

MAREN NIEHOFF

Philo on
Jewish Identity
and Culture

*Texts and Studies in
Ancient Judaism*

86

Mohr Siebeck

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Martin Hengel und Peter Schäfer

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Maren R. Niehoff

Philo on Jewish Identity and Culture

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For Udi, Maya and Ayana

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Jerusalem, January 2001

Maren R. Niehoff

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The translations of Philo are based on those of the LCL edition, with modifications and frequent corrections. For the *Legatio* I have usually preferred the translation by E. M. Smallwood.

Abbreviations

Journals and Series

AJP	American Journal of Philology
AJS Rev.	Association for Jewish Studies Review
Ak. d. Wiss. u. Lit., Abhandl. Geist. u. Soz. Wiss. Kl.	Akademie der Wissenschaften und Literatur, Abhandlungen der Geistes- und Sozialwissenschaftlichen Klasse
Am. Jour. of Anc. Hist.	American Journal of Ancient History
Am. Phil. Assoc. Monogr. Ser.	American Philological Association, Monograph Series
Am. Philos. Quart.	American Philosophical Quaterly
ANRW	Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt. Geschichte und Kultur Roms im Spiegel der neueren Forschung
APA	Abhandlungen der Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften
ASP	American Studies in Papyrology
Bull. Soc. Arch. Alex.	Bulletin. Societe archéologique d'Alexandrie
BZAW	Beihefte zur "Zeitschrift zur alttestamentlichen Wissenschaft" (ZAW)
Cambr. Phil. Soc. Suppl. vol.	Cambridge Philological Society, Supplement volume
CAH	Cambridge Ancient History
CBQ	Catholic Biblical Quaterly
CCSL	Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina
CJ	Classical Journal
CP	Classical Philology
CPJ	Corpus Papyrorum Judaicarum
CQ	The Classical Quaterly
CW	The Classical World
GLAJJ	Menachem Stern: Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism, Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Hu- manities, 3 vols, 1974–1984.
HTR	The Harvard Theological Review
HUCA	Hebrew Union College Annual
JANES	Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society of Columbia University
JBL	Journal of Biblical Literature
JEA	The Journal of Egyptian Archeology
JHS	Journal of Hellenistic Studies

JJS	Journal of Jewish Studies
JPS	Jewish Publication Society (of America)
JQR	The Jewish Quaterly Review
JRS	The Journal of Roman Studies
JSJ	Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic and Roman Periods
JSNT	Journal for the Study of the New Testament
JSOT	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament
JSQ	Jewish Studies Quaterly
JSS	Journal of Semitic Studies
JThS	Journal of Theological Studies
JStPs	Journal for the Studies of the Pseudepigrapha
LCL	The Loeb Classical Library
Mem. Am. Ac. in Rome	Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome
MH	Museum Helveticum
MJSt	Münsteraner Judaistische Studien
NT	Novum Testamentum
NTS	New Testament Studies
Pap. Mon. Am. Ac. Rome	Papers and Monographs of the American Academy in Rome
PBSR	Papers of the British School at Rome
Proc. XII. Intern. Congr. Pap.	Proceedings at the International Congress of Papyrology
Proceed. Mass. Hist. Soc.	Proceedings. Massachussets Historical Society
PT	Poetics Today
RB	Revue Biblique
REG	Revue des Études grecques
RIDA	Revue International des Droits de l'Antiquité
RHR	Revue de l'Histoire des Religions
SBL	Society of Biblical Literature
SBL Diss. Ser.	Society of Biblical Literature, Dissertation Series
SBLSP	Society of Biblical Literature, Seminar Papers
ScEs	Scienes Ecclesiastiques
SCI	Scripta Classica Israelica
SGRR	Studies in Greek and Roman Religion
Sitzungber. Kön. Pr. Akad. d. Wiss.	Sitzungebreicht der Königlich-Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften
SPhA	The Studia Philonica Annual
SP	Studia Philonica
TAPA	Transactions (and Proceedings) of the American Philological Association
TUGAL	Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur
VT	Vetus Testamentum
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament

Philo

Abr.	De Abrahamo
Aet.	De Aeternitate Mundi
Agr.	De Agricultura
All.	Legum Allegoriae
Cher.	De Cherubim
Conf.	De Confusione Linguarum
Congr.	De Congressu quaerendae Eruditionis gratia
Cont.	De Vita Contemplativa
Dec.	De Decalogo
Det.	Quod Deterius Potiori insidiari soleat
Ebr.	De Ebrietate
Flac.	In Flaccum
Fug.	De Fuga et Inventione
Gig.	De Gigantibus
Her.	Quis Rerum Divinarum Heres
Hyp.	Hypothetica
Immut.	Quod Deus immutabilis sit
Jos.	De Josepho
Lib.	Quod Omnis Probus Liber sit
Leg.	De Legatione ad Gaium
Migr.	De Migratione Abrahami
Mos.	De Vita Mosis
Mut.	De Mutatione Nominum
Opif.	De Opificio Mundi
Plant.	De Plantatione
Post.	De Posteritate Caini
Praem.	De Praemiis et Poenis
Prov.	De Providentia
Q.E.	Questiones et Solutiones in Exodum
Q.G.	Questiones et Solutiones in Genesim
Sacr.	De Sacrificiis Abelis et Caini
Sobr.	De Sobrietate
Somn.	De Somniis
Spec.	De Specialibus Legibus
Vir.	De Virtutibus

Ancient Authors

Aeschylus

Pers. Persae

Alexander *Aphrodisiensis* (*Alex. of Aphrod.*)

Met. Metaphysica

Aristoteles (*Arist.*)

G.A. De Generatione Animalum

Met.	Metaphysica
Nic. Eth	Nichomachea Ethica (Aristoteles)
Pol.	Politica
Rhet.	Rhetorica
<i>Arrianus (Arrian.)</i>	
Anab.	Anabasis
<i>Augustinus</i>	
De Cons. Evang.	De Consensu Evangelistarum
<i>Augustus (Aug.)</i>	
R.G.	Res Gestae
<i>Ben Sira (Sir.)</i>	
<i>Cicero (Cic.)</i>	
Ad Her.	Ad Herennium (ascribed to Cicero)
De Benef.	De Beneficiis
De Div.	De Divinatione
De Fin.	De Finibus
De Off.	De Officiis
De Rep.	De Republica
Ep. Att.	Epistulae ad Atticum
Leg.	De Legibus
N.D.	De Natura Deorum
Pro Rabiro Post.	Pro Rabiro Postumo
Pro Flac.	Pro L. Valerio Flacco
Tus. Disp.	Tusculanae Disputationes
Verr.	In Verrem
<i>Q. Curtius Rufus</i>	
H.A.	Historia Alexandri Magni
<i>Cassius Dio (Dio)</i>	
Roman History	
<i>Dio Chrysostomos (Dio Chr.)</i>	
Or.	Orationes
Paus.	Pausanias
<i>Diodorus (Diod.)</i>	
Bib.	Bibliothecae Historicae
<i>Diogenes Laertius (D.L.)</i>	
Vitae Philosophorum	
<i>Dionysius of Halicarnassus</i>	
A.R.	Antiquitates Romanae
<i>Eusebius (Eus.)</i>	
Ec. Hist.	Ecclesiastes Historias
Praep. Ev.	Praeparatio Evangelica
<i>Gaius</i>	
Inst.	Institutiones

Herodotus (Hdt.)

Historiae

Q. Horacius Flaccus (Hor.)

Ep. Epistulae

Iamblichus

Vit. Pyth. De Vita Pythagorica

Josephus (Jos.)

A.J. Antiquitates Judaicae

B.J. Bellum Judaicum

Contr. Ap. Contra Apionem

Juvenalis (Juv.)

Sat. Saturae

Livius (Liv.)

Ab Urbe Condita

*Lucianus*Quomodo hist. Quomodo historia conscribenda sit
conscrib.*Johannes Lydos*

De Mens. De Mensibus

Cornelius Nepos

Alc. Alcibiades

Ovid

Ars Amat. Ars Amatoria

*Philolaus (Phil.)*In Nic. In Nicomachi Arithmeticam Introductionem
(apud Iamblichus)*Plato*

Crat. Cratylos

Hip. Mai Hippias Maior

Leg. Leges

Men. Menon

Pol. Politicus

Rep. Respublica

Symp. Symposium

Theaet. Theaetetus

Tim. Timaius

Plinius the Elder

N.H. Naturalis Historia

Plutarchus (Plut.)

Alex. Alexandrus

Ant. Antonius

Cato Mai Cato Maior

De Is. et Os. De Iside et Osiride

De Lib. Educ.	De Libris Educandis
Dem.	Demosthenes
Praec. Ger. Reip.	Praecepta Gerendae Reipublicae
<i>Polybios (Polyb.)</i>	
Hist.	Historia
<i>Pseudepigrapha</i>	
Ar.	Letter of Aristeas
G. Th.	Gospel of Thomas
Jub.	Jubilees
Jos. and As.	Jospeh and Aseneth
I. Macc.	I. Maccabees
II. Macc	II. Maccabees
Sib. Or.	Sybelline Oracle
<i>Rabbinic Sources</i>	
b. Yeb.	Talumd Bavli Yebamoth
b. Kid.	Talumd Bavli Kidushin
b. Shab.	Talumd Bavli Shabbath
G.R.	Genesis Rabbah
K.R.	Kohelet Rabbah
m. Kid.	Mishna Kidushin
t. Kid	Tosephta Kidushin
Yalq. Shim. Numb.	Yalqut Shimoni on Numbers
<i>Seneca the Elder</i>	
Contr.	Controversiae
<i>Seneca the Younger (Sen.)</i>	
Cons. Helv.	Consolatio ad Helviam Matrem
Cons. Marc.	Consolatio ad Marciam
Cons. Pol.	Consolatione ad Polybium
De Brev. Vit.	De Brevitate Vitae
De Clem.	De Clementia
De Tranq. Anim.	De Tranquillitate Animi
De Vita Beat.	De Vita Beata
Div. Claud. Apocol.	Divii Claudii Apocolocytosis
Ep.	Epistulae (morales)
N.Q.	Naturales Quaestiones
Oct.	Octavia
Prov.	De Providentia
<i>Stobaeus</i>	
Anth.	Anthologion
Flor.	Florilegium
<i>Strabo</i>	
Geogr.	Geographica
<i>Suetonius (Suet.)</i>	
Aug.	Divus Augustus
Claud.	Divus Claudius

Tib.	Tiberius
<i>Tacitus (Tac.)</i>	
Agr.	Agricola
An.	Annales
Hist.	Historiae
<i>Pompeius Trogus</i>	
Hist. Phil.	Historia Philippicae
<i>Vergilus (Verg.)</i>	
Aen.	Aeneis
<i>Xenophon (Xen.)</i>	

Introduction

“Identity emerges as a kind of unsettled space, or an unresolved question in that space, between a number of intersecting discourses. My purpose is to mark some of those points of intersection, especially around the question of cultural identity, and to explore them in relation to the subject of ethnicity in politics”
S. Hall, *Ethnicity* 339.

This book is concerned with the ways in which Philo constructed Jewish identity and culture in first-century Alexandria. It deals with questions such as: what made Philo a Jew in his own eyes? Where did he draw boundaries between “us” and “them”? Furthermore, which features of cultural life did Philo distinguish as Jewish? What was for him a Jewish cultural discourse? All of these questions are patently modern. They derive from relatively recent theories and are closely related to a burgeoning literature on ethnic identity and nationhood. In an age which has witnessed both the collapse of seemingly stable categories and the re-emergence of hitherto obsolete ethnicities, questions of identity and culture naturally impose themselves. In Israel in particular such issues cannot be avoided by anyone consciously trying to understand his or her life in a wider intellectual context. Recent discussions, however, have often been informed by the specific conditions of modernity, such as printing, industrialisation and the nation-state.¹ This leads us to question their relevance to situations other than modern; to ascertain whether they apply exclusively to our own age or not. Close investigation does in fact reveal that modern scholarship has developed some theoretical categories which do transcend their particular time and are extremely useful for

¹ This is especially true for the so-called “modernist” school which has stressed the uniqueness of modern nationalism and its intrinsic connection to the conditions of modernity, see: E. Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford 1983); idem, *Culture, Identity, and Politics* (Cambridge 1987); B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London 1991, 2nd revised ed.); for a systematic criticism of this approach, see: A. Hastings, *The Construction of Nationhood. Ethnicity, Religion and Nationalism* (Cambridge 1997); R. Poole, *Nation and Identity* (London and New York 1999) 18–23; D. McCrone, *The Sociology of Nationalism. Tomorrow's ancestors* (London and New York 1998) 1–21; see also: A.D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Oxford 1986), who emphasized the significant continuity between concepts of ethnicity in the past and notions of nationhood in the present.

a proper understanding of periods other than modern. They throw new light on Philo and uncover aspects of his writings hitherto overlooked.

The theoretical models underlying the present study concern the idea that identity and culture are social constructs. Benedikt Anderson has stressed the constructed nature of collective identity in his felicitous and by now famous phrase that a nation “is an imagined political community” which is rooted in large cultural systems.² As some commentators have noted, Anderson’s definition implies an approval of national communities which are seen as products of positive intellectual creativity.³ Each community is thought to be constituted in its own particular way. It can be distinguished from others by its rather unique form of creating both a sense of belonging and difference. Anderson assigned to written texts in vernacular languages a crucial role in the emergence of imagined communities. This type of literature creates in his view the necessary forum for addressing potential members and shaping their collective self-awareness (25–46). These theoretical notions are sufficiently general to be helpful in thinking about related issues in pre-modern societies as well. The creative role of texts in forming a public discourse about national identity and culture can, it seems, be investigated in most historical contexts. Anderson’s own analysis of historical material, on the other hand, is highly problematic and leaves the reader without specific guidelines for further study.⁴ Such guidelines may be gleaned from the works of scholars who have described general features of constructing ethnic identity and culture: Frederik Barth and Clifford Geertz.⁵

Barth stressed in a seminal paper that the decisive factor defining ethnic identity is the group’s subjective sense of itself as belonging together and differing from others. He made scholars sensitive to the fact that “objective” criteria – such as geography, language and physical characteristics – do not by themselves constitute ethnicity. They only become relevant in so far as they are chosen by the group as ethnic markers. What ultimately matters is their symbolic value and not their physical existence. Barth therefore warned that com-

² Anderson, *Imagined Communities* 6, the cultural roots of these imagined communities are discussed *ibid.*, 9–36; see also: Gellner, *Culture, Identity, and Politics* 6–17, who adopts with some qualifications Renan’s voluntarist notion of a nation as involving a “daily plebiscite”; Hastings, *Construction of Nationhood* 26–7.

³ See especially: Poole, *Nation and Identity* 10–11, 18.

⁴ Anderson, *Imagined Communities* 47–65, argued that the South American Creole population created for the first time authentic concepts of nationhood, which were later phenomenologically repeated in Europe; this argument has rightly been criticized by Hastings, *Construction of Nationhood* 10–11.

⁵ F. Barth, Introduction, in: *idem* (ed.), *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries. The Social Organization of Culture Difference* (Oslo/London 1969) 9–38; C. Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures. Selected Essays* (New York 1973) 33–54; see also: J. Assmann, *Das Kulturelle Gedächtnis. Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen* (München 1992) 130–60.

ponents of ethnic identity must not be imposed from outside upon any group. A procedure which relies on “objective” and thus external factors only reflects the onlooker’s perspective, while missing the real sense of community which holds the group together. Scholars truly wishing to understand identity therefore have to acknowledge the standards set by the group itself. Relativity and subjectivity have to be accepted. Apparently negligible differences may thus reveal themselves to be major dividing lines between groups. Seemingly substantial differences, on the other hand, may prove irrelevant to the group’s self-awareness.

Barth furthermore identified certain strategies of constructing and maintaining identity. In his view the “Other” always plays a crucial and primary role. Barth did not refer by this term to the objective reality of other societies and states surrounding a given group. He rather suggested that a sense of collective self-awareness always emerges against the background of an imagined Other who is contrasted to one’s own group.⁶ Constructing the Other thus involves defining oneself. This may be done by pointing to a diametrical opposition between “us” and “them”.⁷ It may also take the form of describing semi-permeable boundaries which allow for certain similarities besides decisive differences. These types of boundaries, ranging from completely impervious to barely visible ones, are especially relevant in the context of multi-ethnic societies. Contacts between various groups are not only unavoidable here, but represent a part of daily life which is taken for granted or even welcomed. Ethnicity is in such a context constructed by distinguishing specialized tasks and particular social roles which are considered appropriate for “us”, but not for Others.

Geertz’s approach to culture is informed by a similar emphasis on the symbolic meaning which a group attributes to certain aspects of its environment. Following Max Weber, he defined culture as “webs of significance” which man has created for himself.⁸ Understanding culture thus involves a search for socially established structures of meaning and signification. As Geertz put it, we are not concerned with the closing and opening of the eye, but with the winks that are potentially conveyed by such eye movements. Culture emerges as an interpretative framework which renders man’s action meaningful and makes communication with others possible. It creates a public forum in which messages are exchanged and broader structures of significance attributed to specific human action. These social constructs provide man with crucial guidelines

⁶ E.H. Erikson, *Identity. Youth and Crisis* (New York 1968); idem, *Childhood and Society* (New York 1950, 2nd. rev. ed. 1963), suggested a similar dynamics on the level of the individual.

⁷ S.L. Gilman, *Difference and Pathology. Stereotypes of Sexuality, Race, and Madness* (Ithaca and London 1985), has shown that the construction of the Other is not only intrinsic to any formation of identity, but often goes so far as attributing pathological and abnormal qualities to the Other, which implicitly suggest the healthiness and normative values of one’s own group.

⁸ Geertz, *Interpretation of Cultures* 5.

without which his life would make no sense. Geertz indeed argued that human life would be unlivable without symbolic structures of meaning. These replace in his view the encompassing genetic codes with which animals are endowed, whose behaviour is largely determined from birth. Culture can thus be understood as an acquired code which has become as natural as inborn directives. This sense of naturalness is achieved by establishing a correspondence between the particular lifestyle of a group and a transcendental order rooted in the world as a whole. The formation of man's character in accordance with the specific customs of his nation is interpreted as an adjustment to larger, overall structures of meaning embedded in the universe. It is precisely the function of culture to draw that connection between the particular and the general, thus rendering man's life and customs meaningful on a much broader level.

The relationship between ethnic identity and culture is complex. Various interpretations have been offered. Often culture is seen as the driving force of national awareness. From this viewpoint, cultural distinction initially exists and then seeks self-expression in nationhood.⁹ Anthony Smith distanced himself from this approach and suggested more cautiously that ethnic, and subsequently national groups, define themselves partly by cultural components.¹⁰ Among the constructs which serve to define them is a myth of origin, a shared history with generally acknowledged heroes and a distinctive culture. Cultural components are in his view closely connected to the formation of ethnic identity, but do not precede it. Barth has taken a more radical view and criticized the very notion of culture engendering ethnic identity. He thinks that the relationship between cause and effect is precisely the other way round: identity comes first, culture second.¹¹ The latter results from the political and social choices which have previously been made in the context of defining the group's identity. There is, in other words, no culture without a specific ethnic context. The ways in which a group sets itself apart from others informs both its way of life and the meaning it attributes to its environment. Barth's approach seems to be correct. It is obvious that the emergence of culture cannot be divorced from the question of who we are. The politics and sociology of identity necessarily play a formative role in creating structures of meaning. As Stuart Hall has aptly formulated it:¹²

⁹ See especially: Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* 8–38; idem, *Culture, Identity, and Politics* 12–3.

¹⁰ Smith, *Origins of Nations* 21–46.

¹¹ Barth, *Introduction* 11. This argument has provoked considerable controversy. In Jewish studies it has been the one element of Barth's theory which has been rejected even by those who generally applied his model, see especially: S. Stern, *Jewish Identity in Early Rabbinic Writings* (Leiden 1994 = *Arbeiten zur Geschichte des antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums* 23) 135–8; S. J. D. Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness. Boundaries, Varieties, Uncertainties* (Berkeley 1999) 5–6.

¹² S. Hall, *Ethnicity: Identity and Difference*, in: G. Eley and R. G. Suny (eds.), *Becoming National. A Reader* (New York 1996) 347.

There is no way ... in which people of the world can act, can speak, can create ... can begin to reflect on their own experience unless they come from some *place* ... You have to position yourself *somewhere* in order to say anything at all. Thus, we cannot do without that sense of our own positioning that is connoted by the term ethnicity.

Constructs of ethnic identity must therefore be studied before culture can be properly appreciated. Culture indeed needs to be understood in the overall context of identity. Its importance, however, must not therefore be underestimated. As Ross Poole put it:¹³

If, as Renan argued, the existence of a nation is the 'daily plebiscite', then it is the national culture which secures the votes.

The notion of identity and culture as social constructs furthermore attributes a significant role to historical circumstances. If the idea of objective, stable identity and primordial culture is abandoned, relativity must be acknowledged. We must then accept the fact that concepts of identity and culture are constantly undergoing change. They are in a permanent flow and respond to the changing circumstances of history. The nature and outcome of a group's "daily plebiscite" naturally depend on the conditions of the day. Hall therefore rightly spoke about the construction of difference as "a never finished process" taking place in the changing narratives we tell about ourselves.¹⁴

These theoretical approaches to identity and culture provide new perspectives on Philo of Alexandria. They initially draw our attention to the fact that the views which transpire in his writings are constructs. They are the result of the author's creative imagination and particular choices, rather than a reflection of given facts. His discussions on Jewish identity and culture can therefore not be understood by reference to external criteria, such as the Bible and rabbinic literature. They must instead be appreciated by asking what made Philo a Jew in his own eyes. Where, in other words, did he himself decide to draw boundaries between "us" and "them"? Who were for him significant Others from whom he distinguished the characteristic features of being Jewish? Furthermore, what was for him a Jewish cultural discourse? How did he make sense of the specific customs of his people in a broader context of meaning?

Philo's views on Jewish identity and culture must moreover be appreciated as social constructs which have emerged under particular and changing circumstances. Neither internal stability nor detachment from the environment can be assumed. We must instead acknowledge that Philo wrote for a specific audience whom he addressed in terms meaningful at the time. His works had a definite

¹³ Poole, *Nation and Identity* 35.

¹⁴ Hall, *Ethnicity* 345; see also: idem, *Cultural Identity and Diaspora*, in: J. Rutherford (ed.), *Identity, Community, Culture, Difference* (London 1990) 222–37, where he discusses in a highly illuminating way the changing and creative constructions of Jamaican/Black identity in contemporary cinema.

social context and were grounded in contemporary concerns.¹⁵ Philo himself moreover developed and changed in the course of his life, switching emphases as he encountered new circumstances. Justice must be done to these changes as far as the often undatable sources allow.¹⁶ This holds especially true for Philo's construction of Jewish identity. In this area we can often distinguish significant developments both on external and internal grounds. These must be understood against the background of contemporary events.

Focusing on the immediate context of Philo's work leads us to a hitherto overlooked component: Rome. While her influence has increasingly been acknowledged regarding Palestinian figures, such as Herod, Josephus and Luke, it has thus far been neglected in the case of Philo.¹⁷ To be sure, Philo's works have previously been analysed with a view to Roman rule. Yet such studies tended to concentrate almost exclusively on the *Legatio* and *In Flaccum* which were used as sources for the history of the Jews under Roman rule.¹⁸ Rome's

¹⁵ See also: G. E. Sterling, 'The School Of Sacred Laws': The Social Setting Of Philo's Treatises, *Vigiliae Christianae* 53.2 (1999) 148–64, who has suggested a useful reconstruction of some aspects of Philo's social environment.

¹⁶ The chronology of Philo's works is notoriously difficult to settle and has been the subject of much scholarly controversy, see especially the divergent views of L. Cohn, *Einleitung und Chronologie der Schriften Philos*, *Philologus Suppl. Bd.* 7 (1899) 387–435, and L. Massebieau and E. Bréhier, *Essai sur la chronologie de la vie et des oeuvres de Philon*, *RHR* 53 (1906) 25–64, 164–85, 267–89. I have made no attempt to identify a specific order of works, but have relied on more limited and secure indications, such as Philo's reference to his old age in the opening of the *Legatio* (Leg. 1).

¹⁷ Regarding Herod, see: J. Geiger, *Herod and Rome: New Aspects*, in: I. M. Gafni *et al.* (eds.), *The Jews in the Hellenistic-Roman World. Studies in Memory of Menahem Stern* (Jerusalem 1996) 133–45; regarding Josephus, see: M. Goodman, *Josephus as Roman Citizen*, in: F. Parente and J. Sievers (eds.), *Josephus and the History of the Greco-Roman Period. Essays in Memory of Morton Smith* (Leiden 1994) 329–38; M. Goodman, *The Roman Identity of Roman Jews*, in: Gafni, *The Jews in the Hellenistic-Roman World* 85–99; G. Haaland, *Jewish Laws for a Roman Audience: Toward an Understanding of Contra Apionem* in: J. U. Kalms and F. Siegert (eds.), *Internationales Josephus-Kolloquium Brüssel 1998* (Münster 1999 = MJSt4) 282–304; J. M. G. Barclay, *Judaism in Roman Dress: Josephus' Tactics in the Contra Apionem*, in: J. U. Kalms (ed.), *Internationales Josephus-Kolloquium Aarhus 1999* (Münster 2000 = MJSt 6) 231–45; regarding Luke, see: D. R. Schwartz, *On Luke-Acts and Jewish-Hellenistic Historiography*, unpublished paper based on a lecture delivered at the European Conference of the SBL (Lausanne 1997); M. Goodman, *Jewish History and Roman History: Changing Methods and Preoccupations*, in: A. Oppenheimer (ed.), *Jüdische Geschichte in hellenistisch-römischer Zeit. Wege der Forschung: Vom alten zum neuen Schürer* (München 1999 = *Schriften des Historischen Kollegs. Kolloquien* 44) 75–83, has generally emphasized the importance of Rome for a proper understanding of Jewish affairs during the Second Temple Period, without, however, specifically analyzing Philo in this context.

¹⁸ See especially: E. M. Smallwood, *Philonis Alexandrini Legatio ad Gaium* (Leiden 1970); eadem, *The Jews under Roman Rule* (Leiden 1981); M. Hadas-Lebel, *L'évolution de l'image de Rome auprès des Juifs en deux siècles de relations judéo-romaines –164 à + 70*, *ANRW* II.20.2 (1987) 784–812, who makes very useful comments on Philo's pro-Roman position; in the past, however, Rome's presence was seen to be so oppressive that Philo had to become subversive and write in a political code which would escape Roman attention, see:

impact on Philo's overall ideas, on the other hand, has not yet become the subject of scholarly attention.¹⁹ Even Koen Goudriaan, in his otherwise highly convincing and important study of Philo's "ethnic strategies" has overlooked this aspect.²⁰ The presence of Rome, however, is absolutely vital for a proper understanding of Philo's Jewish identity. This is so, because Egypt profoundly changed after Augustus' conquest which turned the country into a Roman province.²¹ Direct Roman rule installed a new administration which significantly shaped the political, social, economic and cultural life of Egypt. Rome left an immediate imprint on the country, playing a substantial role in defining everybody's identity. Some Jews had already under Caesar become Roman *amicii* in Egyptian politics.²² Others may have shared the greater reservation of

E. R. Goodenough, *The Politics of Philo Judaeus. Practice and Theory* (New Haven 1938) 21–41; while this interpretation has from the beginning been criticized (see especially: A. H. M. Jones, *JThS* 40 (1939) 182–5; and A. Momigliano, *JRS* 34 (1944) 163–5, it is now revived by J. G. Kahn, *La Valeur et la Légimité des Activités politiques d'après Philon d'Alexandrie, Méditerranées* 16 (1998) 117–27.

¹⁹ Indicative of this trend is the fact that the *ANRW* series, which explores Rome's influence in culture, religion, literature and politics, deals only with Philo's political connections to Rome (*ANRW* II.21.1 (1984) 417–533). R. Barraclough, Philo's Politics. Roman Rule and Hellenistic Judaism, *ANRW* II.21.1 (1984) 417–553, even distinguishes between Roman rule and Hellenistic Judaism, treating all cultural and philosophical issues under the category of Hellenism as distinct from Rome. B. Schaller, Philo, Josephus und das sonstige griechischsprachige Judentum in *ANRW* und weiteren neueren Veröffentlichungen, *Theologische Rundschau* 59 (1994) 205, rightly criticized Barraclough for ignoring the connection between Philo's politics and his philosophy. A similar lack of attention to Philo's Roman context is visible in two other surveys: C. Mondésert, Philo of Alexandria, in: W. Horbury *et al.* (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Judaism* (Cambridge 1999) 3:877–900; J. Morris, The Jewish Philosopher Philo, in: E. Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ (175 B.C.-A.D. 135)* new engl. version rev. and ed. by G. Vermes, F. Millar and M. Goodman (Edinburgh 1987) 3.2:817, briefly mentions Philo's position as a "well-born provincial with Roman citizenship" without, however, drawing further conclusions for his works and ideas.

²⁰ K. Goudriaan, Ethnic Strategies in Graeco-Roman Egypt, in: P. Bilde *et al.* (eds.), *Ethnicity in Hellenistic Egypt* (Aarhus 1992) 74–99. Goudriaan himself admits the anachronism implied in his exclusive consideration of Hellenistic circumstances under the Ptolemies (*ibid.* 80), without, however, being aware of its serious consequences.

²¹ For a historical account of Augustus' victory at Actium and subsequent conquest of Alexandria as well as Egypt, see: Ch. Pelling, The triumphal Period, in: *CAH* (Cambridge 1996, 2nd ed.) 10:54–67; regarding the immediate and deep influence of Rome on the new province, see: A. K. Bowman, Egypt, *CAH* (2nd ed.) 10:676–702; *idem* and D. Rathbone, Cities and Administration in Roman Egypt, *JRS* 82 (1992) 107–27; M. Sartre, *L'Orient Romain. Provinces et sociétés provinciales en Méditerranée orientale d'Auguste aux Sévères (31 avant J.-C. – 235 après J.-C.)* (Paris 1991) 411–3; N. Lewis, "Greco-Roman Egypt": Fact or Fiction?, *Proc. XII. Intern. Congr. Pap.* (Toronto 1970 = ASP 7) 6–11; *idem*, The Romanity of Roman Egypt: a Growing Consensus, *Atti XVII Congr. Intern. Pap.* (Naples 1984) 1077–84; A. Stein, *Untersuchungen zur Geschichte und Verwaltung Aegyptens unter Römischer Herrschaft* (Stuttgart 1915) 119–31; V. Tcherikover in collab. with A. Fuks, *CPJ* (1957) 1:48–93.

²² According to Josephus, Antipater supported Caesar's war in Egypt. He was rewarded by Roman *amicitia*, citizenship and exemption from taxes (A.J. 14:127–39; *Contr. Ap.* 2:58–60). It must stressed that H. Fuchs, *Der Geistige Gegenstand gegen Rom* (Berlin 1938) 62

many Alexandrians, such as Timagenes, who continued to admire Alexander the Great and believe in his superiority over Rome.²³

Described by Josephus as a “man held in the highest honour, brother of Alexander the Alabarch and no novice in philosophy” (A.J. 18:259), Philo belonged to the rich provincial elite of the Greek East with whom the Romans entertained close political and cultural contacts.²⁴ Philo was probably a Roman citizen.²⁵ This would have been such a natural part of his status that he, like Plutarch, did not even bother to mention it.²⁶ Josephus’ praise of Philo as ἀνὴρ τὰ πάντα ἔνδοξος furthermore suggests that he was successful in public affairs. He himself complained that his intellectual work had too often been interrupted by “civil cares” in which he seems to have been involved as a community leader (Spec. 3:3). This kind of complaint surely refers to regular political activity before Philo’s participation towards the end of his life in the embassy to Gaius.²⁷ It indicates that he led the life typical of Greek intellectuals in the Roman empire. Nicolaus of Damascus, Plutarch and others characteristically divided their time between political responsibilities, philosophical conversations and their own research and writing.²⁸ They also entertained close

and *passim*, was fundamentally wrong in assuming that “das jüdische Volk hatte in der Zähigkeit, mit der es die Feindschaft gegen die Römer bei sich lebendig hielt, nirgends im Reiche seinesgleichen”.

²³ Regarding Alexandrian views of Rome, see especially: P. M. Fraser, *The Alexandrine View of Rome*, *Bull. Soc. Arch. Alex.* 42 (1967) 1–16; R. Mac Mullen, *Nationalism in Roman Egypt*, *Aegyptus* 44.3–4 (1964) 179–99; for details on Timagenes, see below chapter five. Augustus’ refusal to restore the Alexandrian *boule* certainly caused disappointment among the Alexandrians, see: *CPJ* no. 150; G. W. Bowersock, *Augustus and the Greek World* (Oxford 1965) 90.

²⁴ On the well-known Roman policy of supporting the local elites of the East and ruling through them, either directly in the framework of a provincial government or indirectly as “friends and associates”, see: Bowersock, *Augustus* 1–13, 30–41; M. Goodman, *The Roman World. 44 BC – AD 180* (London 1997) 138–9; E. S. Gruen, *The Hellenistic World and the Coming of Rome* (Berkeley 1984) 1:54–95.

²⁵ On Roman policy regarding citizenship, see: A. N. Sherwin-White, *The Roman Citizenship* (Oxford 1973 2d ed.) 291–306; F. Vittinghoff, *Römische Kolonisation und Bürgerrechtspolitik unter Caesar und Augustus* *Ak. d. Wiss. u. Lit., Abhandl. Geist. u. Soz. Wiss. Kl.* (1951) 1217–1366; regarding Philo’s Roman citizenship, see: G. Sterling, *The Jewish Plato. Philo of Alexandria, Greek speaking Judaism, and Christian Origins* (forthcoming) chap. one. J. Schwartz, Note sur la Famille de Philon d’Alexandrie, in: *Mélanges Isidore Lévy* (Bruxelles 1955 = *Annuaire de l’Institut de Philologie et d’Histoire Orientales et Slaves* 13) 591–602; idem, L’Egypte de Philon, in: *Philon d’Alexandrie. Colloques Nationaux du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique* (Paris 1967) 38, 43; and the recent discussion of Schwartz’ arguments by Barraclough, *Politics* 440–1.

²⁶ On Plutarch’s reticence in this respect, see: C. P. Jones, *Plutarch and Rome* (Oxford 1971) 45.

²⁷ See also: Massebieau, *Chronologie* 35; E. R. Goodenough, *Philo and Public Life*, *JEA* 12.1–2 (1926) 77–9; *contra* Cohn, *Einleitung* 427.

²⁸ Regarding Nicolaus and Plutarch, see especially: B. Z. Wacholder, *Nicolaus of Damascus* (Berkeley 1962) 14–36; Jones, *Plutarch* 13–47.

friendships with the Roman elite of the empire, forming their ideas and identities in relation to these *amicii*. Philo's family background, wealth and education perfectly qualified him for a similar position. He may have counted among his friends Seneca the Younger who was related to a governor of Egypt and spent in his youth time in the province. The families of the two men belonged to the same social milieu and are likely to have known each other. Philo may have met Seneca already in Egypt and then again in Rome when he came there on his embassy to Gaius.²⁹

The encounter between Rome and the Greek East is highly meaningful to a proper understanding of Philo's life and work. His views will often be found to correspond to those of other Eastern intellectuals who had been similarly brought up and then become involved in Roman affairs. In the present study of Philo this context has been carefully taken into account. The first section of the book, which deals with his construction of Jewish identity pays particular attention to the contemporary Roman discourse as reflected in the Greek East. The impact of Rome on political, social and cultural matters has in each instance been considered as an explanation for Philo's particular choice of boundaries. The way in which he constructed Jewish descent, significant Others and distinctly Jewish values are interpreted in light of contemporary Roman concerns. Changing circumstances, such as the crisis under Gaius, have furthermore provided important clues as to the developments of Philo's ethnic self-awareness. The second section of the book investigates how Philo's sense of identity translates into cultural structures. We examine here which distinctive activities, commitments and attitudes emerge from Philo's construction of ethnicity. More importantly, the characteristic features of Jewish life are analyzed with a view to the overarching meaning which he attributes to them. We shall see how he rooted Jewish customs in deeper structures of meaning which were in his view embedded in the overall order of the universe.

Philonic texts are not studied here as reflections of a given reality, but as creative constructions of an individual writer. They are understood as a means of communication aimed at shaping the identity and cultural awareness of potential readers. Philo imagined a community and outlined its features as he saw fit under the circumstances of his time. His narrative is evocative and meant to engender a certain mind-set among the elitist Jews who were his primary audience.³⁰ Philo's voice is distinct and to some extent even unique. It

²⁹ So far the connection between the two thinkers has been investigated from a purely philosophical perspective. Scholars tended to argue either for their dependence on a mutual source or for Seneca's dependence on Philo whose ideas he got to know when the latter came to Rome, see: H. Baumgarten, *Vitam brevem esse, longam artem. Das Proömium der Schrift Senecas De brevitae vitae, Gymnasium 77* (1970) 299–323; G. Scarpata, *Cultura ebreo-ellenistica e Seneca, RB 13.1* (1965) 3–30.

³⁰ For the most part Philo, as well as other Hellenistic Jews, wrote for a Jewish audience. His work must therefore be appreciated for its message in this context, rather than as

cannot be taken as representative of others and certainly not as typical of the whole Greek-speaking diaspora.³¹ His constructs of identity and culture must instead be appreciated against the background of a considerable variety of Jewish positions in Egypt.³² Despite the enormous loss of primary sources, some of this diversity can still be reconstructed from the extant works. Philo's failure to specify the names of other Jewish writers does not mean that he wrote his treatises without them in mind. Artapanus, for example, is an important point of reference. Even though his work survived only in most fragmentary form, we can see that his views were widely divergent from those of Philo. It indeed seems that Philo formulated at least some of his ideas in direct response to those expressed by Artapanus.³³ Philo's position on Jewish identity and culture can thus be fully appreciated only in the context of a vibrant and diverse community which formed many opinions on the burning issues of the day.

The specific objectives of the present book can further be clarified by distinguishing them from other approaches which have thus far prevailed in the study of Philo. It is from the outset conspicuous that my insistence on the connection between ideas and social realities sets this book apart from those primarily concerned with theological and philosophical perspectives on Philo. It is until now customary to appreciate him in the context of philosophical schools and to treat his ideas as detached *theologoumena*.³⁴ His writings tend to be discussed

apologetics for an outside world; see also: V. Tcherikover, Jewish Apologetic Literature Reconsidered, *Eos* 48.3 (1956); E. S. Gruen, *Heritage and Hellenism. The Reinvention of Jewish Tradition* (Berkeley 1998) XIII–XX. For a more detailed analysis of texts which have traditionally been taken to address a foreign audience, see below, especially chapter one.

³¹ *Contra* G. E. Sterling, "Recherché or Representative? What is the Relationship between Philo's Treatises and Greek-speaking Judaism?", *SPhA* 11 (1999) 1–30; idem, "Recluse or Representative? Philo and Greek-Speaking Judaism beyond Alexandria," *SBLSP* (1995) 595–616. Sterling's conclusion is problematic, because it is based on a too narrow sample of rather general ideas.

³² The diversity of Ancient Judaism in general has been emphasized especially by V. Tcherikover, *Apologetic Literature* 185–6; A. T. Kraabel, "The Roman Diaspora: Six Questionable Assumptions," *JJS* 33.1–2 (1982) 453–4; and with regard to Egypt especially by M. Pucci Ben Zeev, "New Perspectives on the Jewish-Greek Hostilities in Alexandria During the Reign of Emperor Caligula," *JSJ* 21 (1990) 234–5. One of the Jewish groups which has recently been discussed as potentially important actors in Egypt are the Jews of Leontopolis. By the time of Philo, however, they seem to have lost their significance. For divergent interpretations of their role, see: E. S. Gruen, "The Origins and Objectives of Onias' Temple," *SCI* 16 (1997 = *Studies in Memory of Abraham Wasserstein*) 47–70; D. R. Schwartz, "The Jews of Egypt between the Temple of Onias, the Temple in Jerusalem, and Heaven (Hebrew)," *Zion* 62.1 (1997) 5–22; G. Bohak, *Joseph and Aseneth and the Jewish Temple in Heliopolis* (Atlanta 1996 = *SBL Early Judaism and its Literature* 10).

³³ For details on Artapanus in comparison to Philo, see especially below chapters two, six and seven.

³⁴ See e.g. the recent article by D. T. Runia, "Philo of Alexandria and the Greek *Hairesis*-Model," *Vigiliae Christianae* 53.2 (1999) 117–47. The over-emphasis on religion in the study of Ancient Judaism has been criticized before, see especially: Tcherikover, *Apologetic Literature*, 186–93; Kraabel, *Roman Diaspora* 454–56; J. M. G. Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterra-*

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