

WHY DOES PHILO CRITICIZE THE STOIC IDEAL OF *APATHEIA* IN *ON ABRAHAM* 257? PHILO AND CONSOLATORY LITERATURE¹

Some of Philo's philosophical inconsistencies are not always the result of a supposed eclectic mind, or of the subordination of the philosophical material to the necessities of exegesis, but can also be explained in light of Philo's adherence to cultural conventions of his time and milieu. This is the case with the curious advocacy of *metriopatheia* (moderation of the passions) and the implied criticism of *apatheia* (absence of passions) in Philo's exegesis of Abraham's attitude upon the death of Sarah. I state that from paragraph 245 to 261 of his *On Abraham*, Philo adopts the popular literary genre of *consolation*, and that it is the close adhesion to the rules of this genre that explains Philo's odd preference for the virtue of *metriopatheia* over that of *apatheia*. First, the literary analysis of the passage discloses the fact that Philo is shaping a consolatory discourse built in two parts: 1) the eulogy to the dead Sarah followed by 2) the arguments of consolation. In both of these parts, Philo is inscribing himself within a long Greco-Roman tradition of consolatory discourses. The comparison with other consolatory pieces shows that the adoption of the ideal of *metriopatheia* is in fact a permanent trait of the genre. What is more, the literary analysis sheds light on another aspect of Philo's endeavour: the shaping of Abraham as a new hero of consolation and the modelling of the patriarch of the Hebrew nation in a way that fully corresponds to the norms and expectations of Greco-Roman culture.

At the end of his *On Abraham*, Philo recounts the attitude of Abraham at the death of his beloved wife, Sarah. According to Philo, the patriarch did not display an absence of passions or emotions (*apatheia*), but rather a moderation of the passions (*metriopatheia*):

And the advice of reason was this: neither showing agitation beyond measure as in front of an utterly new and unprecedented misfortune, nor showing impassiveness (*μήτε ἀπαθεία*), as if nothing terrible had happened, but choosing the mean rather than the extreme (*τὸ δὲ μέσον πρὸ τῶν ἄκρων ἐλόμενον*) he endeavoured to moderate his passions (*μετριοπαθεῖν*). (*Abr.* 257)

Why does Philo reject in this passage the Stoic ideal of the eradication of the passions (*apatheia*) which he supports and adopts as his own in many other places? This question raises another one: why does Philo attribute to the hero of his narrative, Abraham, a second-rank virtue, that is, that of *metriopatheia*? Indeed, in the third book of his *Allegories of the Laws* the inferiority of *metriopatheia* in comparison with *apatheia* is clearly formulated:

¹ I would like to thank Prof. Guy Stroumsa for his helpful suggestions and the anonymous referee of *CQ* for his careful reading and useful comments.

Therefore Aaron, since he is second after Moses – who cuts out the breast, that is, the irascible part (τὸν θυμὸν) ... first, cures and bridles it by reason ... but Moses thinks that it is necessary to completely cut out and remove the irascible part of the soul, since he is fond not of moderation of the passions (μετριοπάθειαν) but of total impassivity (ἀπάθειαν). (Leg. All. 3.128–9)

In this section, Philo echoes a controversy between two antithetic ethical conceptions. On the one hand, the Stoics did not accept the presence of any *pathos* in the sage's soul and proclaimed an ideal of eradication of the passions (*apatheia*). On the other hand, the Platonic-Aristotelian tradition tolerates the presence of passions in the soul of the sage, provided that they remain under the control of reason.² This acceptance of the passions, later labelled under the term *metriopatheia*, derives from a part-based conception of the soul which admits a passionate part as the natural *locus* of passions in man. At the opposite, the monistic soul model of the Stoics implies that each and every passion is seen as a disturbance of the soul as a whole, which is, according to the Stoics, purely rational. Therefore, for the Stoics, passions are nothing else but diseases of the soul, of which the sage should be free.

While no Stoic philosopher would envisage the Platonic-Aristotelian ideal of moderation of the passions (*metriopatheia*) and, conversely, no heir of Plato or Aristotle would adhere to the Stoic ideal of *apatheia*,³ Philo, in his *Allegories of the Laws*, combines these two conflicting ideals in a hierarchical order. Under Philo's pen, *apatheia* becomes the virtue of the perfect sage, while *metriopatheia* fits one who is making progress, that is, to the *προκόπτων*:

Indeed God has attributed to the wise man the best lot, that is, to be able to cut out the passions. See how the perfect man always practises the perfect impassivity (τελείαν ἀπάθειαν αἰεὶ μελετᾷ)? But the one in progress (προκόπτων), Aaron, since he is second in rank, practises moderation of the passions (μετριοπάθειαν) since, as I said, he is not yet capable of cutting out the breast and the irascible. (Leg. All. 3.132)

Thus the Stoic ideal of *apatheia* appears as the highest ethical degree for the Jewish philosopher.⁴ Therefore, one wonders if Philo has changed his mind in *On*

² For ancient accounts on this controversy see, e.g. Cic. *Tusc.* 4.38–47; Plut. *De virt. mor.* See also J. Dillon, 'Metriopatheia and apatheia: some reflections on a controversy in later Greek ethics', in id., *The Golden Chain: Studies in the Development of Platonism and Christianity* (Aldershot, 1990), 508–17; R. Sorabji, *Emotion and Peace of Mind, from Stoic Agitation to Christian Temptation* (Oxford, 2000), esp. 181–210.

³ Nevertheless, the philosophy of the 'germanissimus Stoicus', Antiochus of Ascalon, may be an exception to this rule. Notwithstanding, the scarcity of evidence concerning Antiochus' thought or, more generally on Middle Platonism, makes it a matter of conjecture. See Cic. *Acad. Pr.* 2.35. See also R.E. Witt, *Albinus and the History of Middle Platonism* (Cambridge, 1937), 90–1; J. Dillon, *The Middle Platonists, 80 B.C. to A.D. 220* (Ithaca, NY, 1977), 77–8; S. Knuuttila, *Emotions in Ancient and Medieval Philosophy* (Oxford, 2004), 87–8; J. Dillon, *Alcinous. The Handbook of Platonism* (Oxford, 1993), 188. Although it is not the place to determine if Philo's ethics are more Stoic than Platonic, we should consider the possible influence exerted on Philo's ethical thought by the Stoicizing Platonism of Antiochus of Ascalon or of Eudorus of Alexandria, which may be advanced as a plausible explanation for Philo's acceptance of the ideal of moderation of the passions. See J. Dillon and A. Terian, 'Philo and the Stoic doctrine of *eupatheiai*', in *Studia Philonica* 4 (1976–7), 17–24 and Dillon, *The Middle Platonists* (see above), 114–35. I would like to thank the referee of *CQ* for this suggestion.

⁴ See also Leg. All. 2.101–2; *Plant.* 98; D. Winston, 'Philo of Alexandria and the emotions', in J. Fitzgerald (ed.), *Passions and Moral Progress in Greco-Roman Thought* (London, 2008),

Abraham 257. Does he disclaim his own ideal in presenting the Platonic-Aristotelian *metriopatheia* as a better choice?

First and foremost, we must exclude a solution which would consist in seeing in Abraham a *προκόπτων*, 'one in progress', as Aaron is. Indeed, the overall tonality of the *On Abraham* does not support this reading. In this treatise, Philo aims to present the first patriarch of the Hebrew nation as the paragon of wisdom, faith and piety. Abraham's behaviour is as exemplary in relation to God as it is in relation to other human beings. He is explicitly referred to as a *σοφός*⁵ and depicted as one who has lived a perfect life (*Abr.* 271). Not only does he possess the four classical virtues of justice, courage, temperance and prudence (*Abr.* 219), but he is also the *νόμος ἐμφυχος*, that is, the animated law (*Abr.* 1–6 and 276). Thus Abraham is the living example of the Mosaic Law, before the revelation on Mount Sinai.⁶ What is more, if this solution explains the reference to *metriopatheia*, it does not provide any answer to the implied criticism of *apatheia*.

Scholars have noticed this anomaly and have proposed various explanations. For John Dillon, for instance, Philo is on the whole a supporter of Stoic *apatheia*, although in some cases 'he is prepared to commend *metriopatheia* more highly, even as an ideal of the sage'.⁷ In his view, what has dictated Philo's choice of the Peripatetic-Platonic ideal here is the wish to emphasize Abraham's humanity. David Winston speaks about 'Philo's fascination with the ideal of *apatheia*' and, according to him, 'Philo's sage is virtually a mirror image of the Stoic sage' though he admits that sometimes Philo adopts 'the milder Platonic view'.⁸ Other scholars have conceived two different kinds of *apatheia*. Thus for Carlos Lévy, it is the 'bad *apatheia*' which is displayed in *Abr.* 257. This *apatheia* is closely similar to a kind of indifference and inhumanity, while the good one consists in a lack of excessive and harmful passions and, as such, could be associated with *metriopatheia*.⁹ Simo Knuuttila adopts a rather similar stance and distinguishes between a 'Stoic *apatheia*' and a 'Platonic *apatheia*.' According to him 'the Stoic *apatheia* was criticized as a practical attitude to things; the Platonic *apatheia* of those who were perfect in likeness to God was not a practical attitude, but consisted in turning away from mundane matters without the loss of emotional dispositions'.¹⁰ As for Walter Völker, he notices an evolution of Philo's thought within *On Abraham* itself: from the commendation of *apatheia* which is, according to him, displayed by Abraham in the episode of Isaac's sacrifice (*Abr.* 170 and 175) to the ideal of *metriopatheia* promoted in the episode of Sarah's death.¹¹

201–20 and id., 'Philo's ethical theory', *ANRW* 2.21.2 (1984), 400–5.

⁵ As e.g. in *Abr.* 68, 77, 80, 118.

⁶ What is more, *QG* 4.30 contrasts Abraham, the perfect, to another *προκόπτων* of the Philonic corpus, namely Loth.

⁷ J. Dillon, 'The pleasures and perils of soul-gardening', *StudPhilon* 9 (1997), 191.

⁸ Winston, (n. 4 [2008]), 202–3. Note that Winston has also noticed the parallel between our passage and some of Seneca's consolations (ibid. 216 n. 14). See also E. Bréhier, *Les idées philosophiques et religieuses de Philon d'Alexandrie* (Paris, 1950), 29.

⁹ C. Lévy, 'Philon d'Alexandrie et les passions', in L. Ciccolini et al. (edd.), *Réceptions antiques* (Paris, 2006), 37.

¹⁰ Knuuttila (n. 3), 93.

¹¹ He also notes that the discrepancy is due to the Biblical text, in which it is stated that Abraham was mourning (*πενθήσαι*) Sarah (Gen. 23:2): W. Völker, *Fortschritt und Völlendung bei Philo von Alexandrien: eine Studie zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur* (Leipzig, 1938), 133–5. The question of the presumed *apatheia* of Abraham in the case of Isaac's sacrifice is far beyond the scope of this paper. Suffice to note that the term *apatheia* does not occur in the text of Isaac's sacrifice (*Abr.* 169–77).

From a broader perspective, the question of the criticism of *apatheia* in Philo's *On Abraham* 257 raises again the *quaestio vexata* concerning the treatment of inconsistencies in Philo's *œuvre*. If Philo has sometimes been seen as an unoriginal and unsystematic thinker,¹² since the seminal studies of Valentin Nikiprowetzky most scholars agree that philosophical incoherencies should be understood in the light of Philo's overall intellectual approach. Indeed, Nikiprowetzky has stated that the pivotal motor of the Philonian endeavour is the Biblical text itself. Philo perceives himself first and foremost as an exegete of the revealed text and, consequently, the philosophical material is subjugated to the necessities of the exegesis. Following this approach, philosophical inconsistencies can be explained as a consequence of the primacy of the Biblical text above any philosophical system.¹³

Without rejecting this view, I would suggest that some of Philo's inconsistencies are not always the results of the subordination of the philosophical material to the aporia of the Biblical text but can also be explained in the light of Philo's close adherence to the literary and cultural conventions of his time and milieu. Indeed, I would argue that from paragraph 245 to 261 of *On Abraham*, Philo closely follows the rules of a distinctive literary genre, that of the consolation (*παραμυθητικός λόγος*). I would state that it is his allegiance to the specific conventions of this genre that enables us to elucidate Philo's commendation of *metriopatheia* and rejection of *apatheia* in *On Abraham* 257.

CONSOLATION LITERATURE

Although ancient consolation literature was a very popular genre which crossed cultures and times, it is difficult to determine its sources and origins precisely. Some scholars situate its emergence in the Sophistic movement of the fifth century B.C.,¹⁴ others point to several earlier treatises entitled *Concerning the Dead* as possible ancestors of the genre;¹⁵ while still others posit some close association with the Cynic movement.¹⁶ Without any doubt, motifs of consolation are to be found from the earliest stages of Greek literature. Achilles consoles Priam whose son he has killed in *Iliad* 24.507–51 and Greek tragedies provide fruitful ground for consolatory situations.¹⁷

¹² See e.g. A.J. Festugière, *La révélation d'Hermès Trismégiste*, vol. 2 (Paris, 1949), 519–54, who does not mince his words, and for whom Philo is 'un parfait exemple de l'homme cultivé moyen tel qu'en ont fabriqué à la douzaine les écoles hellénistiques. C'est un bon élève nourri de lieux communs: toute occasion lui sert de prétexte pour répéter avec monotonie d'édifiantes banalités' (ibid. 519). This is also to some extent the approach of W. Völker, who repeatedly notes the unsystematic character of Philo's thought; see Völker (n. 11), *passim*.

¹³ V. Nikiprowetzky, *Le commentaire de l'écriture chez Philon d'Alexandrie: son caractère et sa portée, observations philologiques* (Leiden, 1977).

¹⁴ See [Plut.] *X orat.* 833C in which he describes the *τέχνη ἀλυσίας* of Antiphon the Sophist, the house that he has built near the public market of Corinth and in which he cured by his words those in affliction (*τοὺς λυπομένους διὰ λόγων θεραπεύειν*). See also R. Kassel, *Untersuchungen zur griechischen und römischen Konsolationsliteratur* (Munich, 1958), 3–12.

¹⁵ Such as the *περὶ τῶν ἐν Αἴδου* of Democritus (Diog. Laert. 9.46), of Protagoras (ibid. 9.55), of the Cynic Antisthenes (ibid. 6.17) or of Heraclides (ibid. 5.87). Besides the titles – that could also be understood as *Concerning the things in Hades* – nothing is known about those treatises. See P. Holloway, *Consolation in Philippians, Philosophical Sources and Rhetorical Strategies* (Cambridge, 2001), 56–7.

¹⁶ C.E. Manning, *On Seneca's Ad Marciam* (Leiden, 1980), 12 and Kassel (n. 14), 13–17.

¹⁷ See e.g. Stob. *Flor.* 4.54 and 4.56.

There is, however, no evidence for the existence of consolation as a distinct and crystallized literary form before the late third century B.C. Indeed, the lost work of the Academic philosopher Crantor of Soli (c. 335–276/5 B.C.), *On Grief* (*περὶ πένθους*), can be seen without any doubt as a cornerstone in the history of the genre. According to Diogenes Laertius, this prolific author and talented ‘word deviser’ was admired in antiquity especially for this letter addressed to his friend Hippocles at the occasion of his son’s death.¹⁸ According to Cicero, Panaetius urges Tubero to learn this ‘golden book’ by heart.¹⁹ The popularity of this treatise was considerable in antiquity and it exerts a profound influence on later works such as the *Tusculan Disputations* of Cicero²⁰ or the *Consolation to Apollonius* of pseudo-Plutarch.²¹ It is presumably the extreme popularity of this work which was the cause of its loss. It was so widely quoted and imitated that the original version vanished with time.

From the Hellenistic period and up to the Middle Ages, consolation was a very successful and flourishing genre. Not only did the Hellenistic philosophers, prose writers or, later, Church fathers, try their hand at this literary form, but it is probable that any educated person in antiquity once practised it.²²

Usually, letters of consolation deal with bereavement and are addressed to friends or relatives. Nevertheless, we know from Cicero that he wrote a consolation to himself after the tragic death of his daughter Tullia in February 45 B.C.;²³ and there exist extant consolation epistles dealing with all kind of misfortune, such as exile, departure and so forth.²⁴

Among important consolatory works that are still extant, it is worth mentioning the three *Consolation Letters* of Seneca (the *Consolation to Marcia*, *To Helvia* – Seneca’s mother – and *To Polybius*) and the *Consolation to his Wife* which Plutarch addresses to his wife upon their two-year-old daughter’s death. The satirical counterpart of those works is to be found in Lucian’s sardonic *On Grief*. The third book of the *Tusculan Disputations* is not a work of consolation *per se*, but it deserves some attention since it offers the first methodical and theoretical

¹⁸ Actually this last information is known only from [Plut.] *Cons. ad Apoll.* 104B–C; Diog. Laert. 4.27.

¹⁹ Cic. *Luc.* 135; *Tusc.* 1.115; Plin. *HN* 1.17.

²⁰ M. Graver, *Cicero on the Emotions* (Chicago, 2002), 187–94.

²¹ J. Hani, *Plutarque, Consolation à Apollonios* (Paris, 1972), 43–9. Although the Loeb Classical Library as well as the Collection Guillaume Budé include this work in Plutarch’s *œuvre*, its genuineness is usually rejected. One of the main defenders of its authenticity is Jean Hani. See also F.C. Babbitt, *Plutarch’s Moralia*, vol. 2 (LCL; Cambridge, MA, 1928), 106. For a summary of the various opinions for or against the authenticity see Hani (this note), 27–49.

²² The relation between the conception of philosophy as a therapy of the soul and the writing of consolations has been highlighted by numerous scholars. See e.g. Manning (n. 16), 12–20; Kassel (n. 14), 4–5. For Christian consolations see C. Favez, *La Consolation latine chrétienne* (Paris, 1937); R. Gregg, *Consolation Philosophy: Greek and Christian Paideia in Basil and the Two Gregories* (Cambridge, MA, 1975); J.H.D. Scourfield, *Consoling Heliodorus: A Commentary on Jerome, Letter 60* (Oxford, 1993). For consolation as a school exercise, see J. Hani, *Plutarque, Oeuvres morales*, vol. 2 (Paris, 1985), 17.

²³ Unfortunately, this work is no longer extant, but Cicero refers to it in his *Tusculans* (see 1.66, 1.76, 3.70, 3.76 and 4.63). This practice of self-consolation is also to be found in Julian, in his *Consolation to himself upon the Departure of Sallustius* (*Or.* 8).

²⁴ Cic. *Fam.* 4.8 (on the exile of M. Claudius Marcellus); 4.13 (on the exile of Nigidius Figulus).

discussions on the subject.²⁵ Indeed from chapters 31 (3.75) to 33 (3.79), the Latin orator reviews different strategies of consolation put forward by different philosophical schools in order to alleviate or to suppress sorrow (3.75). The work of Cicero shows the deep interconnectivity between consolatory discourses and philosophical discussions concerning death, the soul and especially the passions. In fact, widespread consolatory arguments originated in affirmations, standpoints or techniques which have been developed by different philosophical schools of the Classical and Hellenistic periods.

The unifying factor of the consolatory epistles is their deep similarity on three levels: 1) the overall structure of the consolation, 2) the stories or *exempla* displayed and 3) the consolatory arguments. Jean Hani has demonstrated the close similarity between the general architecture of the *Consolation to Apollonius* and that of the *Consolation to Marcia*.²⁶ Seneca knows those formal conventions and when he does not follow them, he feels compelled to justify himself.²⁷ Besides, works of consolation are replete with edifying stories, concerning people who have shown exemplary attitudes in bereavement. Those *exempla* fulfil a double function: first, they intend to alleviate the pain of the mourner by showing him that he is not the only one to endure such anguish.²⁸ Secondly, they serve as a model of emulation that the bereaved person should strive to imitate. However, it is the repetition of the same consolatory arguments from letter to letter that is, in my opinion, the most salient characteristic of the genre. Such arguments are, for instance, the insignificance of the span of life compared with eternity, the inevitability of death, the condemnation of excessive mourning as proper to women or barbarians. There is no need to linger on the content of these consolatory arguments since they will be treated later at greater length. What is important to state here is that such consolatory arguments came to function as the ‘trademark’ of the genre, to such an extent that they went beyond the bounds of formal letters of condolence. Indeed consolatory motifs began to be used in various literary forms such as poetry, history or satire.²⁹ Accordingly, when we deal with consolation literature we should not limit the scope of our analysis to formal and well-articulated letters of consolation but we should also take into account those motifs of consolation which are scattered among other works. In my view, it is necessary to understand the role that those ‘trivial’ *topoi* play in a given text as they were well known and easily detectable to the Greek and Roman audience. Indeed, the *solacia* (consolatory arguments) produce a change of tone in the work in which they are intermingled and meet different literary expectations. As we shall see in the case of Philo’s account of Abraham’s

²⁵ Another important theoretical discussion of the genre is to be found in the treatises on epideictic oratory of Menander Rhetor (2.413.5–414.30) from the late third century A.D.

²⁶ Hani (n. 21), 19–21.

²⁷ *Marc.* 2.1. On this point, see J.A. Shelton, ‘Persuasion and paradigm in Seneca’s *Consolatio ad Marciam* 1–6’, *C&M* 46 (1995), 168–9.

²⁸ See *Tusc.* 3.57 and *Fam.* 5.16.2; although in *Tusc.* 3.79 Cicero questions the universal usefulness of this kind of *solacia*. On *exempla* in Seneca’s *Consolation to Marcia*, see Shelton (n. 27), 157–88, and on the possible influence of the Sextii in the extensive use of examples, see Manning (n. 16), 16–17. Authors of consolation also sketch negative examples of attitudes which should inspire aversion: *Sen. Marc.* 2.1–3.4 and *Cic. Tusc.* 3.62–4.

²⁹ See e.g. the Ps-Ovidian *Consolatio ad Liviam*; *Stat. Silv.* 2.1 (esp. lines 30–4), 2.6, 3.3, 5.1 and 5.5; *Catull.* 96; *Hor. Carm.* 1.24; *Ov. Pont.* 4.11; *Cass. Dio* 38.18–29; *Lucian, Luct.* and *Juv. Sat.* 13.

grief, those ‘introduced motifs’ of consolation imported into the text the genre itself, that is, its main set of *rules* and its horizon of expectations.

As a matter of fact, Philo’s depiction of Abraham’s grief provides a good example of this kind of ‘imported consolation’. First, I shall outline the elements which make of this passage a consolatory piece *per se*. Then, we shall see how the literary analysis enables us to understand the advocacy of *metriopatheia* in this passage.

The eulogy of Sarah

In *On Abraham* 245 Philo recounts the death of Sarah. However, before turning immediately to her burial, as in the Biblical text (Gen 23:1–3), he introduces ten paragraphs exclusively devoted to the matriarch. There, he praises the excellence of her character and shows to what extent she was an exemplary devoted wife. Unlike other women who run away in misfortune, Sarah was always with Abraham through thick and thin:

She was at his side always and everywhere, not leaving any place or at any time, being truly his partner in life and in life’s events, judging it right to share alike good events as well as misfortunes. (Abr. 246)

Besides, Philo also recalls what is, according to him, the most praiseworthy of her deeds – that, being barren, she offered Abraham her maid Agar (cf. Gen 16:1–5). Philo does not hesitate to alter the Biblical narrative slightly and passes over the anger of Sarah depicted in Genesis 16:5. Moreover, he insists on the fact that she did not feel the slightest jealousy (*ζηλοτυπία*) toward her pregnant maid (Abr. 248, 251).

We gain a sense of the nature and function of this speech only if we look at it as part and parcel of the exposition of Abraham’s grief (Abr. 255–61). Actually, Philo gives us a valuable clue when he states (247): ‘I could tell of numerous laudatory speeches (*ἐγκώμια*) about this woman but I will only mention one’.³⁰ Thus Philo is composing a eulogy, or a panegyric (*ἐγκώμιον*), for the dead Sarah. In fact, this discourse operates just like a funeral oration. Before addressing Sarah’s burial, the author feels compelled to offer her an *epitaphios logos* that would celebrate and glorify the life of the deceased.

By the time of Philo, the writing of funeral orations – which are, as a matter of fact, a variety of *laudatio* – had already achieved a precise pattern. Cicero elaborates on this ‘third genre’ in his second book of *On the Orator*.³¹ Although Cicero’s Antonius is third reluctant to formalize the pattern of the genre, for ‘not everything that we tell has to be reduced to skill (*ad artem*) and precepts’ (*De or.*

³⁰ Almost the same formulation is to be found in the laudatory speech of Menexenus: [Pl.] *Menex.* 241a. It is likely that this kind of expression was a rhetorical *locus classicus* of *laudationes*.

³¹ Cic. *De or.* 2.341–8. See also Polyb. 6.53–4, which gives a precise description of the Roman public funeral ceremony, including the *laudatio funebris*, and Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 5.17, praising the Romans for having introduced the delivering of eulogies to every illustrious man, as opposed to the Greeks, who reserved them only for those who had died in war. For the history of the genre see M. Durry, *Eloge funèbre d’une matrone romaine* (Paris, 1950), xi–xliii and D.J. Ochs, *Consolatory Rhetoric: Grief, Symbol, and Ritual in the Greco-Roman Era* (Columbia, SC, 1993), 104–17.

2.44), he nevertheless supplies the panegyrist with valuable instructions. We learn from Cicero that only virtues are worthy of praise and especially those which are beneficial for mankind (*genus hominum*).³² Thus mercy, righteousness, kindness, fidelity, courage and so forth are more valuable subjects of praise than intellectual virtues (2.344). Moreover, Cicero stresses that the celebration of any quality should be followed by the recording of the deeds which illustrate it. He also states that

the most satisfactory praise is that bestowed on deeds that appear to have been undertaken by men without advantage and without reward; furthermore those [accomplished] with toil and danger give the most fertile supply for panegyric. (*De or.* 2.346)

It is striking that those are exactly the qualities exalted in the eulogy of Sarah. For Philo, Sarah was 'the best in everything' (*Abr.* 246). She is portrayed as an undaunted, courageous, patient and brave wife, who always remained at Abraham's side through wanderings, migrations, wars or famine (247–54). None the less, it appears that all those attributes are in fact subsumed under one single virtue: the love of Sarah for her husband. Indeed, this unflinching love for Abraham, translated into devotion and self-sacrifice, sets the tone for the whole eulogy.

What is more, Philo's speech in honour of Sarah displays striking similarities with the funerary inscription conventionally known as the *Praise of Turia* (*Laudatio Turiae*).³³ This epitaph is the most detailed private Roman inscription that has come down to us and therefore constitutes the most important non-literary testimony of a husband's eulogy to his wife. The husband recalls the life of his exemplary wife; he mentions her numerous qualities and virtues and extols her patience, endurance, modesty, generosity and so forth. He also praises her noble and courageous actions, such as her unconditional support while he was persecuted and sent into exile.³⁴ Various topics of praise are enumerated, but it is above all the emphasis on Turia's love for her husband – which implies devotion and self-sacrifice – which functions as the cornerstone of the inscription's edifice, in exactly the same manner as in the case of Philo's funeral speech. Just as Sarah's loyalty was the cause of all her courageous accomplishments, Turia's unbreakable faithfulness to her husband is her central virtue which gives rise to all her praiseworthy deeds.³⁵ What is more, in both texts an identical story illustrates the deep compassion and love of the wives for their respective husbands. Indeed, Turia's husband recalls an act of abnegation very similar to Sarah's offer of her maid to Abraham in order to make up for her barrenness:

When you despaired of your ability to bear children and grieved over my childlessness, you became anxious lest by retaining you in marriage I might lose all hope of having children and be distressed for that reason. So you proposed a divorce outright and offered to yield our house free to another woman's fertility. Your intention was in fact that you yourself, relying on our well-known conformity of sentiment, would search out and provide for me a wife who was worthy and suitable for me, and you declared that you would

³² *De or.* 2.343; Cf. Quint. *Inst.* 3.7 and [Pl.] *Menex.* 238e–239a.

³³ The fragment which contains the name of both the wife and husband has not been preserved on the funerary inscription. It is commonly referred to as the *Praise of Turia*, although the name Turia comes from a mistaken identification with the wife of the consul Q. Lucretius Vespillo, exalted by Valerius Maximus (*Hist.* 6.7.2) and Appian (*B Civ.* 4.44). See Durry (n. 31), xlv–lxiv.

³⁴ See 30 (left-hand col.) and 6a (right-hand col.)

³⁵ Cf. Val. Max. 6.7.1.

regard future children as joint and as though your own ... what could have been more worthy of commemoration and praise (*quid memorabil[ius]*) than your efforts in devotion (*inserviēdo*) to my interests: when I could not have children from yourself, you wanted me to have them through your good offices, and since you despaired of bearing children, to provide me with offspring by my marriage to another woman.³⁶

(31–48, right-hand col.)

As we have seen, Sarah's proposal of Agar was, according to Philo, the most worthy of all her deeds (*Abr.* 247). In the speech that Philo puts into Sarah's mouth, the sterile woman beseeches her husband

not to take part in my barrenness, and do not refuse, because of your love for me (*ἐνεκα τῆς πρὸς ἐμὲ εὐνοίας*), to be the father that you can be. For I will have no jealousy towards another woman, whom you would take not out of an irrational desire but in order to satisfy the requirement of the law of nature. For this reason, I should not delay in bringing you a woman, who will compensate for this defect in me. And if our prayers for the begetting of children are fulfilled, they will be yours in full parenthood but, by adoption, fully mine. In order to avoid any suspicion of jealousy, if you want, take my maidservant, she is a slave in her body, but in her mind she is free and noble.

(*Abr.* 249–51)

In both of these eulogies, loyalty to the husband is presented as the pivotal virtue which brings with it all the praiseworthy accomplishments of the spouses. In both of these texts, the key story exemplifying the deep devotion of the spouses is the offering of another wife who could engender an heir.³⁷ Therefore, the comparison of Sarah's eulogy with Turia's epitaph does not leave the slightest doubt concerning the nature of Philo's speech. By producing such a panegyric in honour of Sarah, Philo automatically places himself within a Greco-Roman tradition of *laudatio funebris* and fully adheres to its conventions.³⁸

In fact, Philo's eulogy for Sarah serves two purposes, both of which should be seen in relation to the description of Abraham's mourning. First, in this panegyric, the biblical couple are presented as an example of mutual love, respect and admiration.³⁹ By stressing the mutual love of the spouses in the *laudatio* of

³⁶ Translation: E. Wistrand, *The So-called Laudatio Turiae, Introduction, Text, Translation, Commentary* (Gothenburg, 1976). Unlike Abraham, Turia's husband refuses to take another woman (40–4, right-hand col.).

³⁷ See also Val. Max. 2.1.

³⁸ Depending on the circumstances and the time, funeral orations play different roles, such as the strengthening of collective identity or the assertion of the moral values embodied by the deceased. See C. Carey, 'Epidic oratory', in I. Worthington (ed.), *A Companion to Greek Rhetoric* (Malden, MA, 2007), 240–6 and Ochs (n. 31), 104–11. Furthermore, according to Renée Carrée, 'Les éloges funèbres des femmes romaines (I^{er} siècle av.–I^{er} siècle ap. J.C.)', in D. Jonckers et al. (edd.), *Femmes plurielles, les représentations des femmes, discours, normes et conduites* (Paris, 1999), 125–31, the *Laudatio Turiae* bears witness to the change that occurred in Roman society, at the end of the Republic and at the beginning of the Empire, concerning the status of women in public, political and familial life. It also betrays this new appreciation of conjugal love, which authors no longer, as in the past, hesitate to assert and to praise. Without any doubt, Philo's stress on the mutual love of Abraham and Sarah should also be seen in this context.

³⁹ In *Abr.* 248 Sarah records their long shared life and their cherishing of one another (*ἀλλήλοις εὐαρεστοῦντες*). Abraham is told to feel love (*εὐνοια*) for Sarah (249) and to admire her fresh and renewed love for her husband (253). There is also a strong emphasis on the community of life and the true partnership between the spouses in those paragraphs. Cf. Muson. 13 A. See also M. Niehoff, 'Mother and maiden, sister and spouse: Sarah in Philonic Midrash', *HThR* 97 (2004), 418–23.

Sarah, Philo subtly enhances the virtuous behaviour of Abraham at her death. If the reader of the Bible could be surprised by the extreme conciseness of the Biblical text regarding Abraham's mourning for his wife and perhaps question the patriarch's feelings, Philo's reader, however, does not have the slightest doubt about it. Secondly, the *laudatio* of the deceased is in fact a very common feature of the *consolatio*. In a rather bombastic tone, the author of the *Consolation to Apollonius* lauds the numerous testimonies to the prematurely dead boy's philanthropy (120A–B) and sees in solace a way to pay homage to the deceased (121F). In the same vein, Seneca closes his *Consolation to Marcia* with a eulogy of the dead Metilius (23.3–24). Philo's praise for Sarah should therefore be seen as a meaningful element in the episode of Abraham's grief or, more precisely, as the first piece of the consolatory sequence that Philo is fashioning here – the second being the consolatory arguments, which we shall now analyse in detail.

ARGUMENTS OF CONSOLATION

1. *The strength of sorrow and the role of reason*

Death arouses feelings, strong emotions which can besiege the entire person if not treated in time and appropriately. Although different philosophical schools held different views on the passions, they nevertheless all agreed about their potential for danger. All schools admit that they have the real potentiality to take control of the person. In the case of grief, it is the *pathos* of sorrow (*λύπη/aegritudo*) – one of the four passions which compose the Stoic tetrachord⁴⁰ – that the bereaved person should confront. Warning against the danger of surrendering to *λύπη* is one of the *loci classici* of consolation literature. In his *Consolation to his Wife*, Plutarch admonishes his wife not to let the sorrow become settled and urges her to drive it out as soon as possible:

And this is what happens in the beginning. Everyone invites grief in. But when it is established, and becomes a member of the family and of the house, it does not go away, however much we wish it. Hence one should resist it at the door and not abandon one's guard through mourning clothes or hairstyle.⁴¹ (*Cons. ad ux.* 609F)

Philo echoes this topic:

While sorrow was already setting upon (*τῆς λύπης ἐπαποδουμένης*) and was preparing to fight (*κονιομένης*) his soul, like an athlete he prevailed, utterly strengthening and emboldening the natural enemy of passions, that is, the reasoning faculty (*λογισμόν*), which he had taken as an adviser during his whole life, but at this time he thought that it was especially worthy to obey its excellent and beneficial exhortations. (*Abr.* 256)

In this passage, Philo exploits the vocabulary of fight (*ἐπαποδύομαι, κωνίω, ἀντίπαλος*, etc.) and presents Abraham as an athlete who actively wrestles with the passion of *λύπη*. He adds that the patriarch especially obeys the natural enemy

⁴⁰ *SVF* 1.370.

⁴¹ Translation: Sarah B. Pomeroy, *Plutarch's Advice to the Bride and Groom, and a Consolation to His Wife* (New York, Oxford, 1999), ad loc., slightly modified. Cf. *Cons. ad Apoll.* 112C; *Sen. Helv.* 5.3., *Cic. Tusc.* 3.52.

of the passions, that is, its rational faculty (*λογισμός*). Therein Philo also repeats a well-known topos of consolatory literature. Indeed, the exhortation to use one's reason as a remedy for grief is one of the favourite topoi of consolation writers. Jean Hani has already outlined the numerous occurrences of the words *λόγος*, *λογισμός*, *λογίζομαι* and so forth in the *Consolation to Apollonius*.⁴² Seneca, while consoling his mother, exhorts her to use reason (*ratio*) and good activities (*honesta occupatio*) as the best way to divert herself from grief.⁴³ Time and again, authors of consolations exhort their correspondent to act now with reason to achieve what time will ultimately bring.⁴⁴

Thus Philo succeeds in a single sentence both in referring to well-known arguments of consolation literature and in presenting Abraham as a successful 'grief handler'.

2. Condemnation of excessive grieving and the exercise of praemeditatio malorum

Further on in the same paragraph, Philo elaborates on Abraham's obedience to reason and spells out in what it consists:

not to show agitation beyond measure (*πλέον τοῦ μετρίου*), as being in the presence of an utterly new and unprecedented misfortune (*ὡς ἐπὶ καινοτάτῃ καὶ ἀγενήτῳ συμφορᾷ*).
(*Abr.* 257)

The condemnation of excessive grief is without any doubt very common currency in consolatory literature. The author of the *Consolation to Apollonius* exhorts his friend 'not to be carried beyond nature and measure (*πέρα τοῦ φυσικοῦ καὶ μετρίου*) by unavailing cries of grief and vile lamentations' (114C). Cries, lamentations, abundant tears, loud groans, agitations etc. befit barbarians or women but certainly not educated men. It is interesting to note that excessive forms of lamentation are attributed by Philo to the residents of the country who came to Abraham to show their sympathy. As he puts it, they were amazed 'beyond measure' (*οὐ μετρίως*) not to find lamentations, shouting or beating of the breast, even among women, as was customary among them (*Abr.* 260).⁴⁵

In fact, excessive grieving reveals a lack of philosophical insight. People lament excessively because they are surprised by the course of events, because of their lack of anticipation. In order not to be caught unawares one should be prepared and ills should be forestalled. Seneca's testimony of his own failure to grieve in an appropriate way at the death of his friend Annaeus Serenus shows clearly the close relation between lack of philosophical preparation on the one side, and inappropriate behaviour in bereavement on the other:

Here is what I am writing to you, I, who wept for my dear Annaeus Serenus so excessively (*tam inmodice*) that I can be counted, in spite of my will, among the examples of those whom pain has defeated (*quos dolor uicit*). Today however, I condemn my behaviour and I understand that the main reason why I lamented in such a way is that I never thought

⁴² As stated by the author: 'the best remedy for grief is the *logos*' (103E-F); J. Hani, 'La consolation antique', *REA* 75 (1973), 105.

⁴³ Sen. *Helv.* 18.8; cf. Sen. *Ep.* 116.3 and Cic. *Tusc.* 3.74.

⁴⁴ Cic. *Fam.* 4.5.6 and 5.16.6; Sen. *Ep.* 63.12; [Plut.] *Cons. ad Apoll.* 112C; Ov. *Pont.* 4.11.10.

⁴⁵ Cf. *Cons. ad Apoll.* 113B, 114C; Sen. *Marc.* 6.2-3 and *Ep.* 63.14; Cic. *Tusc.* 3.26, 71; [Pl.] *Menex.* 248b; Lucian, *Luct.* 12.

that he could die before me. The only thought that occurred to my mind was that he was younger than me, and a lot younger, as if destiny was preserving the order! Therefore, let us constantly think as much about our own mortality as about that of all those we love. That is what I should have told myself: ‘Serenus is younger than me, but how is that relevant? He should die after me, yet he may die before me’. But since I did not do this, Fortune suddenly struck me unprepared (*imparatum*). (*Ep.* 63.14–15)

As a good spiritual mentor, Seneca turns his failure into an exhortation to exercise oneself continually in the thought that we – as much as those we love – are mortal.⁴⁶ In other words, Seneca urges Lucilius to practise the well-known spiritual exercise of *praemeditatio futurorum malorum*. As Pierre Hadot has shown, this practice of foreseeing future ills was very much favoured by the Stoics and consists in imagining in advance different kinds of misfortune, such as trial, suffering or death.⁴⁷ By such practice, the individual was expected to acknowledge that those seeming evils are in fact within the range of *indifferent* things (*indifferent/ἀδιάφορα*), that is, that they are not in our power. Although the origin of this technique is probably not Stoic, it was very popular among Stoic philosophers, and Philo himself is well acquainted with it.⁴⁸ What is more, thanks to Cicero we know that *praemeditatio futurorum malorum* was in fact a controversial issue in consolation literature (*Tusc.* 3.29–34). Indeed, Cicero relates that whereas the Cyrenaics thought of *praemeditatio* as the best way to eliminate pain, the Epicureans, on their side, considered it utterly pointless. They thought consideration of evils to be unnecessary suffering and proposed to the bereaved person techniques for diverting the mind from bad thoughts (*advocatio a cogitanda molestia*) and techniques for recalling pleasurable things or events (*revocatio ad contemplandas voluptates*, *Tusc.* 3.33). Cicero himself does not hide his preference for the Cyrenaic prophylactic therapy (3.34).

Accordingly, by claiming that Abraham was not troubled as in the presence of an unpredictable event, Philo portrays his character in terms of the standards of the Greco-Roman philosophical schools. In only two words (ἐπὶ καινοτάτῃ καὶ ἀγενήτῳ) Philo encapsulates a long tradition of spiritual exercises, which will not go unnoticed by his reader.

⁴⁶ Cf. Cic. *Fam.* 5.16.2.

⁴⁷ P. Hadot, *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie antique?* (Paris, 1995), 212–16. For other mentions of this exercise in consolatory discourses see, for example, *Cons. ad Apoll.* 103F–105B and 112C–D; *Sen. Marc.* 9.1–5, *Helv.* 5.3, *Polyb.* 11.2; Cic. *Fam.* 5.16.2. See also M. Armisen-Marchetti, ‘Imagination and meditation in Seneca: the example of *praemeditatio*’, in J.G. Fitch (ed.), *Seneca* (Oxford, 2008), 102–13 and P.A. Holloway, ‘*Nihil inopinati accidisse* – “Nothing unexpected has happened”’: a Cyrenaic consolatory *topos* in 1 Pet. 4.12ff.’, *NTS* 48 (2002), 433–48.

⁴⁸ For pre-Stoic examples of *praemeditatio* see e.g. Teles, fr. 2.9; Cic. *Tusc.* 3.29 and *Cons. ad Apoll.* 112D; Philo provides good evidence of his deep acquaintance with this kind of exercise in his *Special Laws*: ‘Such men, filled with high worthiness, are inured to disregarding ills of the body or of external things, schooled to hold things indifferent as indeed indifferent (ἐξαδιαφορεῖν τὰ ἀδιάφορα), trained (ἀλειφόμενοι) against pleasures and desires and, generally, always eager to take their stand superior to the passions; they have been educated to use every effort to overthrow the fortress of the passions; they do not waver under the blows of fortune since they calculate beforehand (διὰ τὸ προεκκλελογίσθαι) its assaults. Indeed, anticipation (ἡ πρόληψις) lightens even the heaviest adversities, since thought no longer takes up any event as new but apprehends it dully as some old and stale thing’ (*Spec. Leg.* 2.46; tr. F.H. Colson, slightly modified).

3. *Life is a loan*

The view of life as a loan is another stock motif of consolatory discourses which Philo echoes here:

[one must] not bear a grudge against nature for recovering its debt ... And, as no temperate man would be vexed to pay his debt or his deposit back to his creditor, so, in the same manner, [Abraham] thought that there was no need to be angry because nature was recovering its own, but that one must accept the inevitable. (*Abr.* 257–9)

We find almost the same sentence in Seneca:

Nature gave him (your brother) to you, just as she gives to others their brothers, not as a possession, but as a loan (*commodauit*) ... If anyone should be vexed (*moleste ferat*) that he has to pay back borrowed money – especially money of which he received the use for nothing – would he not be taken for an unjust man?⁴⁹ (*Polyb.* 10.5)

The similarity of formulation arguably points at some use of *gnomologiai*. Indeed, it seems that by Philo's time, *gnomologiai* for consolatory purposes circulated widely in the Roman Empire. These contained quotations from poets (especially Menander or Euripides), famous words of illustrious men, citations of philosophers, anecdotes and so forth, so that anyone wishing to compose a consolation could easily draw from them.⁵⁰

4. *Survival of the soul after death*

Not only does Abraham know that life is a loan and consequently does not blame God for what is happening; he also acknowledges that death is not the end of the soul's life:

[Abraham] thought, it appears, that further grieving is alien to nature, from which he learned to think of death not as the ruin of the soul, but as a separation and a disunion from the body (*χωρισμὸν καὶ διάζευξιν ἀπὸ σώματος*); it returns from where it comes, that is, as is shown in the story of the creation, from God. (*Abr.* 258)

Except for one word, Philo is quoting one of the most famous sentences of the *Phaedo*: 'therefore, what is that which is termed death, but the release and separation of the soul from the body?' (*λύσις καὶ χωρισμὸς ψυχῆς ἀπὸ σώματος*, Pl. *Phd.* 67d4). However, here again, Philo does not stray from the consolatory genre. Indeed, the survival of the soul after death couched in the Platonist mode of the *Phaedo* is a commonly shared topic of consolatory discourses. The author of the *Consolation to Apollonius* includes an entire paragraph paraphrasing *Phaedo* 66b3–67b2 (107F–108E). Even Seneca the Stoic elaborates on the soul's survival after death and does not hesitate to call on Plato for help on this topic:

⁴⁹ Tr. J.W. Basore, slightly modified. See also *ibid.* 11.3; *Cons. ad Apoll.* 106A and 116B; [Pl.] *Ax.* 367b.

⁵⁰ See Hani (n. 22), 22–3. It seems that some traces of these are preserved at Stob. *Flor.* 4.34, 35, 44 and esp. 51, 52b–56 (this last chapter being specifically devoted to consolations [*παρηγορικά*]).

It is true that souls which gain a swift release from human society have the easiest journey to the [powers] above; for they draw with them less weight of earthly dross. Set free before they might grow hardened and become too deeply tainted by earthly matter, they fly back to their source more lightly and wash away more easily all defilement and pollution. And great souls are never happy to linger in the body: they long to depart and to burst forth, and cannot tolerate their narrow confines (*has angustias*), accustomed as they are to roving on high over the universe and to looking down with scorn from their lofty seat on the affairs of men. Hence Plato cries that the entire soul of the wise man strives for death; that is what he wants and what he meditates about, and because he yearns for it, he passes through life striving for what lies beyond.⁵¹ (*Marc.* 23.1–2)

Thus by breaking down the episode of Abraham's grief into its constitutive arguments we may clearly see that it belongs to the genre of consolation. In his depiction of Abraham's attitude at the death of his beloved wife, Philo succeeds in echoing six well-known topoi of consolatory literature. As we have seen, each topos has numerous parallels from other consolatory works and, sometimes, they even share a similar formulation. The density and compactness of the arguments should also be stressed. Indeed, within a very short amount of space, sometimes in only a few words, Philo manages to reflect long-standing traditions of *solacia*.

Does this literary identification give us a clue as to the criticism of *apatheia* in this passage? To answer this question, we should make a detour via Seneca, the fervent defender of Stoic *apatheia*. Not only does he advocate an ideal of eradication of the passions but he is also well aware of the debate between Stoic ethics and Aristotelian tradition on this question. In his *Letter to Lucilius* 85, he describes the Peripatetic way to handle the passion of sorrow:

Likewise, they say that he is called 'without sadness' (*sine tristitia*) who is guilty of this fault neither frequently nor excessively. They say that to claim that anyone's soul is deprived of sadness is to deny human nature. They claim that the wise man is not defeated by grief but yet is touched by it ... They do not suppress the passions (*tollunt*) but they moderate them (*temperant*). However, how little we grant the sage if we say that he is stronger than the weakest men, happier than the saddest and more moderate (*moderator*) than the most unbridled and greater than the lowest! (*Ep.* 85.3–4)

Further he clearly exposes his own view concerning this 'peripatetic moderation':

Thus this moderation is wrong and useless: it is just as if someone were to say that we ought to be moderately (*modice*) insane or moderately (*modice*) ill. (85.9)

In the same vein, in *Letter* 116, Seneca clearly exposes the clash between the two ethical traditions:

The question has often been raised whether it is better to have moderate passions (*modicos adfectus*) or none at all (*an nullos*). Philosophers of our school (*nostri*) drive them out (*expellunt*); the Peripatetics moderate them (*temperant*). I, however, do not understand how any moderation in disease (*mediocritas morbi*) can be either healthy or helpful ... You say 'But it is natural that the loss of a friend torments me; allow legitimacy to tears that fall so justly.' ... There is no fault which lacks a defence, there is no vice that, at first,

⁵¹ Tr. J. Davies, slightly modified (cf. *Phd.* 64a, 67d–e). See also Sen. *Marc.* 19.5–6; [Pl.] *Ax.* 370d; Stob. *Flor.* 4.51.17; Cic. *Fam.* 5.16.4. On Seneca's position on death see: A. Setaioli, 'Seneca e l'oltretomba', *Paideia* 52 (1997), 321–67; also in id., *Facundus Seneca. Aspetti della lingua e dell'ideologia senecana* (Bologna, 2000), 275–323.

is not modest and manageable, but from there, it spreads more widely. If you allow it to begin, you will not get it to stop. In the beginning, every passion is weak. Then it rouses itself and, as it progresses, becomes strong; it is easier to prevent it than to drive it out.⁵² (*Ep.* 116.1–3)

According to these quotations, Seneca does not admit the passion of *λύπη*, either kept in moderate bounds, or in the case of the loss of a friend. Nevertheless, scholars have noticed that in some other places, Seneca adopts a very different discourse and commends moderation of the passions. Naturally, this inconsistency has roused a *dissensio eruditorum*. Some scholars have spoken of an evolution of Seneca's thought, others see the mark of the eclecticism of his time, while still others have considered his advocacy of moderation to be his real attitude towards passions.⁵³ Nevertheless, it seems that it is C.E. Manning who has deciphered the logic underlying these different standpoints. Manning has shown that the plea to moderate one's passions appears only in Seneca's consolations.⁵⁴ Indeed, time and again, Seneca asserts that he does not advise the bereaved person to abrogate the feeling of pain completely, but rather encourages him to keep it within moderate bounds.⁵⁵ Some of his advice is even formulated in a way totally congruent with the Peripatetic line:

But never will I demand of you that you should not grieve at all. And I well know that there are some men whose wisdom is harsh (*durae*) rather than brave, who deny that the wise man will grieve (*doliturum esse*). But these, it seems to me, can never have fallen upon this sort of mishap; if they had, Fortune would have knocked their proud wisdom (*superbam sapientiam*) out of them and, even against their will, have forced them to admit the truth. Reason (*ratio*) will have accomplished enough if only it removes from grief whatever is excessive and superfluous (*quod et superest et abundat*); it is not for anyone to hope or to desire that no suffering at all should be felt. Let it rather maintain this measure (*hunc modum*) which is similar neither to irreverence (*impietatem*) nor madness, and it will keep us in the state (*habitu*) that is the mark of an honourable (*piae*), and not an agitated mind (*motae mentis*).⁵⁶ (*Polyb.* 18.5–6)

Manning considers the adoption of the Peripatetic standpoint in Seneca's consolations in the light of three elements: 1) Seneca's self-perception as a teacher; 2) Seneca's self-perception as a physician of the soul; and 3) his inclusive method of consolation.

The first two points explain inconsistencies in the light of pedagogic or therapeutic aims. As physician of the soul, the philosopher has to find appropriate remedies for specific illnesses, in the same way that as a teacher, he needs to adapt his instruction to the specific needs and level of his student. The third point, the inclusive method of consolation, should deserve more attention since it concerns the literary form rather than the specific personality of the author. According to Manning, effectiveness is what Seneca has in mind when he is writing a consola-

⁵² On Seneca's *apatheia* see also *Ep.* 9.2–5. For his criticism of moderation of the passions see *De ira* 1.9.2, 1.14.1, 1.17.1 and 3.3.31.

⁵³ For a summary on the different views see C.E. Manning, 'The consolatory tradition and Seneca's attitude to the emotions', *G&R* 21 (1974), 71–81.

⁵⁴ Manning (n. 53). See also T. Kurth, *Senecas Trostschrift an Polybius, Dialog 11: Ein Kommentar* (Stuttgart and Leipzig, 1994), 224.

⁵⁵ See also Sen. *Marc.* 4.1.

⁵⁶ Tr. J.W. Basore, slightly modified.

tion. For that reason, the philosopher is ready to include various arguments of consolation – including those stemming from opposite philosophical schools⁵⁷ – provided that he finds them useful for the grieving person.⁵⁸ Yet, I believe that this point should be carried a step further. Indeed, besides the widespread inclusive method of fashioning consolations and besides the eclectic aspect of consolatory *topoi*, it seems that the plea for moderation is a permanent trait of the genre. Cicero, for instance, says to his friend Titius, who has lost a son, that excessive sorrow (*ferre immoderatus*) does not fit with his high character and wisdom (*gravitatis et sapientiae*, *Fam.* 5.16.5).⁵⁹ In his *Consolation to his Wife*, Plutarch also advocates a middle path between insensibility and excessive forms of grief. According to him, in a time of bereavement, we should not wrestle against ‘affectionate feelings’ (*φιλόστοργος*) as some claim, but against intemperance of the soul (*τὸ ἀκόλαστον τῆς ψυχῆς*). Plutarch admits regrets (*πόθος*), honour and memory of the dead but condemns the ‘insatiate desire for laments’ (609A). Furthermore, the philosopher fears casting out the memory of his daughter together with grief (608D).⁶⁰ In the historical document coming from the *Epistles of Phalaris* – dating probably from the first or second century A.D., moderation of grief appears to be the chief advice given by the writer of the consolation:

Your heavy sorrow at the death of your son is completely pardonable and I also deeply feel the loss as if the misfortune were my own. And yet I naturally act with great firmness toward such things, since I know that excessive sorrow is of no value ... Think of him, therefore, as a child who has returned a noble gift for his birth and upbringing by his complete life of nobility and virtue. Reciprocate his gift by grieving for him mildly and moderately (*τὸ πρῶως καὶ μετρίως τῆν ἐπ’ αὐτῷ λύπην ἐνεργεῖν*).⁶¹

It is likely that this advocacy of moderation in consolatory discourses comes in fact from the master of the genre himself, Crantor of Soli. The author of the *Consolation to Apollonius* has provided us with a valuable testimony:

The suffering and biting [felt] at the death of a son is a natural cause of grief and is not in our power (*οὐκ ἐφ’ ἡμῖν*). For my part, I do not agree with those who extol that savage and severe impassivity (*σκληρὰν ἀπάθειαν*) which is neither possible nor profitable. Indeed, it will deprive us of the kindly feeling arising from being loved and loving, which has to be preserved above all. Nevertheless, to be carried beyond measure (*πέρα τοῦ μέτρου*) and to exaggerate the grief, I state that it is contrary to nature and comes from the false opinion which is in us. Therefore such a state should be dismissed

⁵⁷ As is the case with Epicureanism: see Manning (n. 53), 79–81 and id. (n. 16), 17–20.

⁵⁸ This also seems to be the method adopted by Cicero in his own consolation (*Tusc.* 3.76): ‘There are some who gather all these methods of consolation (*omnia genera consolando*) – since different persons are moved by different means – so in my *Consolation*, I have combined all these methods in one consolation. Indeed my soul was in pain, and I was trying every remedy.’

⁵⁹ It is interesting to note that Cicero, like Seneca, while seeming to commend moderation of grief in his consolation letters (as in *Brut.* 9.2: ‘To be devoid of every sense of pain would be a greater misfortune than the pain itself, but to do so with moderation (*modice*) is useful for the others, but for you, it is necessary’ and *Att.* 12.10: *tuus autem dolor humanus is quidem sed magno opere moderandus*), openly criticizes this Peripatetic approach in his theoretical discussions on grief (such as in *Tusc.* 3.13, 22–3 or 84).

⁶⁰ See also A. Evangelos, ‘οὐκ ἀπὸ δρυὸς οὐδ’ ἀπὸ πέτρης: Plutarch *Consolatio ad uxorem* 608C und die Umdeutung eines Homersverses’, *Mnemosyne* 51 (1998), 72–5.

⁶¹ See R. Hercher, *Epistolographi Graeci* (Paris, 1871), 410–11; tr. K. Stowers, *Letter writing in Greco-Roman antiquity* (Philadelphia, 1989), 147.

as harmful and bad and not at all proper to right-minded men. But moderation of the passions (τὴν δὲ μετριοπάθειαν) should not be rejected. For let us not be ill, says Crantor the Academic, but if we are, let us conserve a certain sensibility (τῆς αἰσθησις) whether one of our members is cut off or amputated. Indeed, this lack of pain (τὸ ἀνώδυνον) does not come without a high price for man. In one case, it is likely that the body is becoming savage, in the other, it is the soul.⁶² (Cons. ad Apoll. 102C–E)

Later on, the author, speaking now in his own name, states that a golden mean should be found between impassivity (ἀπάθεια) on the one side, and deep affliction (δυσπάθεια), on the other; the first being harsh and savage, the second being appropriate to women (102E). As in Philo, the critique of *apatheia* goes together with the recommendation of *metriopatheia*. In the context of grief, not only Plutarch or the author of the *Consolation to Apollonius*, but also Cicero, Seneca and Philo advocate moderation of the passions.⁶³ Therefore, in the light of these examples, it seems that philosophical inconsistency is not what characterizes Philo's attitude in our text. Indeed, the identification of the literary genre of *On Abraham* 241 to 257 enables us to understand Philo's critique of *apatheia* not as the sign of an eclectic mess of tenets but rather as the sign of the observance of literary conventions imported into exegesis.

What is more, this identification also sheds light on Philo's endeavour. On the one hand, David Runia has noted that highlighting common and unoriginal topoi in Philo's *œuvre* is not very fruitful. In his view, we should rather pay attention to the minor modifications which Philo makes to well-known themes, as these slight changes 'may disclose important points of reorientation'.⁶⁴ In fact, in the case of Abraham's grief, the contrary seems to be true. Indeed, in my view it is the lack of originality in the construction of the arguments and the close allegiance to the genre of consolation which actually betray an important facet of Philo's project. Philo is not writing a consolation, but he uses consolation to elaborate his commentary on the Bible and to model a new 'hero'. The fact that Philo depicts the ethical attitude of the patriarch of the Hebrew nation in a way that fully corresponds to the norms and expectations of Greco-Roman culture – at least in our passage – does not reveal a deliberate project of translation of an ostensibly 'foreign' Jewish culture into Greco-Roman standards, but merely illustrates an identity which thinks and presents itself in terms of that culture. For Philo's reader, henceforth Abraham can be counted among those who have sustained grief in an exemplary way. Under Philo's pen, Abraham becomes one of the *exempla* of which Greek and Latin consolation authors are so fond.⁶⁵ Therefore, by echoing well-established topoi, Philo is modelling a new hero of consolation.

⁶² = fr. 8 (Mullach, *FPV*, 146–7). According to Mullach (ad loc.) and Hani (n. 22), 270–1 n. 4, the whole quotation is from Crantor. In my opinion, Crantor should not be seen as the author of the whole paragraph, but this question cannot be dealt with properly within the confines of this paper. See Cic. *Tusc.* 3.12 and Graver (n. 20), 187–94.

⁶³ A plea for moderation is also to be found in Hyp. *Or. fun.* 41 (ap. Stob. *Flor.* 4.56.36); Sen. *Polyb.* 4.3, *Ep.* 63.1, 99.15–16; [Pl.] *Menex.* 247c–d, 248c; Cic. *Fam.* 5.18.2; Plut. *Cons. ad ux.* 608B–C. In later works of consolation, see, for instance, Jer. *Ep.* 60.7; Julian, *Or.* 8.1 and 6; Amb. *De exc. Sat.* 10.

⁶⁴ D. Runia, *Philo of Alexandria and the Timaeus of Plato* (Leiden, 1986), 271.

⁶⁵ On the function of Abraham as an *exemplum* in Philo see A.Y. Reed, 'The construction and subversion of Patriarchal Perfection: Abraham and exemplarity in Philo, Josephus and the Testament of Abraham', *JSJ* 40 (1998), 185–212.

Nevertheless, at the same time Philo remains within the compass of exegesis. In fact, two observations should be made concerning the association between the Biblical account of Genesis 23:1–3 and Philo's exegesis. First, the Bible does describe an act of bereavement and explicitly states that the patriarch 'beat himself through grief' (κόψασθαι) and 'laments' (πενθήσαι) before he 'stood up from before his dead wife' (Gen. 23:1–3, cf. *Abr.* 258). Such a description does not invite an interpretation of Abraham's attitude in term of *apatheia*. Yet, the Bible's account is extremely concise and does not suggest a long and painful bereavement as in the case of Jacob's grief, for example.⁶⁶ These two elements combined together, that is, the mention of Abraham's grief together with the striking conciseness as to the content of his grief, could easily lead to an interpretation of Abraham's mourning for his wife in terms of *metriopatheia*. Therefore it is important to note that Philo does not derogate from the Biblical narrative when he interprets Abraham's attitude in term of *metriopatheia*. The Bible is the point of departure but it is also the finishing line of his exegesis. In between, Philo develops, extends and actualizes the narrative in his characteristic way, creating this conflation of the Jewish Bible and Greco-Roman norms.

In sum, if we want a brief answer to the question raised at the beginning of this paper, we can state that Philo rejects the ideal of *apatheia* in *On Abraham* 256 because he is following a well-established convention of a Greek and Roman literary genre, which he has chosen to adopt in order to shape and present the patriarch of his nation.

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⁶⁶ Gen. 37:34–5. In this case, the Bible recounts a very long and painful bereavement. Here again, Philo's interpretation fits into the biblical framework, since he describes very tragic mourning in which Jacob, because of the painful way his son died and because of the lack of sepulchre, cannot handle grief properly and cannot even display *metriopatheia* (*Ios.* 22–7).