumcision had become a circumcision of the "spiritual heart" (5.11), and the keeping of the Sabbath had become a "desist[ing] from evil works" (5.12). Only in the case of fasting, things had not fully changed.

While on the one hand bodily fasting has indeed been abandoned in favour of "spiritual (τὴν πνευματικήν)" fasting with its higher ethical meaning of "abstinence from evil (ἀποχὴ πάντων τῶν φαύλων)", Ptolemy acknowledges that "[w]e do observe outward fasting (ἡ κατὰ τὸ φαινόμενον νηστεία) however, since this can be of some use to the soul as well when done with reason (μετὰ λόγου)" (5.13). If it is done with reason, and thus in view of its higher meaning, actual fasting can prove of a "reminder of the true fast (ἀνάμνησιν τῆς ἀληθινῆς νηστείας) […] [for] those who are as yet unable to keep" it (5.14).

Strikingly, no references are made to the sayings of the Saviour for any of these transformations, despite Ptolemy's claim that the Saviour had instituted them. Rather, the only reference is to the apostle Paul, whose interpretation of the Passover at *1Cor* 5.7 Ptolemy adopts.[727]

The most important insight for our purposes is the fact that Ptolemy acknowledges that the physical laws "were rightly performed as long as the truth was not here. But once the truth is here we must do what is proper to the truth, not to the image" (6.5). We can observe that Ptolemy grants these laws a legitimate place in the history of salvation and therefore supposes the "the idea of a salvation-historical continuity".[728] However, now that truth itself, the Saviour, had appeared, these laws were transformed – lifted up – to their true meaning, the truth they had only mirrored so far.

IV. The Nature of the Lawgiver

After having discussed the law, the only thing that remains for Ptolemy is to disclose the identity of the lawgiver (7.2). Ptolemy reveals that the answer to this question is already available to Flora if she had "listened attentively" to what Ptolemy had reported about the law so far (7.2). This goes to show, once more, that the nature of the law corresponds closely to the nature of the lawgiver. It will therefore be beneficial to highlight the correspondence between the nature of the law and that of the lawgiver.

[727] Rütten, "Brief," 63; Standhartinger, "Ptolemaeus und justin," 141.
[728] Rütten, "Brief," 64. "die Vorstellung heilsgeschichtlicher Kontinuität"

Ptolemy recalls that he had already dismissed the perfect God and the Devil as lawgivers at the beginning of the letter (cf. 3.4-5) and any attempt to assume the latter to be the lawgiver would be, Ptolemy remarks, a notion that "is not proper (μηδὲ θεμιτόν ἐστιν) even to say" (7.3). Indeed, Ptolemy makes it very clear once more that the notion that the law could in any way be linked with the Devil, whose nature is evil and wicked, is a completely unfitting (θεμιτός) one to entertain, since he had shown that the law was "just" and aimed at preventing injustice.

The lawgiver is then revealed to be the same as "the demiurge and maker (δημιουργὸς καὶ ποιητὴς) of this entire world (τοῦδε τοῦ παντός ἐστιν κόσμου) and everything in it (τῶν ἐν αὐτῷ)" (7.4). As had been noted by Markschies, the phrase used to describe the lawgiver takes up the Platonic phrase from *Timaeus* 28c which Ptolemy had used at the very beginning of the letter in his account of the opinion which credited the Devil with the creation of the world (cf. 3.2). By repeating it here again, Ptolemy creates a "careful ring-composition" that links the beginning and the end of the letter.[729] This time, however, the phrase has been modified. Whereas the initial phrase at 3.2 was given as πατέρα καὶ ποιητὴν […] τοῦδε τοῦ παντός – an inverted version of the phrase from *Timaeus* 28c –, it now reads δημιουργὸς καὶ ποιητὴς (7.4): the initial πατήρ has been replaced by δημιουργός. Hence, the lawgiver is the Demiurge, the creator, of the world but he is not the Father of all. Indeed, the epithet "Father" refers to a different entity and this careful distinction operates throughout Ptolemy's treatment in the letter in which he "distingue soigneusement les épithètes 'père' et 'créateur'".[730] While the just Demiurge is described as the "maker (ποιητὴς) of this entire world (τοῦδε τοῦ παντός ἐστιν κόσμου) and everything in it (τῶν ἐν αὐτῷ)" (7.4), reality and being itself are ultimately dependent on the perfect God who as "the Father, of whom are all things since all things, each in its own way, have been framed by him" (7.6), is the only one who properly bears the epithet "Father". Moreover, this ultimate dependency of all things on the perfect God, results, as Löhr had rightly remarked, in the fact that "[l]e premier Dieu n'est pas totalement séparé du monde d'ici-bas (comme il l'est dans la doctrine de Marcion)".[731]

The lawgiving Demiurge is then placed between the perfect God and the Devil and – due to this middle position – is given the corresponding name "The Intermediate (ἡ μεσότης)" (7.4). The reason for the Demiurge being placed in the middle is owing to the fact that "he differs (ἕτερος ὢν) from the essences of the other two (παρὰ τὰς τούτων οὐσίας)" (7.4): his οὐσία is in contrast to that of the perfect God as well as that of the Devil.

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[729] Markschies, "Research," 235, cf. also p. 234.
[730] Löhr, "La doctrine de Dieu," 185.
[731] Ibid., 186. The first God is not totally separated from the world below (as he is in Marcion's doctrine).

In the following two paragraphs, Ptolemy proceeds to elaborate on the essence of the lawgiving Demiurge in relation to the essence of the perfect God and the Devil. We shall consider the natures of the perfect God and the Devil first, before evaluating their natures in relation to that of the Demiurge.

On the one end of the spectrum is the perfect God who "by his own nature […] is good (ἀγαθός ἐστιν κατὰ τὴν ἑαυτοῦ φύσιν)" (7.5). He is thus defined by the classic divine feature of goodness. Furthermore, with reference to a paraphrase of *GMt* 19.8, Ptolemy declares that the perfect God "is the one and only good God (ἕνα γὰρ μόνον εἶναι ἀγαθὸν θεόν)" (7.5). And lastly, the perfect God is also said to possess "righteousness (δικαιοσύνη)" (7.6).

On the other end of the spectrum – or maybe, more precisely, in opposition – is the Devil whose "nature is evil (φύσεως κακός) and marked (χαρακτηριαζόμενος) as wicked by his injustice (πονηρὸς ἐν ἀδικίᾳ)" (7.5). Interestingly, while the nature of the Devil is essentially "evil (κακός)", he is furthermore characterised as "wicked (πονηρός)". A wickedness which is witnessed in his "injustice (ἀδικία)". Hence, the devil partakes in the realm of justice only in so far in that he displays the very far end of the spectrum, or more precisely, the opposite, to justice: namely "injustice (ἀδικία)". And this injustice marks him out as "wicked (πονηρός)". Unfortunately, Ptolemy's letter does not tell us more about the Devil's injustice and how it manifests itself, whether it might be in unjust laws and punishments or unjust deeds.

With the perfect God and the Devil presenting the polar sides of the spectrum, the lawgiving Demiurge "stands between (μέσος) them, and is neither good (μήτε ἀγαθὸς) nor, certainly, evil (μήτε μὴν κακὸς) or unjust (μήτε ἄδικος)" (7.5). Rather, he "may properly be called "just (δίκαιος)," being the arbiter (βραβευτής) of his sort of justice (τῆς κατ' αὐτὸν δικαιοσύνης)" (7.5). Hence, we can notice that the nature of the lawgiving Demiurge corresponds to the nature of his law: both are characterised as "just (δίκαιος)". However, the justice of the lawgiver is described as "his sort of justice (τῆς κατ' αὐτὸν δικαιοσύνης)" (7.5).

IV.1. The Justice of the Lawgiver

How this has to be understood becomes apparent when we consider the other two mentions of justice in the letter, namely the existence of the just law as well as the fact that the perfect God displays "righteousness (δικαιοσύνη)" (7.6). The first point we notice is that both the perfect God as well as the lawgiving Demiurge are characterised by justice. However, the justice of the lawgiving Demiurge is said to be "inferior to his [sc. the perfect God's; FG] righteousness" (7.6). Why is this the case? The reason – ἅτε δὴ – which is given by the text is that the Demiurge is "generate (γεννητὸς), not ingenerate (ἀγέννητος)" like the perfect God (7.6). But what does this mean and how does it relate to the justice of each? To shed further light on this problem, a consideration of the law is helpful.

As we had observed, the law given by the Demiurge was either pure, just, or symbolic. The *ius talionis* has a peculiar status for it "was and is just" at its core, as Ptolemy was keen to maintain (5.5), but since it was borne out of a particular necessity it was also always "mixed with inferior matter and injustice" (5.1; cf. 5.4). Hence, because the *ius talionis* "was and is just" (5.5) it could not have been given by the evil Devil whose characteristic is injustice (7.5). However, despite being essentially just, the *ius talionis* was "not in accord with the nature and goodness of the Father of all" (5.5), since it is always bound up with injustice, an attribute of the evil Devil, which does not befit the perfect God who is good. Thus, since the principle of fittingness did not allow for an ascription of the *ius talionis* to either the perfect God or the Devil, Ptolemy was forced to assume a third figure with a unique nature. Hence, when the justice of the lawgiver is described as "his sort of justice (τῆς κατ' αὐτὸν δικαιοσύνης)" (7.5), what Ptolemy wants to convey is this sort of unique justice: a justice that is not compatible with the goodness of the perfect God. Since, the justice of the perfect God, on the other hand, can be inferred to be a justice that is compatible with goodness, the lawgiving Demiurge displays a justice that is "inferior (ἐλάττων)" to the justice of the perfect God (7.6). The reason why the Demiurge and his justice are subject to necessity and thereby inferior appears to lie in the fact that the Demiurge is on a lower ontological level than the perfect God.

Whereas the Demiurge is "generate (γεννητὸς), […] there is one Ingenerate, the Father (εἷς γάρ ἐστιν ἀγέννητος ὁ πατήρ)", the perfect God (7.6). Furthermore, although the lawgiving Demiurge's justice is inferior to that of the perfect God, the reason why he "will be greater (μείζων) and possessed of more authority (κυριώτερος) than the adversary" probably lies in the fact that his justice makes him superior to the injustice of the Devil (7.6) and places him in closer proximity to the perfect God rather than to the Devil.

This is confirmed when Ptolemy further elaborates the essence of all three figures, the Devil, the perfect God, and the Demiurge. The attributes of the Devil and the perfect God are displayed in contrast to each other: the Devil's essence is defined by "corruption (φθορά)" and "darkness (σκότος)" for he is also "material (ὑλικός)" and "composite (πολυσχιδής)" (7.7).[732] This is in direct contrast to the perfect God whose essence is "simple (ἁπλοῦν)", "uniform (μονοειδές)", and of "incorruption (ἀφθαρσία)" and "self-existent light (φῶς αὐτοόν)" (7.7).

The essence of the Demiurge, on the other hand, has "shown a sort of dual capacity (διττὴν μέν τινα δύναμιν προήγαγεν)" (7.7). Analogous to the location of the justice of the *ius talionis* between the higher perfect justice – which is compatible with goodness – of the higher God and the injustice of the Devil, so is the essence of Demiurge located between the essences of these two. And in further parallel to the

[732] The γάρ seems to indicate that it is the Devil's being material and composite which results in his essence being one of corruption and darkness. Nonetheless, while the former seems to occasion the latter, both ultimately make up his essence.

justice of the Demiurge, which due to being essentially just and therefore closer to the superior justice of the perfect God, so is his essence "the image of the better (τοῦ κρείττονός […] εἰκών)" (7.7), the essence of the perfect God.

Towards the end of the letter, Ptolemy is aware that one related issue has not been raised yet. How is it possible that the nature of the evil Devil and the just Demiurge, which are both "natures which differ in kind (ἀνομοούσιοι), arose from one first principle" – namely the perfect good God – "though it is the nature of the good (τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ φύσιν) to beget (γεννᾶν) and bring forth (προφέρειν) its like (τὰ ὅμοια ἑαυτῷ) and its own kind (ὁμοούσια)" (7.8)? In other words, how does it befit the good and perfect God to produce something that is ἀνομοούσιος, of a different essence, to him? Particularly pressing in the case of the evil Devil will have been the question: *unde malum*? And how could the existence of the evil Devil befit the goodness of the perfect God, especially since he was said to be "the Father, of whom are all things" (7.6)? Ptolemy had to postpone these even more fundamental questions of god-fittingness and theodicy and the advice he was to give Flora was to "not let this disturb" her at this point (7.8). Nonetheless, Ptolemy indicated to her that she "shall learn both their origin and their generation" at some point.

Conclusion

As this chapter has argued, in response to Marcion's denigration of the God and laws of the Jewish Scriptures over a concern of god-fittingness, Ptolemy took up the concerns raised by Marcion but dismissed his more radical solutions. To do so, Ptolemy used himself an argument from fittingness which dismissed Marcion's claim that an evil and unjust entity was responsible for the Jewish law as well as the creation of the world. Using the words of the Saviour as a hermeneutical tool, Ptolemy first demonstrated the Pentateuchal law to have human and divine parts. Secondly, considering the nature of the different parts of the divine law, Ptolemy finds that the divine laws exhibit varying degrees of justice, ranging from pure but imperfect justice to justice that is intermingled with evil. Finally, Ptolemy concludes that the nature of the divine laws neither befits the nature of the perfect God, nor that of the evil Devil, but only befits a just and providential but ultimately weak Demiurge. Thus, Ptolemy successfully refutes Marcion's reasoning by using an argument from fittingness which claims to more carefully exegete the nature and intention of the different laws and their lawgivers.

Chapter 7: Justin Martyr

Introduction

Around the middle of the second century, the still new Christian faith found itself in a hostile but philosophically curious environment. Next to Christianity, Rome's citizens could choose from among several other philosophical and religious options. Greek myths continued to be taught through education in the poets while debates among the philosophical schools were commonplace, each claiming to be superior to the others. In this context, Justin Martyr, a Christian philosopher and teacher, was one of the faith's staunchest and most capable defenders against the various accusations to which the Christians were subjected.

In this chapter, I will argue that Justin in his *Apologies*[733] engaged in a debate over the right concept of God, advancing an argument from fittingness which showed that despite similarities to the Greek myths, the Christian philosophy uniquely retained a fitting concept of God's nature. On the other hand, Greek myths were shown to be unfitting distortions of the truth by evil demons. Moreover, I will show that Justin's argument is embedded in a wider philosophical discourse which linked the right knowledge and veneration of God to the ethical as well as general goals of one's life. While explicit fittingness terminology is less prevalent than in previous chapters, I will argue that the notion of fittingness is an influential concept in the background of Justin's arguments.

I shall begin with a short introduction to Justin Martyr and his *Apologies*. Secondly, I will sketch Justin's wider concerns and strategies in which the principle of "god-fittingness" comes to bear. Thirdly, I will demonstrate how Justin, after highlighting the similarities with Greek religion and philosophy, employed the principle of god-fittingness to attack both of these and shift the focus towards a discussion of the true and accurate depiction of the nature of God. In this context, I will also examine how Justin depicted the fittingness of the Christian notion of God by linking it with ethics as well as how Justin accounts for the reasons for the unfitting and fitting depictions of God in the Greek myths and Christian faith respectively.

I. Justin Martyr – An Overview

I.1 The Setting – Person, Place, Work

Justin was a Christian philosopher who was born in Flavia Neapolis (modern day Nablus) around the year 100 and died in Rome in the year 165.[734] Even though he called himself a Samaritan, he did not

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[733] While the *Dialogue with Trypho* as well as the pseudo-Justinian *De Monarchia* would be of interest too, I am restricting myself to the *Apologies* which in themselves already yield much to discuss.
[734] Ulrich, *Justin: Apologien*, 18; Minns and Parvis, *Apologies*, 32–33; Stefan Heid, "Iustinus Martyr I," *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum* 19 (2000): 821.

belong to the religious group of the Samaritans (*Dial.* 29.1, 120.6; *2Apol.* 15.1). Indeed, he was born to pagan parents and not circumcised (*1Apol.* 1.1; *Dial*. 29.1-3). After having experienced the teaching of various philosophical schools, Justin became a Christian before the year 135[735], and returned to Rome for a second time (M. Just. 3.3 Rec. A/B), living above the baths of Myrtinus (M. Just. 3.3 Rec. A). During this time in Rome, Justin lived the life of a Christian philosopher, teaching in his own Christian school, which was probably located in his home above the baths of the mentioned Myrtinus. In this capacity, Justin engaged in public debates with members of other philosophical schools (*2Apol.* 8.1-6). However, around the year 165, Justin, along with his pupils, was tried and executed by the urban prefect Quintus Iunius Rusticus (M. Just. 1.1 (rec. A/C; 1.2 (rec. B); 5.8, 6.1 (rec. B), 5.2, 6.1 (rec. C).[736] It was then Tertullian who gave Justin the epithet of "philosopher and martyr" (*Adv. Val.* 5.1) at the beginning of the third century.

Among the eight works attributed to Justin, the only ones regarded as genuine are his two *Apologies* (*1/2Apol.*) and his *Dialogue with Trypho the Jew* (*Dial.*).[737] What can be seen from these three works as well as his lost *Syntagma* (*1Apol.* 26.8; *H.E.* 4.11.8) and *"Against Marcion"* (*Adv. Haer.* IV.6.2; V.26.2; *H.E.* 4.18.9-12) is that Justin engaged with the three main intellectual and religious competitors of his day: emerging Rabbinic Judaism, divergent Christian beliefs, such as Marcion's, and lastly the "pagan" Greco-Roman philosophical and religious landscape, which among others included Stoic and Platonist philosophies as well as mystery cults.

1.2 The Apologies – A Brief Introduction

While it is common to assume that Justin wrote two apologies, our *1Apol* and *2Apol*, the evidence at large seems to suggest that Justin originally only wrote one apology.[738] The question resultant from this assumption then obviously regards the nature and relationship between the *First* and the *Second*

[735] Ulrich, *Justin: Apologien*, 19.
[736] Whether Justin's opponent, the Stoic/Cynic philosopher Crescens was involved in Justin's execution as mentioned by Eusebius (H.E. 4.16.7) is possible but not certain. Cf. also Tert., *Orat*. 19.2 See Ibid., 27.
[737] For an overview of these works see Ibid., 28–30.
[738] There a several, often somewhat convoluted, matters to consider and we cannot discuss them at any length here but only mention some main points. The primary manuscript, codex Parisinus graecus 450 (=A), transmits two separate apologies, yet reverses the numbering of these, labelling our *2Apol* as the (first) apology and our *1Apol* as the second apology. Besides this fact there are chiefly two issues at different but related levels, the first of which concerns statements made by the indirect tradition, namely Eusebius, whereas the second regards the content and formal character of the *Apologies*. While Eusebius assumes two apologies, it appears likely that what he takes as Justin's first apology comprised of our *Apol* and *2Apol*, whereas what he believed to be Justin's second apology had either already been lost at the time or is in fact Athenagoras' *Legatio* (the latter suggestion was first made by Harnack). Lastly, based on the content and formal characteristics of the *Apologies*, it has been argued that they either represent two individual apologies or one text that was later divided. Both positions have their unique rewards as well as problems, most of which can be resolved when assuming a middle position as has been done by Henry Chadwick, "Justin Martyr's Defence of Christianity," *Bull. John Rylands Libr.* 47, no. 2 (1965): 275–97. Further refined by Minns and Parvis, *Apologies*. it is also assumed by us. For further details on all of the issues discussed see Ulrich, *Justin: Apologien*, 42–58.

Apology.[739] The most convincing and elegant solution accounting for the character of each of the apologies has, in my opinion, been offered by Minns and Parvis. Following the reasoning of Minns and Parvis, we have to assume the following: Justin really did submit a petition, a so-called *libellus*, to the emperor.[740] After its rejection, it was subjected to a major revision by Justin and came to form the nucleus of the *1Apol* we have today. While Parvis simply stated that this nucleus "cannot be reconstructed"[741], Ulrich suggested that, whilst hypothetical, one might presume *1Apol* 1-12, 68.3-70.4, and *2Apol* 1.3-2.20 to be part of this nucleus.[742] Consequently, Ulrich assumes most of the protreptic material in *1Apol* 13.1-67.8 to have been added to this nucleus, which together formed *1Apol*.[743] Furthermore, the *First Apology* exhibits all formal characteristics of a *libellus* except for its ending. Given that the required ending is, however, found at the very end of the manuscript of the second apology, Minns and Parvis decided to transpose theses chapters (originally 14.1-2 and 15.2-5[744]) to the end of the *First Apology*, where they now form its end as *1 Apol* 69.1-70.4 and thereby fully restore the petitionary character of *1Apol*.[745] Consequently, the material contained in *2Apol* is best understood as "a series of disconnected fragments […] kept [as] notes – perhaps a notebook – of materials excised [from the earlier petition; FG] and resources that could be deployed in street-corner or bathhouse debate".[746]

However, a further point needs to be considered: who were the addressees of *1Apol* and what was its purpose?[747] Along the lines of our previous remarks, we will have to assume that the original addressees

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[739] The two most recent proposals are by Runar M. Thorsteinsson, "The Literary Genre and Purpose of Justin's Second Apology: A Critical Review with Insights from Ancient Epistolography," *HTR* 105, no. 1 (2011): 91–114. And P. L. Buck, "Justin Martyr's Apologies: Their Number, Destination, and Form," *The Journal of Theological Studies* 54, no. 1 (2003): 45–59.– while different in their distinct views – assume two *Apologies*.

[740] Justin calls *1Apol* an "address and petition (τὴν προσφώνησιν καὶ ἔντευξιν)" (1.1; cf. 68.3) and uses βιβλίδιον, the Greek equivalent for *libellus*, at *1Apol.* 29.2, 69.1, *2Apol.* 2.8 to describe his work. On the characteristics of a petition more generally see especially Wolfram Kinzig, "Der „Sitz im Leben" der Apologie in der Alten Kirche," *ZKG* 100, no. 3 (1989): 302–4; Minns and Parvis, *Apologies*, 24–25. The title and label of "Apology" was either introduced by Eusebius or a prior tradition he was dependent on; Cf. Ulrich, *Justin: Apologien*, 42–43, 127–28.

[741] Paul Parvis, "Justin, Philosopher and Martyr: The Posthumous Creation of the Second Apology," in *Justin Martyr and His Worlds* (ed. Sara Parvis and Paul Foster; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 35.

[742] Ulrich, *Justin: Apologien*, 56.

[743] Jörg Ulrich, *Justin: Apologiae - Apologien* (Fontes Christiani 91; Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 2021), 36.

[744] *2Apol* 15.1 is not part of this and, while often deleted, has been left at the very end of *2Apol* as a "dislocated fragment" by Minns and Parvis, *Apologies*, 269, n. 3, p. 323, n. 1. Cf. Ulrich, *Justin: Apologien*, 645–46.

[745] This transposition has additional codicological arguments in its favour. See Minns and Parvis, *Apologies*, 28–31.
Moreover, it should be noted that Minns and Parvis relocated what used to be *2Apol* 3, making it *2Apol* 8, whereby what used to be *2Apol* 4-8 has now become *2Apol* 3-7.

[746] Ibid., 27. Ulrich, *Justin: Apologien*, 57–58. assumes the same but stresses the educational context of Justin's school of the material likely used in debates. In his earlier essay, Parvis seems to have assumed *2 Apol.* to *only* consist of excised material that "is structured around the answers to hypothetical objections – it might have been used as a resource for street-corner debate" (Parvis, "Justin, Philosopher and Martyr: The Posthumous Creation of the Second Apology," 35.

[747] This question is obviously related to the previous issue regarding the number of the apologies, but due to brevity neither issue can be discussed in much detail.

of Justin's *libellus* were the Roman emperor Antonius Pius and his two adopted sons: Verissimus[748], that is Marcus Aurelius, and Lucius.[749] The reason for the petition seems to generally have been Justin's concern over an unfair treatment of the Christians (1.1; 4.5), more precisely their being charged purely on the basis of being called Christian, hence being charged *nomen ipsum* (4.1-6).[750] Moreover, the denunciation of a Roman lady as Christian by her husband, which consequently resulted in the death of her Christian teacher Ptolemy, the martyrdom of Lucius, and a further unknown Christian may well have been the concrete cause which prompted Justin to write his petition (*2Apol* 2.1-20).[751] However, as mentioned, the *First Apology* was not a real petition itself but a modified version of an original *libellus*. Since it maintained the form of a petition, its imagined addressees remained the same, namely the emperor and his adoptive sons, yet its intended addressees will probably have been pagans as well as Christians.[752] Justin's aim was to demonstrate to these addressees that the allegations against the Christians were unfounded and that while there were seeming similarities between them, Christian philosophy was true and superior to Greek myths and philosophy respectively. Lastly, various indications suggest that *1Apol* was probably written in Rome around 153 or 154.[753] The material of *2Apol* will have been from around the same time and was probably put together in its current form in the 160s.[754]

Justin had to defend the name "Christian" from various allegations it had become linked with. Among these were the charge of atheism due to the Christians' non-participation in public cults (13.1-4, 24.1), their denial of honouring the emperor (17.1-3), and their purportedly irrational and suspicious form of worship (13.1-3), which was frequently alleged to contain various kinds of immorality, often of a sexual nature (26.7-27.1-5; 29.1-3). Lastly, it was the worship of a crucified man that felt most strange to Roman sentimentalities and where "they declare[d] our [s.c. the Christians'; FG] madness to be manifest" (13.1; cf. 22.3).

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[748] Marcus Aurelius is addressed as "Verissimus", his commonly used nickname, originally given to him by Hadrian. See on this Minns and Parvis, *Apologies*, 37; Ulrich, *Justin: Apologien*, 129.
[749] See Minns/Parvis, pp. 24-25 on the form of the Apology as a petition/*libellus*. Parisinus Graecus 451 as well as Eusebius (*H.E.* 4.12, cf. 4.18.2) also name "the holy Senate and the whole People of the Romans" as addressees. This has been dismissed as a gloss that was introduced from *1 Apol.* 56.3. On this see Minns and Parvis, *Apologies*, 35–36.
[750] Justin argues against such treatment that "something is not judged to be either good or bad by the name it is called without consideration of the actions which are associated with that name" (4.1) and hence that the basis of any judicial charge should not be based on defamations connected to a group-designation but on rigorous examination of any actual deeds committed by the accused.
[751] There is no possibility to date the petition and it is neither attempted nor even acknowledged in any of the above-mentioned publications. Based on the possibility that the story mentioned in *2 Apol.* 2.1-20 may have caused Justin to write his petition and Quintus Lollius Urbicus being prefect AD 146-160, the petition might have been written between 146 and 152 (this would assume that Lucius may have been added to the addressees at the time of writing).
[752] Ulrich, *Justin: Apologien*, 60–64.
[753] Ibid., 59–60. Cf. Minns and Parvis, *Apologies*, 33, 44.
[754] Ulrich, *Justin: Apologien*, 60.

Over the course of his *Apology*, Justin addressed all these issues with the intention of refuting them and eradicating any fears and suspicions his pagan environment might have fostered against the Christian faith. During his various arguments, Justin demonstrates that while at first glance some of the things believed by the Christians appear not that different from what the pagans believed in their myths and philosophies, the Christians champion a concept of God which befits a true divine nature. Moreover, the fact that the Christians had such a superior and fitting conception of God was, Justin argues, reflected in their likewise superior morality in comparison to their pagan counterparts. The reason for this link must be found in the Christians' imitation of God's nature. It is to the issue of god-fittingness in this wider context to which I will now turn.

II. The Framework of the Debate

II.1 Logos as Ultimate Arbiter

As part of his address, Justin uses the epithets εὐσεβής, φιλόσοφος, and ἐραστὴς παιδείας for the three addressees of his *Apology*, Antonius Pius, Marcus Aurelius, and Lucius respectively (1.1).[755] All three of these epithets are markers of significant cultural capital, something highly valued during the time of the Second Sophistic, and certainly claimed by the emperors.[756] However, Justin immediately challenges the validity of these epithets, mentioning them several times in his *exordium* (2.1-4), asserting that reason will be the ultimate arbiter of the validity of these epithets. Justin maintains that

> "[r]eason prescribes (ὁ λόγος ὑπαγορεύει) that those who are truly (κατὰ ἀλήθειαν) pious and philosophers (εὐσεβεῖς καὶ φιλοσόφους) should honour and hold in affection the truth alone, refusing to go along with the opinions of the men of old (δόξαις παλαιῶν), should these be of no value. For not only does sound reason prescribe (ὁ σώφρων λόγος ὑπαγορεύει) that those who do teach anything wrong should not be followed, but the lover of truth must [...] choose to say and to do what is right (τὰ δίκαια λέγειν τε καὶ πράττειν)." (2.1).

Justin introduces the notion of "reason (λόγος)" as the criterion that determines whether the emperors are rightly characterised as "truly pious and philosophers", thereby appealing to the widely accepted notion that anyone who claims to be pious or a philosopher has to subject his thought and life to reason.[757] Indeed, the notion of living in accordance with reason, λόγος, was of major importance to the

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[755] On the titles of the addressees, divergences between Eusebius and manuscript A, and the related question of dating the apology in relation to the addressees see Minns and Parvis, *Apologies*, 34–41; Ulrich, *Justin: Apologien*, 129–31.
[756] While Antonius was already known as "Antonius Pius" for his alleged piety, the Latin *pius* rendering the Greek εὐσεβής, and Marcus Aurelius for his interest in philosophy, Lucius is ascribed the more general epithet "lover of learning (ἐραστής παιδείας)" (1.1).
[757] Ulrich, *Justin: Apologien*, 135.: "Für wahrhaft fromme und philosophisch orientierte Menschen ist bei allen Aussagen und Urteilen die Orientierung an der Vernunft bzw. am Logos verbindlich […]; die Ausrichtung an der Vernunft ist Voraussetzung für das ehrfürchtig-philosophische Leben".

Stoics, the leading philosophical school at the time, and can be witnessed in Marcus Aurelius' own Stoic writings:

> "Walk with the Gods! And he does walk with the Gods, who lets them see his soul invariably satisfied with its lot and carrying out the will of that 'genius', a particle of himself, which Zeus has given to every man as his captain and guide and this is none other than each man's intelligence (νοῦς) and reason (λόγος)." (Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations* 5.27)[758]

This passage well indicates the importance Marcus attached himself on following λόγος in order to imitate God. As we had seen earlier, the Stoics living in accordance with λόγος was one way of following God in the attempt to imitate and resemble his nature.[759] And, as we shall see in more detail, it is this notion that Justin makes a key point in his wider argument.

Justin argues that following λόγος has to trump everything including "the opinions of the men of old, should these be of no value" (2.1). These δόξαι παλαιῶν are likely pointing to the subsequently mentioned "gängigen Vorurteile gegen die Christen als auch die überkommene Rechtspraxis der Christenprozesse" which Justin will demonstrate to not only be unfounded but also contrary to reason.[760] Hence, by invoking the emperors' personal aspirations and their public image, Justin continues by putting the emperors' esteem up for debate:

> "you [sc. the emperors] hear on all sides people calling you pious and philosophers (εὐσεβεῖς καὶ φιλόσοφοι) and guardians of justice (φύλακες δικαιοσύνης) and lovers of learning (ἐρασταὶ παιδείας). But whether in fact you are remains to be seen." (2.2)

Besides the three epithets used in his address, Justin adds the epithet "guardians of justice (φύλακες δικαιοσύνης)"; the idea of the philosopher-ruler who is concerned with justice being a Platonic notion.[761] Consequently, proceeding along the lines of the notion of justice, Justin argues that the legitimacy of all these epithets will be determined by whether the emperors will "give judgment (τὴν κρίσιν) in accordance with careful and exact reasoning (κατὰ τὸν ἀκριβῆ καὶ ἐξεταστικὸν λόγον)" or whether they will let themselves be guided by prejudices, external influence, and "irrational impulse (ἢ ἀλόγῳ ὁρμῇ)" in their judgment (2.3). If they were to fall prey to the latter, the emperors, Justin claims, would end up "giving a verdict which would actually be against [them]selves" (2.3). Hence, as noted by Ulrich, Justin has inverted the situation at hand, ultimately making the emperors stand trial instead

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758 This passage, among others, has been referenced by Ibid.
759 E.g. Seneca, *Epistles*, 92.3; Epictetus, *Dissertationes* 2.14.11–13. See for these the discussion above.
760 In his commentary on the passage, Ulrich does not suggest that this phrase might also refer to the *mos mairoum* (Ulrich, *Justin: Apologien*, 136.). Yet, one of his later comments can be read as suggesting this to be envisaged here as well (Ibid., 399, with n. 32.). Indeed, I deem it likely to be the case as we shall find Justin challenge the *mos mairoum*.
761 Cf. also Ulrich, *Justin: Apologien*, 137.

of the Christians.[762] To further illustrate the gravity of the situation that Justin believes the emperors to be in, he draws a parallel between the situation of the Christians and Socrates by alluding to a well-known statement by Socrates in Plato's *Apology of Socrates*: "You have the power to kill us, but not to harm us" (2.4).[763] By having changed Plato's original phrase to address the emperors directly, Justin is able to cast the emperors as Socrates' accusers, Meletos and Anytos.[764] Since Socrates' death at the hands of the Athenian rulers was commonly thought of as one of antiquity's greatest calamities, Justin is effectively warning the emperors not to commit a similar tragedy by unreasonably condemning the Christians. After these remarks, Justin submits that the emperors ought to judge the Christian neither according to rumours (3.1), nor *nomen ipsum* (4.1-6; *2Apol* 2.16) but to "inspect both our life and our teachings" based on reason (3.4; cf. 2.3).

III. Fittingness in Justin

III.1 The Similarities between Christian Faith and Greek Myths and Philosophies

In his defence of the Christian faith, Justin ultimately has to deal with two major pillars of Greek thought: poetry and philosophy. Instead of flatly rejecting either of them, Justin is able to achieve two helpful objectives by pointing out some seeming similarities between pagan myths, philosophy and Christian beliefs. As a result, his pagan audience might be less apprehensive about some Christian beliefs as they resembled pagan myths and philosophy. Additionally, the Christian philosophy would be shown to be a serious competitor for other philosophies.

Justin begins with one of the Christians' core beliefs, which is that

> "the Logos, which is the first offspring of God, was born without sexual intercourse as Jesus Christ our teacher, and that after his crucifixion, death, and resurrection he went up to heaven" (21.1).

Justin purports that the individual statements made in this profession should not appear strange to the pagans since in these the Christians "introduce nothing stranger than those you [sc. pagans; FG] call the sons of Zeus [who] […] are said by the writers you hold in honour to have gone up to heaven" (21.1-2). Indeed, Justin lists several of Zeus' sons, such as Asclepius, Dionysus, Heracles, the Dioscuri, and Perseus, who were believed by the Greeks "to have gone up to heaven" (21.2). Even a mere human figure like Ariadne, Justin notes, has "been set among the stars", implying her ascension (21.3).

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[762] Ibid. See especially his essay Jörg Ulrich, "Die Kaiser vor Gericht: Zur Umkehrung des Gerichtsszenarios in der „ersten Apologie" Justins," in *Kirche und Kaiser in Antike und Spätantike* (ed. Uta Heil and Jörg Ulrich; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017), 61–88.
[763] Referring to Plato*, Apol* 30c. Cf. Minns and Parvis, *Apologies*, 83, n. 2.
[764] Ulrich, *Justin: Apologien*, 138–39.

Moreover, similar beliefs connected to the apotheosis of the Roman emperors, who are "made into gods" the moment someone swore "that he ha[d] seen the cremated Caesar going up to heaven from the pyre" (21.3), are mentioned by Justin with subtle irony. Similarly, the belief that Jesus is called the son of God should not come as a surprise, for "all the writers call God the father of men and gods" (22.1). Neither should seemingly more specific Christian ideas such as Christ being the Logos of God or being born of a virgin appear as strange beliefs to the Greek mind. Rather, Justin claims that the former is nothing else than the Greeks' "calling Hermes the logos who announces the things that come from God" (22.2), just like the latter is comparable to Perseus' virginal birth that came about from Danae's virginal conception by Zeus disguised as golden rain (22.5).[765] Moreover, just like Christ suffered on the cross, the Greeks likewise believed that the "sons of Zeus […] suffered (παθοῦσιν)" (22.3).[766] Also, the healing miracles of Christ are paralleled with the healings ascribed to Asclepios (22.6).

Justin is likewise keen to draw out the parallels between Christian beliefs and Greek philosophy, especially focusing on the two leading philosophical schools at the time, the Stoics and the Platonists. Regarding Stoic philosophy, Justin can unhesitatingly attest "that the followers of Stoic opinions were decent at any rate with regard to their ethical doctrine" (*2Apol* 7.1) and praises Heraclitus and Musonius as some of their prominent teachers. Musonius, a first century Stoic, was highly regarded at the time and his pupils had a major impact on Stoic philosophy as well as on Justin's addressee Marcus Aurelius (since Musonius' pupil Athenodotos was the teacher of Fronto who in turn was the teacher of Marcus Aurelius). Moreover, Marcus himself referred to and praised the writings of arguably Musonius' most famous student: the Stoic Epictetus. Although the mention of the Pre-Socratic Heraclitus might appear odd, he "was looked upon as a forerunner of the Stoics" due to his teachings on fate, logos, and conflagration and also influenced Marcus Aurelius.[767] Besides this approval of Stoic ethics, Justin assimilated the Stoic idea of ἐκπύρωσις to Christian eschatological beliefs to the extent that he claimed that in "saying that there will be a conflagration, we [sc. the Christians; FG] will seem to speak the opinion of the Stoics" (20.4).[768]

Furthermore, in the area of eschatology, Justin can also allege similarities with Platonism, asserting that Christians and Platonists both assume the existence of eschatological punishment (8.4). Additionally, Justin claims a correspondence between Christian eschatological beliefs and broader philosophical thought, asserting that the Christian belief of the soul's consciousness after death and its being able to experience punishment is also affirmed in "the teachings of the writers, Empedocles and Pythagoras, Plato and Xenocrates, and those who say the same sort of things" (18.5; cf. 20.4). Lastly, Justin claims

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765 See Ibid., 265. Cf. Homer, *Iliad* 14.319.
766 As we can see, Justin does not mention the cross in reference to the Greeks since he believes this to be a unique Christian feature which was not imitated in the Greek myths. See on this below.
767 Minns and Parvis, *Apologies*, 297, n. 6.
768 However, as we shall see in due course, Justin will indeed reject the Stoic notion of conflagration.

that the Christians "seem to speak the opinion of Plato" in their belief that "all things were fashioned and came into being through God" (20.4) and are paralleled in their critique of idol worship by the poet Menander since he supposedly "declared the artisan to be greater than the thing crafted" (20.5; cf. 9.1).

In conclusion, by comparing the Greek myths with Christian beliefs, the latter have been demonstrated by Justin to be similar to the former and hence Justin claims that the Christians "seem to say the same things as the poets and philosophers" (20.4) and protests the fact that "although we say similar things to the Greeks, we alone are hated on account of the name of Christ" (24.1). Moreover, by pointing out that in some areas of their faith the Christians "seem to speak the opinion of Plato […] [and in others] the opinion of the Stoics" (20.4) or other Greek luminaries, Justin will have demonstrated to his pagan audience that Christian belief is rational and can compete with the respected philosophical schools of the day.

III.2 Rejecting the Unfitting Myths and Philosophical Ideas

III.2.1 The Unfittingness of Myths

However, the concept of God upheld by Justin is that of a "God who is most true and the Father of justice and temperance and the other virtues and who is unalloyed with evil" (6.1; cf. *2Apol* 6.9). Moreover, this God is also "good (ἀγαθός)" (10.2; 14.2; *Dial*. 23.2), providential (*2Apol* 4.2; *Dial*. 118.3) and showing his "loving-kindness" (10.1). Moreover, God is presumed "unchangeable and eternal (τὸν ἄτρεπτον καὶ ἀεὶ ὄντα θεὸν)" (13.4), "passionless (ἀπαθής)" (25.2; cf. *Dial*. 124.4) and "self-sufficient (ἀνενδεής)" (13.1; 10.1; *Dial*. 23.2).[769] As is evident, Justin's notion of God clearly adhered to the first and second Platonic typos. Consequently, he was to find many issues with the stories the myths propagated about the gods in particular as well as certain philosophical doctrines.

Hence, in a second step, Justin shifts gears towards a discussion of the true and fitting notion of God. In this discussion, Justin employs the principle of "god-fittingness" as a hermeneutical tool with which to vigorously attack notions of god's nature as construed by Greek myths and philosophy, exposing the former to be distorted notions which have been brought about by the demons and which carry grave implications for the realms of education and ethics and the latter to merely be limited, derivative, and at times misunderstood insights and plagiarised accounts on the nature of God.

First, Justin argues that despite their similarities, the Greek myths present, unlike the Christian stories, an unfitting notion of god. Mirroring the traditional Greek critique of the Homeric and Hesiodic myths, Justin argues that the myths contain false – that is unfitting – accounts of the nature of the gods, for in these

[769] [see also "eternal (ἀεί)" (13.4; Dial. 3.5) (cf. Dial 23.2: immutable (ὄντα ἀεὶ))].

> "even Zeus, according to them the leader and begetter of all, was both a parricide and the son of a father who was also such, and, enslaved by love to evil and shameful pleasures, had sex with Ganymede and with the many women he debauched, and that his own children did similar things" (21.5).

Justin here clearly takes up some of the unfitting depictions of Zeus predominantly found in Homeric and Hesiodic poetry which had been the subject of a long tradition of criticism.[770] By pointing out that the Greek myths ascribe shameful deeds to Zeus – such as (alleged) parricide and sexual immorality – Justin rejects that the Greek myths present a truthful source for pagans on which to base their notion of god's nature. Moreover, Justin also exposes the sexually immoral acts of other gods, whose mysteries are still celebrated by the pagans, such as Persephone's and Aphrodite's love of Adonis and "Dionysus the son of Semele and Apollo the child of Leto, or [sic!] who because of love of males did things which it is shameful even to mention" (25.1). However, in contrast to the gods of the Greek myths which fall short of a god-fitting behaviour, Justin asserts that the Christians assume an

> "unbegotten and passionless God, whom we do not believe had frenzied sex either with Antiope or the other women like her, or with Ganymede, nor do we believe that through Thetis he obtained the help of that hundred-handed one, and so was loosed from his bonds" (25.2).

Hence, we can observe that Justin juxtaposes the fitting notion of the Christian God who is "passionless" with the unfitting notion of the adulterous Zeus who shows his sexual passion in the pursuit of his immoral promiscuity. Moreover, Justin refers to another poetic depiction which showed Zeus to be powerless and requiring the help of the hundred-hander Briareus, another notion that was not considered to befit the nature of a true God.[771] Therefore, since the Greek myths portray the gods as immoral and weak, Justin derides them for not propagating a god-fitting account of divine nature.

It is worth noting, however, that Justin is aware that some Christian stories could likewise be dismissed for appearing unfitting. In the case of Mary's conception, Justin is aware that some could "charge against us the things we charge against the poets, who said that Zeus came to women for the sake of sexual gratification" (33.3) and hence elucidates that the conception was certainly "without intercourse" and that it was not God but "the power of God [who] came upon the virgin and overshadowed her, and caused her, though a virgin, to be pregnant" (33.4).

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[770] Hesiod described neither Chronos, nor Zeus as parricides, but as overthrowing their respective fathers. Additionally, Chronos is said to have castrated his father Ouranos. On Ganymede see Homer, *Iliad*, 20.231. For further details see above. Cf. also Ulrich, *Justin: Apologien*, 261, with nn. 263 and 264.
[771] Nothing is believed to be impossible for the Christian God (18.6, 19.6).

3.2.2 The Effect of Imitating an Unfitting Concept of God

Just like the goal of imitating God and becoming akin to God was a central tenet in Platonic, Stoic, and Epicurean ethics[772], so does Justin agree "that it is good to imitate the gods" (21.4).

However, the fact that by imitating God one expresses one's underlying concept of God leads Justin to argue that the pagan concepts found in myths are unfitting as they have a detrimental impact on one's ethics. In contrast, Justin argues that the fitting Christian concept of God results in the Christians' exemplary ethics and should therefore encourage his audience to consider the truth of the Christians' concept of God.

Mirroring Plato's concerns in the *Republic* regarding the mimetic influence of unfitting poetry, Justin deplores the harmful impact of poetry on education and morality, declaring that "the doings of those who are called sons of Zeus […] [had been] written to persuade to corruption those who are being educated. For all think that it is good to imitate the gods" (21.4). And just like Euthyphro is portrayed by Plato to advance the myths' stories about the gods to justify his own immoral behaviour, Justin mockingly suggests that if the accusations of Christian sexual immorality were indeed true, the Christians could easily have claimed to have "become imitators of Zeus and the other gods in homosexual intercourse with males and shameless sexual intercourse with women", ultimately justifying their sexually inappropriate behaviour by "bringing forward as […] defence the writings of Epicurus and of the poets" (*2Apol* 12.5).[773] Of course, neither is the case with the Christians as they do not think it right for "a sensible mind to be schooled in such an idea concerning the gods" (21.5) and rather "persuade people to flee such teachings and those who do and imitate these things" (*2Apol* 12.6).

The Christians also "seek after communion with God (ἐπιθυμοῦντες τῆς μετὰ θεοῦ)" (8.2) and it was the Christ-Logos who persuaded them to give up their former pagan ways and instead "follow the only unbegotten God, through the Son (θεῷ δὲ μόνῳ τῷ ἀγεννήτῳ διὰ τοῦ υἱοῦ ἑπόμεθα)" (14.1). In his teachings, the incarnated Logos instructed the Christians of the will of God which they ought to follow (16.8-10) and the nature of God which they ought to imitate. As a result of the Logos' teaching, the Christians "dedicated [them]selves to the good and unbegotten God" (14.2) and abandoned their former immoral lives, forsaking "promiscuity", and "embrac[ing] only temperance" instead (14.2). All this was done with the goal in mind that God "only admits into his presence those who imitate the good things that are his attributes (τοὺς τὰ προσόντα αὐτῷ ἀγαθὰ μιμουμένους), temperance and justice and loving-kindness and all the things that are proper to God (ὅσα οἰκεῖα θεῷ)" (10.1). Markedly, the Christians are only able to know which things "are proper to God (οἰκεῖα θεῷ)" – that is, what characteristics befit

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[772] Philodemus, *On Piety* 71: "But those who believe our oracles about the gods will first to wish to imitate their blessedness in so far as mortals can, so that, since it was seen to come from doing no harm to anyone, they will endeavour most of all to make themselves harmless to everyone as far as it is within their power".

[773] The slight against Epicurean hedonism is unfounded but was common at the time. Cf. Ulrich, *Justin: Apologien*, 638.

his nature and are worthy of imitation – since they had access to a fitting conception of God via the incarnated Logos. As a result of this fitting notion of God, their pagan environment should, Justin argues, appreciate the Christians as exemplary moral citizens of the state (12.1), while the Christians' following and imitating God had made them "worthy both of freedom from decay, and of companionship with him [sc. God; FG]" (10.3; cf. 10.2). Since these things are professed to be the result of imitating a fitting conception of God, namely a Christian one, Justin contends that "it is in the interest of all human beings not to be hindered from learning these things but rather to be urged on to them" (10.5). Therefore, we have demonstrated that Justin utilised the link between theology and ethics found in the notion of imitation of the divine, where the former provides the object of imitation to the latter, to demonstrate the fittingness of the Christian concept of God by the superior ethics.

3.2.3 Some Unfitting Philosophical Notions

But while the Greek myths bear the brunt of Justin's critique, he also takes issue with some philosophical notions, notably Stoic ones. In particular Stoic physics are criticised by Justin, who notes that "in their discussion of first principles and bodies they [sc. the Stoics; FG] are not good guides" (*2Apol* 6.8). And even though Justin had earlier claimed eschatological beliefs held by the Christians to not be that different to the Stoic notion of conflagration (ἐκπύρωσις), he actually rejects the Stoic teaching of conflagration since, according to his reading of the doctrine, it teaches that "even God himself is resolved into fire" (20.2). Such a notion is, however, completely unacceptable to Justin for it suggests that God is subject to change in the process of conflagration, a notion which does not befit the true God whom Justin believes to be "superior to changeable things" (20.2), agreeing with the second Platonic typos. The same sentiment is probably the cause of Justin's denunciation of Stoic conflagration as a "most shameful (αἴσχιστον)" teaching (*2Apol* 6.3; cf. *2Apol* 6.9), expressing the unfittingness of this belief. Moreover, Justin argues that the related notion that God is material and inextricably linked with the material cosmos would result in God being "involved in every kind of evil in the whole world and in its parts" (*2Apol* 6.9), a clear violation of the first Platonic typos upheld by Justin (cf. 10.2, 16.6; 28.4). Hence, we observe that Justin believes some central tenets of Stoic physics to not befit God's nature, for they violate the first and second Platonic typos. Moreover, we notice that Justin uses the same standard anti-Stoic arguments advanced by figures such as Plutarch.[774]

[774] This has also been noted by Minns and Parvis, *Apologies*, 297, n. 2 with various references; Ulrich, *Justin: Apologien*, 590.

III.3 The Underlying Reason for Fittingness: The Struggle between the Demons and the Logos

3.3.1 The Truth of the Logos

Lastly, we shall situate Justin's notions of fittingness and unfittingness in his wider understanding of reality, a reality that consists of a struggle between demons and the divine Logos and which determines why certain stories and beliefs are fitting or not. Examining Justin's view of reality will ultimately enable us to understand why there are similarities between pagan myths, philosophy, and Christian beliefs and why there is a gradient regarding the god-fittingness of their respective viewpoints.

Justin utilises the ambiguity contained in the term λόγος. The logos is the Stoic universal logos that structures and pervades the world, the logos that enables human insight into truth and a moral life according to reason. This λόγος is equated with Christ, since "the whole rational principle (τὸ λογικὸν τὸ ὅλον) became the Christ" (*2Apol* 10.1).[775] Consequently, complete insight regarding God and reality can only be found in the "knowledge and contemplation of the whole of reason, that is, of Jesus Christ" (*2Apol* 7.3), since here alone the whole λόγος is fully present and accessible. However, the Logos had in earlier times disseminated some truth in the prophecies of the Jewish scripture. Indeed, this was not the truth of the prophets but that of the λόγος since it was "the divine Logos moving them" in their writing (36.1).[776] However, to understand these prophecies, one was once again dependent on the Logos. Indeed, Justin believed that humanity was able to gain *partial* and *limited* insights into the nature of reality since there was a "seed of reason (σπέρμα τοῦ λόγου) [which] has been implanted in the whole human race" (*2Apol* 7.1) by the Logos Spermatikos, who was also the Christ-Logos.[777] Given that each of these seeds was "a part of the divine spermatic logos" (*2Apol* 13.3), humans were – by activating their innate spermatic seed through the use of their rational faculties – in theory able to "dimly […] see what actually is (ὁρᾶν τὰ ὄντα)" (*2Apol* 13.5).[778] Such partial insights were granted to a few figures such as Socrates, who was able to uncover the myths' deceptive nature, Musonius, who was able to devise good ethics, and Plato, who was able to discover, but not always understand correctly, certain truths contained in the Jewish prophetic writings (60.5). Hence, *partial* insights could be reached either solely by contemplation or by being enabled by the spermatic Logos to recognise parts of truth in the

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[775] Cf. David E. Nyström, *The Apology of Justin Martyr* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018), 85.

[776] Regarding the Jews and their Scriptures that contained the prophecies, Justin asserts that Jews were neither able to understand their Scriptures nor recognised Christ when he appeared on earth (cf. 36.3; 49.5; 63.1-17). On Justin's usurpation of the Jewish Scriptures see just below.

[777] Dietmar Wyrwa, "Justin," in *Philosophie der Kaiserzeit und der Spätantike: Band 5/1* (Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie. Die Philosophie der Antike; Basel: Schwabe Verlag, 2018), 799.

[778] Dietmar Wyrwa, "Über die Begegnung des biblischen Glaubens mit dem griechischen Geist," *ZThK* 88, no. 1 (1991): 62. "Die menschliche Vernunft ist nicht selbst göttlicher Logos, sondern hat, insofern sie einen Samen und ein Abbild des Logos in sich trägt, eine von ihm verursachte Teilhabe an ihm in Form einer partiellen Erkenntnis der Wahrheit nach Maßgabe ihrer Fassungskraft empfangen".

prophecies and to take these as starting points for own further reasoning (44.8-9).[779] However, any further reasoning without the spermatic logos often led to contradictions among the philosophers (cf. 44.10, *2Apol* 10.3). These assumptions enabled Justin to account for the fact that Greek philosophy (as well as some poets) had similar beliefs to the Christians but undercuts its claim to originality since "anything good that has been said by anyone belongs to us Christians, for after God, we worship and love the Logos" (*2Apol* 13.4).

3.3.2 The Distortions of the Evil Demons

On the other hand, Justin believes there to be evil demons whose goal it is to "enslave the human race to themselves" to satisfy their need for sacrifices and worship since they were themselves "enslaved by passions and desires" (*2Apol* 4.4; cf. *1Apol* 12.5).[780] In order to achieve their much-needed worship and sacrifices, Justin believes that the demons manifested themselves in the manner of pagan gods[781] and frightened people by their immoral acts (5.2). Since the people were unable to assess the true nature of these apparitions, "they named them Gods, not knowing they were wicked demons. And they called each of them by a name which each of the demons had given it" (5.2). The evil deeds committed by the demons were later attributed to Zeus and his sons by the "poets and storytellers" (*2Apol* 4.5). Thus, Justin asserts that the Greek gods were in reality demons and the unfitting deeds narrated in the Greek myths were acts committed by these demons. Since it was common, as we had seen in the case of Plutarch and Philo, to attribute unfitting depictions of the gods in the myths to demons with the intention to safeguard the gods' nature, Nyström may well be right in thinking that Justin displayed some form of "mockery" when, after naming some unfitting deeds of the Greek gods, he simply claims that "the evil demons did these things" (21.6), since for Justin the demons were the Greek gods and hence were not a device to excuse the gods' unfitting behaviour.[782]

Moreover, since the demons are chiefly concerned with upholding their being worshipped, they exert utmost effort to eradicate everything that could threaten it. In this way, the demons were responsible for the death of Socrates as he was exposing the true nature of the Greek myths with the use of reason and was "throwing Homer and the other poets out of the City, taught men to shun wicked demons and those

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[779] Justin, moreover, asserts a literary dependency between Moses and Plato, the latter "taking this [sc. his teaching; FG] from Moses the prophet […] [who] is older than even all the writers in Greek" (44.8; cf. 59.1). Hence, alluding to the widely accepted 'presbyteron kreitton' motif, Justin claims that the prophecy of Moses, that is the Logos telling prophecies through Moses, to be older and therefore superior to Plato's views.

[780] In his account of the origins of demons, Justin is indebted to motives from *Gen* 6.1-4 and its elaboration in *1 Enoch*. Cf. especially *2Apol* 4, on which see Annette Yoshiko Reed, "The Trickery of the Fallen Angels and the Demonic Mimesis of the Divine: Aetiology, Demonology, and Polemics in the Writings of Justin Martyr," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 12, no. 2 (2004): 141–71; Nyström, *Apology*, 139–42; Ulrich, *Justin: Apologien*, 564–69.

[781] Their apparitions are described in the manner typical of Greek gods. See Minns and Parvis, *Apologies*, 91, n. 1.

[782] Nyström, *Apology*, 150–51.

who did what the poets said, and urged them to knowledge, through rational enquiry, of the God who was unknown to them" (*2Apol* 10.6).

Even more so, the demons were highly alarmed when they overheard the Logos speak to the prophets regarding the Logos becoming incarnate in Christ, since then everyone had direct access to the truth. Hence, the demons were determined to distort and discredit the Christian message and incite the persecution of Christians, all with the aim of leading people away from the Christian truth.

Firstly, in order to have people reject and not follow the truth that was about to be found in the incarnated Christ-Logos, the demons engaged in "myth-making through the poets" (23.3) to invent stories that resembled the prophecies of Christ, thereby ultimately deceiving humanity who "would consider the things said about Christ to be a marvellous fable, and similar to the things said by the poets" (54.2). However, the demons did not fully understand the prophecies about Christ and so their myths became distorted versions of the prophesies. Secondly, the demons "brought about the allegation of infamous and impious deeds against" the Christians (23.3). Thus, since Justin sees the demons at work in several aspects of reality, Korteweg has rightly spoken of Justin's "demon-ridden universe".[783] Therefore, the demons' responsibility for the imitation of the prophesies explains the similarities between myths and Christian beliefs as well as the unfittingness of the myths.

Conclusion

In summary, I have argued that in Justin's address to a generally pagan audience and people interested in the Christian philosophy, he demonstrated that while there were some similarities between Greek myths, philosophy, and the Christian faith, the former two fell short of conveying a fitting notion of God. Moreover, Justin highlights that the superior Christian ethics are fundamentally derived from their fitting concept of God. Lastly, I have briefly shown that the origin of the Christians' fitting notion of God is found in their having direct access to God through the incarnated Logos. Whereas the unfitting portrayal of the gods are, in the myths, due to the intentional distortions of evil demons, and in certain aspects of philosophy, due to the restriction to partial insight via the Logos Spermatikos.

[783] Theodoor Korteweg, "Justin Martyr And His Demon-Ridden Universe," in *Demons and the Devil in Ancient and Medieval Christianity* (ed. Nienke Vos and Willemien Otten; Leiden: Brill, 2011), 145–58.

Thesis Conclusion

This thesis has argued that the principle of god-fittingness, which had originated in the criticism of poetry and had come to shape the Greeks' way of thinking about their gods, continued to influence the Jewish and Christian ways of reading their texts and thus their theology.

In the first part of this thesis, I showed that the **Homeric epics** were the fundamental source for the Greeks' knowledge and conception of the divine. The poems' depiction of the gods as a monarchical family introduced a notion of fittingness for each individual god based on the honour each was due according to the characteristics common in monarchical families. Moreover, the Homeric epics not only depicted the gods as immortal and super-human, but also as anthropomorphic and anthropopathic. This resulted in various episodes which described the gods in human, all too human, ways. This portrayal of the gods in all too human ways elicited the critique of the Pre-Socratic **Xenophanes of Colophon**, who shaped the notion of god-fittingness into an evaluative tool, transforming the notion of god itself into a normative concept. While lacking the conceptual terminology, he assumed god's nature to be perfect, which excluded any anthropomorphic conceptions. While critique of Homer's portrayal of the gods continued, attempts were made to "save" Homer from his critics. A new point was reached when **Plato** exposed the detrimental influence of unfitting poetry on the Greeks' perceptions of the gods in the realm of education and outlined two guidelines to which any depiction of the gods had to adhere**.** Plato's two typoi declared that the only fitting way to conceive of and portray the gods was as good and immutable. The influence of these two typoi on the Greek conception of the divine was immense. Indeed, the continued relevance of the principle of god-fittingness in its Platonic form was demonstrated in the philosophical debates of the **Hellenistic and Imperial periods**. Likewise, the concern over the god-fittingness of the Homeric epics continued and different reading strategies were devised to account for the problematic passages, notably among them allegoresis.

The different roles played by the principle of god-fittingness in philosophical debates and the reading of poetry in Greek philosophy can be clearly seen in later Jewish and Christian writings. I demonstrated that **Philo of Alexandria** was concerned to uphold the principle of god-fittingness in its Platonic form, yet, at times, modified the principle of god-fittingness in light of the personal aspect of the God of his Jewish faith, highlighting that it was God himself who determined what was fitting for him. Moreover, we showed that Philo used different approaches to maintain the god-fittingness of the Jewish Scriptures. One was the introduction of intermediary beings to whom the unfitting elements of the story were ascribed. Another considered that while the god-unfitting elements of the Scriptures were not true, they simply reflected the author's intention of addressing two different types of readers in an equally beneficial way.

It was then argued that the principle of fittingness represented a major issue in second century Christian theology. **Marcion's** theology was explained as prompted by a concern over the unfitting descriptions

of God found in the Jewish Scriptures. Since for Marcion this God fell short of what was considered god-fitting, he was thought of as merely an inferior entity. Tertullian rejected Marcion's arguments, showing that Marcion's concepts of goodness and justice which underlay his notion of god-fittingness were fundamentally flawed and had, moreover, to be reconfigured from the perspective of the Christ-event itself. I then further argued that **Ptolemy's** *Letter to Flora* was confronting some of the issues which Marcion's theology had elicited, using an argument from fittingness. While conceding that Marcion had raised some legitimate concerns, his conclusions were dismissed as mistaken. In an intricate exegesis that utilised the principle of fittingness, Ptolemy considered the nature of the Jewish law to determine the character of the lawgiver. This lawgiver was revealed to not be an evil or wicked deity but a just God. Hence, Ptolemy dismissed Marcion's extreme conclusions as mistaken, showing Marcion to be an inferior exegete. Lastly, it was shown that **Justin Martyr** argued for the superiority of the Christian faith by showing it to be the most god-fitting philosophy which enabled a life lived in perfect imitation of the true God. In order to do so, he argued that the pagan myths were distortions and Greek philosophy limited versions of the true nature of God.

In summary, this thesis has demonstrated the vital importance of the principle of god-fittingness and shown that it was adopted from its Greek origins by Jewish and Christian thinkers, exerting a strong influence on their approach to the reading of the Jewish scriptures and the evaluation of God's nature.

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