# V TALKING BACK: *AGAINST APION*

## Introduction

The *Against Apion* is not like the other works of Josephus.[1] Most obviously, it is the only work which is not predominantly narrative. Although many of its themes and preoccupations are historical in nature, it takes the form of a rhetorical treatise, and its central mode is not narrative but argumentation. Indeed, it is argumentative in every sense of the word, by far the most outspoken and intemperate of all the author's extant writings. It was written, as Josephus tells us, in response to hostile commentary about Jews and Judaism which he had encountered in the works of some Gentile (in most cases Greek) writers (*C.Ap* 1.2, *inter alia*). Because of the prestige which Greek scholarship enjoyed in the Roman Empire, hostile presentations of Judaism by Greek authors could cause significant issues in terms of broader attitudes towards Judaism at this time, both in Rome itself and throughout the empire. Thus Josephus aims to set the record straight, to combat misinformation about his people which was circulating in influential Greek works, and to present an insider's view of Judaism to a wider audience, in the hope that such a view would replace the often poorly informed notions which prevailed in contemporary Greek scholarship.

*Against Apion* is the only work of Josephus which cannot be dated precisely. However, it is clearly later than the other extant works, as it mentions them.[2] The treatise must therefore date to the very end of the reign of Domitian, or else to the reign of Nerva and/or Trajan, either in the very last years of the first century or the early years of the second. In addition to questions of date, questions of genre and literary precedent are tricky. The work is sometimes categorized as religious apologetic.[3] Of all such works which survive from the Roman Empire, the *Against Apion* is the earliest. As we will see in

[1] The name *Against Apion* almost certainly does not go back to Josephus, and it is not possible to reconstruct the original title (see Barclay 2006: xviii–xxx; Barclay 2016: 80).

[2] *C.Ap* 1.1 (*Antiquities*); *C.Ap* 1.47–56 (*War*).

[3] On the *Against Apion* as apologetics, see Barclay 2009; Hardwick 1996.

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Chapter 6, Josephus was pervasively influential among early Christian writers, and indeed some of the very same arguments which he deploys against the Greeks in *Against Apion* can be found in the works of later Christian apologists.[4] It seems likely that the *Against Apion* in fact played a role in establishing the generic conventions of Christian apologetic literature. Thus, rather than working within an established generic category, Josephus may have been pioneering a new one when writing this text, establishing the conventions and expectations as he went. In terms of the influence of generic forms which certainly did exist prior to the composition of the work, Martin Goodman has persuasively demonstrated that Graeco-Roman forensic rhetoric was a clear reference point for this treatise (and, of course, the language of 'apologetics' was quasi-legal in any case).[5] The work's final major section, the idealized portrait of the Jewish 'constitution' (*C.Ap* 2.151–296), clearly owes something to the established sub-genre of Greek political philosophy, which involved analysing and comparing constitutions and lawgivers.

Partly, perhaps, because of a lack of a clear generic categorization, there has been some scholarly disputation about the work's intended audience, and some of that disputation has reflected wider debates about the intended audience of apologetics as a whole. Were these texts genuinely written (as they usually claim to have been) for an outside audience of non-believers, or rather were they written for an 'insider' audience, to provide readers with arguments to use in defence of their religious position and to reassure them that it was intellectually respectable?[6] I do not think that stressing one or other element is particularly productive. Both Jews and Gentiles could benefit from a text like the *Against Apion*; there is no reason to suppose that Josephus would not have been conscious of this, and would not have had both kinds of reader in mind.

After the dedication to Epaphroditus and introduction (1.1–5), three main sections follow. First, Josephus sets out to establish the great antiquity of the Jewish people (1.6–218). He demonstrates this primarily by appealing to and quoting a wide range of corroborating sources,

[4] On Christian readers of Josephus, see below, pp. 101–4. For parallel arguments appearing in Christian *apologia*, compare Tertullian's objections to the indignities of Greek mythology (*Apol.* 14) with those of Josephus at *C.Ap* 2.239–49, or the same apologist's emphasis on the great antiquity of Judaism (*Apol.* 19), compared with the first major section of *Against Apion*.

[5] Goodman 1999: 53–5. See also Kasher 1996; Barclay 2016: 79.

[6] On the work's audience, see Mason 1996; Barclay 2006: xlv–li; Barclay 2016: 81–3.

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both Greek and 'barbarian', as well as arguing against the reliability of Greek historians. Following this, we come to the core of the treatise, which takes up the second half of Book 1 and the first half of Book 2 (1.219–2.150). (We should note that gaps in manuscript transmission mean that we are missing the original Greek for part of this section, 2.52–113, and here we are dependent on the Latin translation attributed to Cassiodorus).[7] This is the most riotously entertaining portion of the treatise, where Josephus defends his people's traditions from a horde of Judeophobes, summoning up and quoting a mass of problematic anti-Jewish notions from named authors before refuting them, often in scathing terms, demonstrating a flair for biting and sarcastic humour which is scarcely in evidence in his other works. This long section can itself be subdivided into two parts: the first part, comprising the end of Book 1 (1.219–320), sees Josephus take up arms against several Gentile writers; the second, which covers the beginning of Book 2 (2.1–150), finds him concentrating his vitriol on the eponymous villain of the piece, the first-century Alexandrian poet and Homeric scholar Apion, nicknamed Pleistonikes ('Abundant in Victory'). In the final section (2.151–296), Josephus turns from argumentation and invective to encomium, offering an idealized sketch of the Mosaic law (presented as a constitution), and arguing that it is the most perfect constitution ever devised. In the rest of this chapter, I will consider each of these major sections in turn.

## Bursting the bubble: Josephus on the inadequacy of Greek historiography

At the beginning of *Against Apion* Book 1, Josephus explains that one of the factors which motivated him to produce the work was that some authors had doubted that the Jewish people were genuinely ancient (1.2–5). In the Roman world, antiquity mattered, especially in matters religious. Clearly it would do no harm to Josephus' cause to establish, as strongly as possible right at the outset of his treatise, that the Jewish people and their traditions were extremely ancient. He does just that, and the means by which he does it are quite extraordinary.

He sets the tone at the very outset of the argument (1.6):

[7] On the manuscript transmission of the work, see Barclay 2006: lxi–lxiv; and Leoni 2016: 315–17.

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The first thing that occurs to me is that it is extraordinarily strange that anyone believes that we should only pay attention to Greek authors when it comes to the study of early history, that the truth can only be found in their works, and that neither we Jews nor any other peoples in the world can be trusted on this subject.

Josephus has clearly identified here the core issue which he faces: the widespread tendency to privilege the historical scholarship of one of Rome's subject peoples over all the others. He explains that scepticism about Jewish antiquity predominantly derives from the fact that no early Greek author mentions the Jews, an inference which clearly carries the implication that only Greek authors deserve to be trusted on questions of history (1.2). He then sets out to demolish this implication in several ways: by arguing that non-Greek peoples make better historians than Greeks; by exposing the Hellenocentric absurdity of this argument; by offering several reasons why the early Greeks would not have noticed the Jews; and by adducing both 'barbarian' and Greek testimony which supports his claims about the antiquity of Judaism.[8]

Josephus' claims about Greek versus 'barbarian' history are especially uncompromising. Greek history is, he argues, shallow and unreliable. Among the Greeks, anybody can write history (1.37), frequent environmental disasters have erased much from primordial antiquity (1.9–10), and the invention of writing happened strikingly late, meaning that Greek historians have no reliable sources for early history (1.11–14). Greek historians themselves are characterized as privileging style and novelty over veracity (1.27), and their own habit of refuting each other's works is used to demonstrate the unreliability of the entire tradition (1.16–17):

It is not necessary for me to try to educate readers who are no doubt better informed than myself on how many disagreements exist between Hellanicus and Acesilaus about early history; about how often Acusilaus corrects Hesiod; about how the lying statements of Hellanicus are refuted by Ephorus, those of Ephorus by Timaeus, those of Timaeus by later writers, and those of Herodotus by absolutely everybody.

What these Greek authors lack, Josephus explains, is the single most important quality in a reliable historical tradition, συμφωνία ('agreement').[9] Conversely, what we find in the records of the

[8] In the latter section, Josephus occasionally passes off Jewish authors as Gentiles, among other manipulations of their testimonies. See Goodman 1999: 53; Barclay 2016: 77–8.

[9] On the importance of συμφωνία to historiography, see *C.Ap* 1.26, 38, 160. For συμφωνία in Josephus' historiographical theory, see Cohen 1988: 1–5.

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non-Greek peoples of the eastern Mediterranean and Mesopotamia are authoritative univocal histories which preserve the plain truth, reported not by any hack who fancies himself a historian, but by the priests, the most learned and virtuous among them, the masters of memory (1.28–9). In this way, Josephus prepares the ground for his use of prominent 'barbarian' priest-historians like Berossus and Manetho to support his claims about Jewish antiquity, at the same time as he seamlessly inserts the Jews into the list of 'barbarian' peoples with authoritative historiographical traditions of the remote past.

In fact, what Josephus is doing here is capitalizing on certain tendencies within Greek historiography which went back at least as far as Herodotus and which presented the 'barbarian' priests of the east as preservers of authoritative local records (in other words, he is exploiting a trope from Greek historiography in order to undermine Greek historiography).[10] We might note the likely influence here of Plato's *Critias*, where 'barbarian' (specifically Egyptian) priests are cited explicitly as experts on the history of the remote past in a discussion which also stresses the poor historical memory of the Greeks.[11] And what is really remarkable about this section is how Josephus does not restrict his *apologia* to the Jews alone: he makes the case for the superiority of a broadly conceived tradition of eastern historiography whose records had come to be overlooked in favour of the shallow and inferior historiographical efforts of the Greeks. It would be a stretch to call this anti-colonial solidarity (Josephus advocates for Egyptians and Phoenicians not for their own sake but in order to bolster his defence of his own people), but nevertheless it is an inclusive and generous gesture, showing that Josephus recognized that the difficulties which he faced as a Jewish intellectual in a world which persistently favoured Greek intellectualism were not restricted to him and his people, but were experienced by representatives of many nations under Roman rule.

What this amounts to is a rejection of the imperial intellectual order as upheld by Roman power. Josephus' boldest moves in this section involve his exposure of the Hellenocentricism of Roman intellectual culture by ironically inflicting forms of it on Greeks and Romans

[10] For the trope, see, for example, Hdt. 2.2–3, 44, 99; Diod. Sic. 1.12.9; Plut. *De Is. et Os.* 353B. See also Marincola 1997: 108–11. Similarly, by drawing attention to the Greek historiographical habit of denigration of predecessor works, Josephus uses another feature of Greek historiography to undermine it (while, somewhat ironically, participating in that process of denigration himself).

[11] See esp. Pl. *Criti.* 109D–110B.

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themselves. At one point, he applies a mirrored version of Greek cultural arrogance to the Greeks: 'Imagine if I dared to question the age of Greek culture on the basis of the absence of any mention of Greeks in our literature. Surely they would mock and contemn me for this' (1.69). Here, he (correctly) notes that it would be intellectually absurd to attempt to argue that the Greeks did not have an ancient history simply on the basis that no early Jewish text mentions them. Why, then, is it not equally self-evidently absurd to doubt the antiquity of the Jews based on a lack of early Greek testimony? The answer is that the absurdity is obscured by Greek scholarship's link with imperial power. Elsewhere, Josephus implicitly inflicts this same Greek arrogance on Rome itself (1.66):

> The city of Rome is not mentioned by Herodotus nor by Thucydides nor by any one of their contemporaries, although it had established its power and enjoyed tremendous success in conquest long before their time. It was only yesterday, as it were, or the day before that knowledge of Rome reached the Greeks.[12]

Like the Jews, the Romans were ignored by early Greek authors. But would any Greek dare, on the basis of this, to suggest that Rome did not have an ancient past? These authorial manoeuvres are highly effective, clearly exposing the epistemic consequences of the privileging of the 'classical' over the rest.

This first section of *Against Apion* is, therefore, more than just a demonstration of Jewish antiquity (something which hardly needed demonstrating anyway). It also represents one 'barbarian' author protesting the marginalization of the non-Greek world and denouncing the dominant models of historical scholarship.

## Beating an Egyptian ass: Josephus versus the Judeophobes

The central section of the *Against Apion* involves the serial refutation of specific points made by several named authors, points which Josephus interprets as anti-Jewish. In the second half of Book 1, he attends in turn to the claims of three authors whom he identifies as Egyptian (although, as we will soon see, his ethnic labelling in this treatise can be a little slippery), Manetho, Chaeremon, and Lysimachus. In all three cases, Josephus' objections relate to these authors' presentations

[12] The last clause alludes to Hdt. 2.53.

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of Jewish origins and the story of Moses and the exodus. The first half of Book 2 continues this argumentative approach, but focuses entirely on one author, Apion. It initially maintains the focus on the exodus, addressing Apion's account of that event (2.8–32). But the discussion soon progresses to different themes, first rebutting some scurrilous comments which Apion made specifically about the Alexandrian Jews and their social and legal position (2.33–78), and then turning to a miscellany of slanders against the Jerusalem Temple and Jewish ritual and law (2.79–144).

The first target of Josephus' refutations, Manetho, is tricky. This author had already been pressed into service earlier in the treatise, presented effectively as an Egyptian alter ego of Josephus, a learned Egyptian priest who faithfully transmitted accurate Egyptian records through which Josephus was able to verify Jewish claims to antiquity (1.73–105, esp. 73 for his presentation of Manetho). Now, some re-evaluation is required. Josephus argues that, when Manetho is transmitting authentic Egyptian records, his works can be trusted, but on the basis of some rudimentary textual criticism, he comes to the conclusion that, at times, Manetho does not simply translate what he finds in the priestly records, but incorporates additional extraneous material, anti-Jewish slanders of no historical value (1.227–9, 287). This complication of the previously wholly positive portrayal of this author seems to mirror a simultaneous re-evaluation of all things Egyptian: although Josephus earlier praised the Egyptians as accurate historians and masters of remote-past memory, from this point on his comments about Egyptian matters (especially religion) will be unremittingly mocking and hostile (e.g. 1.223–6; 2.28–32; 2.65–7).[13] This is because he presents Egypt as the source of much anti-Jewish sentiment. The Egyptians, he explains, disparage the Jews for two reasons: spite and envy. They hate the Jews because they believe that, in the past, the Jews (identified with the Hyksos) ruled tyrannically over Egypt; simultaneously, they see the whole world despising their culture while admiring Judaism (1.223–6). Thus, the ways in which both Manetho and Egypt more broadly are valued in this treatise

[13] It is worth noting that the most frequent elements of Josephus' vituperation of the Egyptians (especially his fixation on the idea that they worshipped animals) seem strongly to mirror attested Roman prejudices about Egypt (on which see Smelik and Hemelrijk 1984; Isaac 2004: 352–70). This may indicate that such vituperation was designed to score points in the eyes of Roman readers.

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fluctuate according to Josephus' needs. When he can use them to support his position, he praises them; when he has more to gain from mocking, dismissing, or scoring points off them, he damns them instead.[14]

The strategies of argumentation which Josephus uses in this section of the treatise are varied.[15] Most straightforwardly, he points out elements of the stories these authors tell which can be presented as absurd. For instance, Manetho claimed that the pharaoh Amenophis was instructed by the gods to expel the ancestors of the Jews from Egypt, but he instead forces them to work in a stone quarry and later gives them a city in Egypt in which to live (1.260). Why would he do this? According to Manetho's account, Moses was a leper and led a company of lepers, and yet Josephus points out that Moses' own laws are rather harsh on lepers: this constitutes another absurdity on Manetho's part (1.281–5). Elsewhere, he recounts how Apion's notorious tale of the annual Jewish cannibalistic rite claims that 'the Jews' (presumably denoting all of them) were able to consume the entrails of a single Greek man – patently impossible (2.100).[16] Much of his critique centres on the identification and denunciation of these sorts of narrative absurdities.

Josephus is also eager to point to moments in these authors' works which contain contradictions, either internally or with the other texts under discussion (e.g. 1.293–303). This strategy helps to connect this section of the treatise with the first part, in which, as already discussed, agreement (συμφωνία) emerges as his key criterion of veracity in historiography. Note especially his comments on Chaeremon, while discussing how that author diverges from Manetho: 'those who cobble together lies write things which are not consistent with one another (οὐχ ἑτέροις σύμφωνα), and each invents whatever seems best to him' (1.293). A further element, especially visible in the Apion section, is personal abuse of the authors. Lysimachus is so stupid that, when claiming that the Jews originally named their city Hierosylia in commemoration of their own record of temple robbery (ἱεροσυλία), he does not even pause to reflect that foreign peoples do not use Greek words (1.318–20). Apion, meanwhile, is subjected to a broad range of personal abuse, which will be discussed in a moment. These

[14] In a similar vein, Josephus is quite happy to cite Greek historians who support his case, despite his resounding denunciation of Greek historical scholarship in the first section of Book 1.

[15] For more on Josephus' argumentative strategies, see Kasher 1996; Gruen 2016: 245–53.

[16] On the cannibalistic ritual, see above, pp. 24–5.

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three strategies – pointing out absurdities, identifying contradictions, and insulting the authors – are the means by which Josephus predominantly conducts his argument against the Judeophobes.

No other author is treated as brutally as Apion 'Pleistonikes'. None of his works survive, but nonetheless we know a fair amount about his life and career. He was an Alexandrian scholar and poet who was active in the first century CE. He produced a great deal of (often wilfully controversial) Homeric scholarship. He lived in Rome for a time, where he met the teenage Pliny the Elder and made a bad impression on the emperor Tiberius. He also won prizes in verse competitions in Greece, Sicily, and Italy.[17] Among his literary compositions, he wrote a history of Egypt, probably the source of his material about the exodus as quoted by Josephus. He is also known to have been involved in the aftermath of the violence which broke out between the Greek and Jewish communities in Alexandria in 38 CE: after the violence ended, Apion was part of an embassy to Caligula on behalf of the Alexandrian Greeks, aiming to convince the emperor that the unrest had been predominantly the fault of the Jews (*AJ* 18.257–60). It may have been in connection with this embassy that he wrote his attacks on the Alexandrian Jews which Josephus addresses in *Against Apion*.[18]

One thing which seems clear from this short biographical sketch is that Apion was Greek. He was an Alexandrian citizen; he was selected by the Alexandrian Greeks to represent them before the emperor; he was Greek enough to compete in, and win, Greek poetic contests in Greece. And yet, when addressing his great adversary in *Against Apion*, Josephus will absolutely not concede to him his Greekness: 'He was born in the Egyptian oasis, the quintessential Egyptian, we might say, but he rejected his true country and people and falsely claimed to be an Alexandrian, an admission of the disgraceful nature of his nation of birth' (2.29).

When engaging with Apion, Josephus frequently draws attention to his supposed 'Egyptianness' and uses it as a basis for mocking and demeaning him. And there is something very striking about all this. What Josephus is doing here is the precise reverse of what Apion

[17] On Apion's Homeric scholarship, see Dillery 2003. On his encounter with Pliny, see *HN* 30.18 (and Damon 2011). On his impression on Tiberius, see Plin. *HN* praef.25–6. On verse competitions, see Benaissa 2014.

[18] For more on Apion, see, in addition to the works already cited, Van der Horst 2002: 207–22; Jones 2005; Damon 2008.

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himself appears to have done to the Jews in his writings, in which he 'reduced' them to the status of Egyptians. There may have been a political element to this in Apion's original context. Many of the disputes in Alexandria centred on the question of the status of the Alexandrian Jews, with the Greeks attempting to convince Rome that they should enjoy no special privileges over the native Egyptians. If intellectuals like Apion were able to demonstrate that, originally, the Jews *were* Egyptians, that could have been seen to bolster that case.[19] Be that as it may, Apion's persistent desire to depict Jews as Egyptians is reflected back at him here. Considering the frequency with which Egyptians were mocked and demeaned in Roman literature, such a depiction may have been damaging to Apion's credibility in the eyes of Josephus' Roman readers.

In fact, this sort of playful ironic reversal is wholly characteristic of Josephus' procedure when dealing with Apion. For instance, he cites Apion as the source of the claim that Jews worshipped the head of an ass in the Jerusalem Temple, and on two occasions he ironically labels Apion as an ass. One of those occasions is especially rich, combining the ironic labelling as an ass with the strong Egyptianizing tendencies and personal and ethnic abuse which we see throughout: 'These are the factors which Apion should have considered, if only he had not been endowed with the mind of an ass and the impudence of a dog, which among the Egyptians is a well-established object of worship' (2.85).[20]

Similarly, Josephus goes on to record how Apion had attempted to use the Jews' historical lack of success in war as a basis for abuse. He then mocks the Egyptians for their own record of constant imperial domination by foreign powers, ironically turning Apion's own accusation back against 'his people' (as Josephus would have it) (2.125–32). Even the circumstances of Apion's death are not beneath Josephus as a source of irony-fuelled mockery. Josephus tells us that Apion had once claimed that the Hebrew word for the sabbath derived from the Egyptian word *sabbo*, meaning a disease of the genitals, because the Israelites supposedly suffered from this condition after six days in the wilderness (2.20–1). Later, Josephus tells us that Apion mocked the Jews for their custom of circumcision (2.137–42). Thus his humiliating account of his adversary's demise is rich, once

[19] Harker 2009: 212–20.
[20] The other occasion is at *C.Ap* 2.115.

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again, in irony and mirroring: 'Circumcision became necessary as a result of an ulcer on his penis; the procedure availed him nothing, the ulcer began to necrotize, and he died in excruciating pain' (2.143). The inventor of slanders about genital diseases dies from a gangrenous genital ulcer, the mocker of circumcision is himself circumcised, and the neatness of all this may even have suggested to some of Josephus' readers that it was divine punishment. Josephus turns Apion's whole life and identity into irony, and then he ironizes him to death.

Although no one should doubt the seriousness of Josephus' commitment to these debates, or the importance of defending his people against these insults and accusations, there is something of the playground about all this: the name-calling, the intemperate language, the careless slurs. However, to invoke the perennial excuse of the playground, we should remember that Josephus did not start it. If, in this long central section, our author seems at times to lack taste and decency, then he is only repaying in kind the insults which had long been heaped on his people by the archetypal antisemites of the Graeco-Roman world.

## The best of all laws and the best of all lawgivers

The final section of the treatise involves a significant tonal shift. The focus is no longer on vitriolic refutations of hostile critics or on denigrating other cultures; rather, it is on celebrating Judaism and the Jewish law. This section is not entirely without vitriol, but its prevailing mood is celebratory and encomiastic. It begins with a short preface, explaining that Apollonius Molon, Lysimachus, and others had made two specific problematic accusations: that Moses was a charlatan and that the Jewish 'constitution' teaches vice rather than virtue (2.145–50). Josephus states that the best way to refute these allegations is to provide a summary of the laws and an examination of their teachings, accompanied by comparisons with other celebrated law codes. He begins by summarizing and celebrating Moses' view of God and showing how Moses ensured that his laws would thoroughly inculcate his lofty conception of the deity in all who follow them (2.151–89). Then he provides an abbreviated and thematically arranged summary of the contents of the law (2.190–219), before proceeding to comparisons with celebrated foreign constitutions, both real and imaginary (2.220–86). Finally, he delivers a closing encomium, and restates the work's dedication to Epaphroditus (2.287–96).

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Despite the changes in tone and procedure, Josephus does take some steps to connect this material to the rest of the treatise, offering continuity via certain through-lines. He frames his celebration of Judaism within an apologetic setting: he claims that he is providing this material in order to refute Apollonius, Lysimachus, and others (2.145–50); he refers to this objective periodically throughout (e.g. 2.182, 236); and he returns to it at the very end (2.295):

> If it has been shown that no one observes these laws more scrupulously than us, and if we have satisfactorily demonstrated that we were the first to use them, then we may safely leave people like Apion and Molon and anybody else who exults in slander and abuse to their own ignorance.

Thus something of the combative tone of the earlier sections is allowed to persist even in this predominantly laudatory part of the treatise. The scathing denunciation of what Josephus presents as the absurdity and immorality of Greek myth also carries some of the bitter tone of the earlier parts (2.242–3):

> Stories like these are rightly ridiculed by the most intelligent of the Greeks. They deride the idea that some deities are young men without beards, while others are hirsute elders; or that some have jobs, with one god working as a blacksmith, another goddess as a weaver, another as a soldier who fights against mere mortals, while others are musicians and archers. Equally ridiculous is the idea that they engage in disputes, and so heatedly that they not only physically fight each other, but even suffer from and complain about injuries inflicted by mortals.

The figure of Moses is central to all three main sections of the work, and thus he, too, provides continuity with what has gone before. Perhaps most noticeable, however, is the prominence of the virtue of συμφωνία ('concord' or 'agreement'). As we have seen, this has featured prominently in both of the previous sections: first Josephus presented it as the central criterion in determining whether a nation's historical record is trustworthy; then he used the lack of it as a basis for critiquing the claims of the 'Egyptian' authors he refutes. In the final section, it is presented as one of the four key virtues which are taught by the Judaean constitution, in opposition to the contention of Apollonius Molon and others that Judaism teaches vice (2.170–1).[21] This provides strong continuity with the earlier sections, and even

[21] On the virtues in the *Against Apion*, see Rajak 1998: 231–4. The identification of four chief virtues was already a commonplace in Greek philosophical writings (see North 1966), but the precise combination of virtues which Josephus claims is taught by the Mosaic Laws (justice,

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retrospectively bolsters Josephus' high claims for the reliability of the Judaean historical record. If συμφωνία is the key mark of historical reliability and Jews have been instructed in this very same virtue from birth, then surely they must be master historians.

Josephus' insistence throughout this section on the high degree of harmony and unanimity among Jews is in many ways at odds with his presentation of Judaism in his earlier works. In presenting this overview of the Jewish law, he is summarizing Judaism for outsiders, and he did this in his earlier works too, but in a very different way. In the second book of the *Jewish War*, Josephus claims that there are three legitimate 'schools' (αἱρήσεις) of Judaism. The Essenes (who are given an extensive ethnographic excursus) believe in rewards, punishments, and souls possessing 'new bodies' in the afterlife; in many cases, they live together in common-property communities bound by extraordinary rules (*BJ* 2.119–61). The Pharisees, whose doctrines have much clout with the common people, believe in life after death, hold that both providence and free will play a role in human actions, and are good-natured and strive for the common good (*BJ* 2.162–3, 166). The Sadducees, whose doctrines are especially attractive to the wealthy and powerful, believe that God and providence play no direct role in human affairs and that there is no afterlife, and they are harsh and unfriendly, even to each other (*BJ* 2.164–6). This formulation is clear: it communicates a 'philosophical' vision of Judaism to the Gentile world (the sects are described in terms which echo Pythagoreanism, Stoicism, and Epicureanism), and Josephus was satisfied enough with it to repeat it several times in the later *Jewish Antiquities*, with minor emendations (*AJ* 13.171–3; 15.370–2; 18.11–22).[22] And yet there is not a trace of this scheme in the *Against Apion*, where he once more takes up the task of summarizing Judaism for the outside world. Why?

Josephus most likely abandons his three schools model in this work for the simple reason that it is no longer appropriate to his rhetorical purpose. One feature of the model which is rather attractive to modern

temperance, fortitude, and harmony) appears to be original to him. Goodman 1999: 57–8 has suggested that the virtues which Josephus emphasizes as being inculcated by Judaism map very closely onto conservative Roman values, suggesting that Josephus may have had one eye on winning approval from a Roman audience. When we recall how the hostile stereotypes about both Egyptians and Greeks in this treatise also closely echo Roman prejudices, we get the impression that, in the *Against Apion*, Josephus aims to suggest that Romans and Jews are similar, and to oppose both groups to Egyptians and Greeks.

[22] On Josephus' three schools model more broadly, see Haaland 2007; Klawans 2012; Baumgarten 2016.

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sensibilities is that it emphasizes Jewish diversity. The three schools believe quite widely divergent things, and yet Josephus is happy to present them all, without qualification, as legitimate expressions of Judaism. However, that same emphasis on diversity would be unhelpful in a work which aims to stress the remarkable harmony that exists within global Judaism, harmony which is emphasized in the strongest possible terms (*C.Ap.* 2.179–80):

> Having one and the same conception of God, and differing in no way from one another in our way of life or our values, has enabled us to attain the most perfect ethical concord (συμφωνία) of all peoples. Only among us will no contradictory opinions about God be voiced; these kinds of disagreement are ubiquitous among others, and are expressed not only among ordinary people whose opinions might change with each passing fancy, but are even forcefully expounded by philosophers.

Thus rhetorical exigency requires Josephus to abandon his earlier formulation of healthy diversity within Judaism and replace it with this (wholly misleading) picture of utter harmony and unanimity. Rhetorical convenience may also explain a further apparent shift from his conception in earlier works. Previously, when expressing Judaean political arrangements in terms comprehensible to Gentile readers, he had identified Moses' constitution as an aristocracy (*AJ* 4.223). Here, this will not do. Josephus wants to establish that the Mosaic constitution is the best constitution ever devised. Other nations could claim to possess aristocratic constitutions and so, in this treatise, Josephus goes one better. He coins a new Greek word, 'theocracy' (θεοκρατία), to describe a nation entirely under the rule of God (*C.Ap* 2.164–7). The neologism, to which Josephus explicitly draws attention, further highlights the exceptional nature of the Mosaic πολιτεία ('constitution'), elevating it emphatically above all possible competitors.

In the final stretches of the *Against Apion*, Josephus is at his best when he is in a celebratory mood, hymning, in rather elegant and elevated language, the nobility of Moses' conception of the deity, admiring the passionate attachment and loyalty of the Jews to their laws, and enumerating the virtues which obedience to those laws will inculcate. It is lofty and dignified stuff, and this is surprising as it comes at the end of what has, for the most part, been an obstreperous, impertinent, and aggressive piece of work. Josephus spends most of this exhilarating treatise fighting dirty in the gutter. At least he is able to finish it looking at the stars.

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