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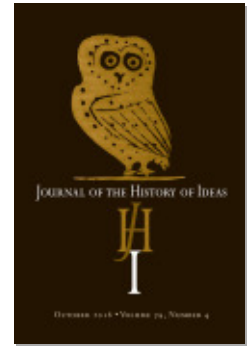
*Retracing the "Art of Arts and Science of Sciences" from
Gregory the Great to Philo of Alexandria*

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Retracing the “Art of Arts and Science of Sciences” from Gregory the Great to Philo of Alexandria

Andrew Hofer, O.P., and Alan Piper, O.P.

INTRODUCTION

The phrase “art of arts and science of sciences” appears in philosophical, religious, and political writing through much of the history of Western thought. How does the phrase appear in antiquity? Little has been done to trace the phrase’s usage in a way that reveals the great complexity of its semantic range. The most thorough treatment of the phrase known to us in antiquity and through the Western Middle Ages is the recent work of Constantin Teleanu, who treats the development of the phrase before the late thirteenth and early fourteenth-century philosopher and religious writer Raymond Lull.¹ But, in treating ancient sources, Teleanu does not consider Sophocles, Maximus of Tyre, Themistius, Emperor Julian, Didymus the Blind, Nilus of Ancyra, Isidore of Pelusium, or, most importantly,

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¹ Constantin Teleanu, “2.2 Art des arts et Science des sciences” in Raymond Lulle, *Livre de Contemplation*, trans. Teleanu (Paris: Schola Lulliana, 2016), xv–xviii; cf. Teleanu, “‘Art e manera’: Le système de l’Art des arts du *Libre de Contemplació* de Raymond Lulle,” *Mediaevalia: Textos e estudios* 34 (2015): 145–66. For a highly select Byzantine reception, see Dimiter G. Angelov, “Classifications of Political Philosophy and the Concept of Royal Science in Byzantium,” in *The Many Faces of Byzantine Philosophy*, series 4, vol. 1, ed. Börje Bydén and Katerina Ierodiakonou (Athens: Norwegian Institute at Athens, 2012), 23–49.

Philo of Alexandria's *On Special Laws*. Teleanu credits Chrysippus for a citation from a different text by Philo, thus exemplifying how scholarship commonly traces the phrase's origin to Chrysippus or Aristotle, but without citing evidence from the extant texts of those two ancient philosophers.

The present study gives an account of the phrase and its variants, such as simply "art of arts," and considers how they are used in texts written before the seventh century. We begin with Gregory the Great's *Book of Pastoral Rule* and work, more or less, backward in history to avoid the notion of a direct and continuous genealogy. Extant records do not give a complete history of ideas. Yet, we argue that Philo of Alexandria, the earliest known writer to use "art of arts and science of sciences" as a complete phrase, should be considered most prominently. His descriptions of the phrase's meaning have a significance that scholars have neglected. In surveying the variety of texts where the phrase appears, we may come to a better appreciation of both the common *paideia* of the authors under consideration and the distinct ways they have used the phrase in philosophical, theological, and political contexts. Indeed, the durability of the phrase and its wide appeal seem to reflect an abiding preoccupation with the notion of a master science—a sort of wisdom that might harmonize the various pluralities of antiquity.

FROM THE SIXTH TO THE SECOND CENTURY

Part One of Gregory the Great's *Book of Pastoral Rule*, written most likely in late 590 and January 591, soon after his election to the Roman episcopacy in September 590, begins, "No one presumes to teach an art that he has not first mastered through study. How foolish it is therefore for the inexperienced to assume pastoral authority when the care of souls is the art of arts."² Gregory (d. 604) thus immediately announces the dignity of what he is discussing in this most thorough treatment of pastoral care in early Christianity. J. J. O'Donnell comments:

But a textual history needs to be kept in mind, for those words are familiar ones. We find a minor character in Macrobius's *Saturnalia* 7.15.14 stating "philosophiam artem esse artium et disciplinam

² "Nulla ars doceri praesumitur, nisi intenta prius meditatione discatur. Ab imperitis ergo pastorale magisterium qua temeritate suscipitur, quando ars est artium regimen animarum," Gregory the Great, *Regula Pastoralis* 1.1.3 (PL 77.14A), trans. George Demacopoulos (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2007), 29.

disciplinarum” [philosophy is the art of arts and the discipline of disciplines], but he is echoing words of Praetextatus (“disciplina disciplinarum” [discipline of disciplines] at *Sat.* 1.24.21), and the phrase recurs in Cassiodorus’s digest written in Gregory’s lifetime: Cassiodorus, *Institutiones* 2.3.5, “aliter, philosophia est ars artium et disciplina disciplinarum” [in another way, philosophy is the art of arts and the discipline of disciplines].³

O’Donnell is correct that a textual history needs to be kept in mind, and that the words are familiar. He singles out the purported traditions recorded in Macrobius (fl. early fifth century), including a saying by Praetextatus (d. 384) not attested before Macrobius, as well as Cassiodorus’s efforts to Christianize classical culture (d. ca. 585). Missing, however, is the most natural reference to the only non-biblical authority cited by Gregory in his *Book of Pastoral Rule*: his namesake, Gregory of Nazianzus (d. ca. 390).⁴ The familiar phrase “art of arts” appears in Gregory of Nazianzus’s *Or.* 2.16. Gregory the Great had access to the Latin translation of that oration, by Rufinus in 398 or 399: “to rule or instruct a human being is the art of arts and discipline of disciplines.”⁵ Cremascoli’s study of the phrase “art of arts” addresses only that antecedent in addition to the *Book of Pastoral Rule* itself.⁶ But before we investigate the fourth-century Greek original of *Or.* 2, let us consider attempts to express the meaning of this idea by other authors between Gregory the Great and his namesake.

Introductions to philosophy in this era variously defined philosophy, as we already saw in the example of Cassiodorus’s *Institutiones* adduced by O’Donnell. One method was to list a series of definitions (usually six), a practice perhaps initiated around AD 500 by Ammonius, the great pupil of Proclus in Athens who established the commentatorial tradition on Aristotle’s texts in Alexandria.⁷ Ammonius is said to have taught such figures as

³ James J. O’Donnell, “The Holiness of Gregory,” in *Gregory the Great: A Symposium*, ed. John C. Cavadini (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995), 62–81, at 73.

⁴ Gregory the Great, *Regula Pastoralis*, liber 3, prologus (PL 77.49C).

⁵ “Ars artium et disciplina disciplinarum hominem uel regere uel inbuere,” Gregory of Nazianzus, in August Engelbrecht, *Tyrannii Rufini Orationum Gregorii Nazianzenii nouem interpretatio*, Corpus scriptorium ecclesiasticorum Latinorum 46 (Vienna: F. Tempsky, 1910), 18.17–18; cf. Mary Monica Wagner, C.S.C., *Rufinus the Translator: A Study of His Theory and His Practice as Illustrated in His Version of the Apologetica of St. Gregory Nazianzen*, Patristic Studies 73 (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1945).

⁶ Giuseppe Cremascoli, “‘L’ars artium’ nella ‘Regula Pastoralis’ di Gregorio Magno,” *Studi Medievali* 50 (2009): 673–87.

⁷ Anton-Hermann Chroust, “Late Hellenistic ‘Textbook Definitions’ of Philosophy,”

Asclepius of Tralles, John Philoponus, Simplicius, Zacharias of Gaza, Damascius, and probably Olympiodorus, and his thought thereafter influenced David, Elias, Pseudo-Elias, and Stephanus.⁸ Ammonius gives as his fifth definition of philosophy “art of arts and science of sciences,” and he alludes to an Aristotelian provenance.⁹ This is later specified by Elias to be what Aristotle says in the *Metaphysics*.¹⁰ Anton-Hermann Chroust conjectures that Elias may have in mind *Metaphysics* 1.2 (982b). But nowhere in extant works does Aristotle use the phrase “art of arts and science of sciences.” Elias is unusual in specifying a particular work, as only more general comments about where that definition for philosophy is found are made by Simplicius, Asclepius, Eustratius, and David.¹¹ David compares the formulation to similar formulations of calling a king a “ruler of rulers” (ἄρχοντα ἀρχόντων) and God “king of kings” (βασιλέα βασιλέων).¹² Moreover, he says that the other arts derive their principles from philosophy and are corrected by it.¹³

Chroust points to some similar ideas about philosophy’s unique status, such as those held by Posidonius (d. ca. 51 BC), who was heavily influenced by Aristotle’s texts and several of whose fragments are preserved by Seneca (d. AD 65).¹⁴ Chroust also recounts that Cicero (d. 43 BC) calls philosophy “the mother of all art.”¹⁵ He helpfully points to the *Meditations* of Marcus Aurelius (d. AD 180), but confuses the emperor’s distinction there when

Laval théologique et philosophique 28 (1972): 15–25; cf. Teleanu, *Livre de Contemplation*, xv.

⁸ For recent surveys of Ammonius, see Richard Sorabji, “Introduction: Seven Hundred Years of Commentary and the Sixth Century Diffusion to other Cultures,” in *Aristotle Re-Interpreted: New Findings on Seven Hundred Years of the Ancient Commentators*, ed. Sorabji (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), 1–80, esp. 46–57 on “Ammonius of Alexandria (445?–517/526) and his School”; David Blank, “Ammonius Hermeiou and his School,” in *The Cambridge History of Philosophy in Late Antiquity*, ed. Lloyd P. Gerson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 2:654–66.

⁹ For the text, see Adolf Busse, ed., *Ammonius in Porphyrii isagogen sive quinque voces*, Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca, vol. 4, pars 3 (Berlin: Reimer, 1891), 1–128, at 6. For discussion, see L. G. Westerink, “The Alexandrian Commentators and the Introductions to Their Commentaries,” in *Aristotle Transformed: The Ancient Commentators and Their Influence*, ed. Sorabji (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990), 325–48.

¹⁰ Elias, *In Porphyrii isagogen* 20.18–23.

¹¹ Chroust, “Late Hellenistic ‘Textbook Definitions’ of Philosophy,” 22.

¹² David, praxis 13, in Adolf Busse, ed., *Davidis Prolegomena et in Porphyrii Isagogen commentarium*, Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca, vol. 18, pars 2 (Berlin: Rheimer, 1904), 1–79, at 39.

¹³ For summary, see Westerink, “The Alexandrian Commentators,” 373; cf. Teleanu, *Livre de Contemplation*, xv–xviii.

¹⁴ Seneca, *Ep.* 88.21ff and *Ep.* 88.28ff; *Ep.* 90.7 and *Ep.* 90.23; and *Ep.* 39.5.

¹⁵ Cicero, *Tusculanae Disputationes* 1.26.64.

offering the quotation “let philosophy be thy foster-mother and mother.”¹⁶ Marcus Aurelius, instead, says: “If you had a stepmother and a mother at the same time, you would be dutiful to your stepmother, but still you would constantly return to your mother. Let the court and philosophy now be stepmother and mother to you,” and then stresses that philosophy is the mother, whereas the court is the stepmother.¹⁷ Chroust refers to the *On Mating with the Preliminary Studies* of Philo of Alexandria (d. ca. AD 50) as being “Aristotelian in spirit,” but does not point to any further text by Philo as relevant.¹⁸ He is aware that the definitions had already become authoritative before Ammonius’s categorization, and he posits that through Cassiodorus, Isidore of Seville, Dominicus Gundissalinus, and other writers, the six definitions influenced medieval theology and philosophy.¹⁹ He writes, “In this manner they became an essential part or aspect of Christian intellectual and spiritual life. Thus, the fifth definition, for instance, which calls philosophy ‘the art of arts and the science of sciences,’ among other matters, was also referred to in order to explain, justify and exalt the pastoral functions of priesthood.”²⁰ Nowhere does Chroust offer a reference to the exact phrase “art of arts” before the fifth century, and one can gather the impression from his study that medieval Christians were particularly indebted to the Neoplatonist tradition of philosophical definitions in the fifth and sixth centuries.

Yet, in the fourth and early fifth centuries we find several examples of the phrase. To take immediately four Greek Christian writers subsequent to or contemporary with Gregory of Nazianzus, we can consider Isidore of

¹⁶ Chroust, “Late Hellenistic ‘Textbook Definitions’ of Philosophy,” 22.

¹⁷ Εἰ μητρῴϊαν τε ἅμα εἶχες καὶ μητέρα, ἐκείνην τ’ ἂν ἐθεράπευες καὶ ὄμως ἢ ἐπάνοδος σοι πρὸς τὴν μητέρα συνεχῆς ἐγίνετο. τοῦτό σοι νῦν ἔστιν ἡ αὐλή καὶ ἡ φιλοσοφία, Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*, 6.12, in *The Meditations of the Emperor Marcus Aurelius Antonius*, vol. 1, ed. A. S. L. Farquharson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1944; repr., 1968), 4–250; trans. George Long, *Meditations* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2014), 38. For a related topic of “mother of virtue” before the sixth century, see Harry Hagan, O.S.B., “The Mothers of Virtues and the Rule of Benedict,” *American Benedictine Review* 60 (2009): 371–97.

¹⁸ See Philo, *On Mating with the Preliminary Studies* 146, in *Philo*, trans. F. H. Colson and G. H. Whitaker, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1932; repr., 1996), 4:535. All translations of Philo are taken from the Loeb edition. Cf. Chroust, “The Definitions of Philosophy in the De Divisione Philosophiae of Dominicus Gundissalinus,” *The New Scholasticism* 25 (1951): 263–81, at 267.

¹⁹ Cassiodorus, *De Artibus ac Disciplinis Liberalium Litterarum* 3; Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiae* 2.24.1, 2.24.2, and 2.24.9; Gundissalinus, *De Divisione Philosophiae*, passim; see Chroust, “The Definitions of Philosophy in the De Divisione Philosophiae of Dominicus Gundissalinus.”

²⁰ Chroust, “Late Hellenistic ‘Textbook Definitions’ of Philosophy,” 25.

Pelusium (d. ca. 435/440), Nilus of Ancyra (d. 430), John Chrysostom (d. 407), and Didymus the Blind (d. ca. 398). Gregory may have learned from Didymus when he visited Alexandria in 348,²¹ and John Chrysostom was certainly influenced by Gregory of Nazianzus's *Or. 2* in the writing of his own *On the Priesthood*.²² Although little is known with certainty about his life, and some works of other authors passed under his name, Nilus of Ancyra seems to have been a disciple of John Chrysostom. An Egyptian monk who became famous for his thousands of letters, Isidore of Pelusium knew and supported John Chrysostom. We look briefly at each in turn.

Didymus's writing on Ecclesiastes compares the grammar of the phrase to the biblical phrase "vanity of vanities": it is "just as if you were to say science of sciences and virtue of virtues."²³ Didymus does not mean that vanity is like science or virtue, but that the phrases share a genitive construction. John Chrysostom expresses the idea of "art of arts" twice in his preaching. In his homilies on Matthew, he considers almsgiving to be the superlative art—he does not exactly call it the "art of arts," but rather states that "nothing is more useful than almsgiving; it is clear that this art is better than all arts."²⁴ In his homilies on 2 Corinthians, the Antiochene preacher again uses the familiar rhetorical technique of *synkrisis*: "For ruling is an art, not merely a dignity, and an art above all arts. For if the rule of those outside [non-Christians] is an art and science superior to all other, much more this. For this rule [in the Church] is as much better than that, as that than the rest; yea, rather, even much more."²⁵ Notice that John Chrysostom considers it commonplace to identify governance with art and

²¹ John McGuckin, *Saint Gregory of Nazianzus: An Intellectual Biography* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2001), 44–45.

²² See Andrew Hofer, O.P., "The Reordering of Relationships in John Chrysostom's *De sacerdotio*," *Augustinianum* 51 (2011): 451–71.

²³ ὡς ἐὰν λέγης ἐπιστήμη ἐπιστήμῶν, ἀρετὴ ἀρετῶν, Didymus the Blind, *Commentary on Ecclesiastes* (1:1–8), codex p. 10, lines 18–19, in Gerhard Binder and Leo Liesenborgs, *Didymos der Blinde: Kommentar zum Ecclesiastes*, pt. 1, *Papyrologische Texte und Abhandlungen* 25 (Bonn: Habelt, 1979).

²⁴ ἐλεημοσύνης δὲ οὐδὲν χρησιμώτερον, εὐδηλον ὅτι καὶ τέχνη καὶ τεχνῶν ἀπασῶν αὕτη ἀμείνων, John Chrysostom, *Matt hom.* 52.3, on Matt. 15:21–22 (PG 58.522.48–50).

²⁵ Καὶ γὰρ τέχνη τὸ ἄρχειν ἐστίν, οὐκ ἀξίωμα μόνον, καὶ τέχνη τεχνῶν ἀπασῶν ἀνωτέρα. Εἰ γὰρ ἡ τῶν ἔξωθεν ἀρχή, τέχνη καὶ ἐπιστήμη πασῶν βελτίων ἐστὶ πολλῶ μᾶλλον αὕτη. Καὶ γὰρ τοσοῦτω ἀμείνων ἐκείνης αὕτη ἢ ἀρχή, ὅσω τῶν ἄλλων δὲ ἐκείνη· μᾶλλον δὲ καὶ πολλῶ πλεόν, John Chrysostom, 2 *Cor hom.* 15.4, on 2 Cor. 7:13 (PG 61.506.27–33), trans. in *Saint Chrysostom: Homilies on the Epistles of Paul to the Corinthians*, rev. Talbot Chambers, vol. 12, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, First Series, ed. Philip Schaff (New York: The Christian Literature Company, 1889), 352 (slightly altered).

science. If this supreme art can be known in a secular fashion in that sense, it can be applied more truly to ruling within the Church.

Nilus of Ancyra uses the phrase in a polemic against those who think they can offer monastic spiritual direction without experience. He writes sarcastically that every art requires time and much instruction to be mastered, “but the art of arts alone is practiced without being learned.”²⁶ Isidore of Pelusium writes to Ophelius the Grammarian that various philosophers have defined philosophy to be an art of arts and science of sciences. He then names three and gives summary definitions of philosophy: for Pythagoras, it is the zeal for wisdom; for Plato, the possession of sciences; and for Chrysippus, the devotion to right reason. Isidore himself prefers to define philosophy in terms of εὐσέβεια (piety) and ἀρετή (virtue).²⁷

Moving to the Latin West, we see that Augustine (d. 430) at the end of the fourth century has his own adaptations, reminiscent of the phrase *ars artium*.²⁸ In his *On Order* (386) Augustine reviews what came to be known as the liberal arts. After grammar, and before rhetoric, he discusses dialectic, which he calls the *disciplina disciplinarum*, and discusses how this discipline teaches how to teach, and how to learn.²⁹ A few years later, Augustine writes in *On True Religion* (390) about the first life, the first essence, and the first wisdom, and “that incommunicable truth, which is rightly said to be the law of all arts and the art of the all-powerful artisan”³⁰ He thus refers to the divine law as the foremost art, and recognizes that he carries on a tradition.

Perhaps most famously in the fourth century the phrase is embedded in what has long been considered to be the first Christian treatise on the priesthood, Gregory of Nazianzus’s *Or. 2*, the *De fuga* or *Apologetica*. Gregory of Nazianzus says, “To lead a human being, the most diverse and

²⁶ μόνη δὲ ἡ τέχνη τῶν τεχνῶν ἀμαθητέως ἐπιτηδεύεται, Nilus of Ancyra, *De monastica exercitacione* 22 (PG 79.748D), trans. in Michael Lawrence Birkel, “The Contemplative as Prophet: Monastic Authority in the Works of Nilus of Ancyra,” (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1986), 174; see also Pascal P. Parente, *Spiritual Direction* (St. Meinrad, IN: Grail, 1950), vi.

²⁷ Isidore of Pelusium, *ep. 558* (PG 78.1637A); cf. Karlheinz Hüsnler, *Die Fragmente zur Dialektik der Stoiker: Neue Stammlung der Texte mit deutscher Übersetzung und Kommentaren*, vol. 1 (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 1987), frag. 2B, 6.

²⁸ See Teleanu, *Libre de Contemplation*, xv and xviii.

²⁹ Augustine, *De ordine* II.13.38 (PL 32.1013), trans. Silvan Borruso, *On Order (De Ordine) St. Augustine* (South Bend, IN: St. Augustine’s Press, 2007). See Naoki Kamimura, “Self-Knowledge and the Discipline ‘in vita’ in Augustine’s *De ordine*,” *Patristica*, supplementary vol. 2 (2006): 85–109.

³⁰ “Illa incommutabilis veritas, quae lex omnium artium recte dicitur et ars omnipotentis artificis,” Augustine, *De vera religione* 31.57 (PL 34.147).

complex living thing [τὸ πολυτροπώτατον ζῶον καὶ ποιικιλώτατον], seems to me to be an art of arts and science of sciences [τέχνη τις εἶναι τεχνῶν καὶ ἐπιστήμη ἐπιστημῶν].³¹ In the *Sources Chrétiennes* edition of this text, no note discusses the significance of this phrase, but one refers to Gregory's following comparison between this work of the physician of souls with the treatment of the body.³² Due to Gregory's high reputation, his formulation of "art of arts and science of sciences" was particularly influential in the Byzantine tradition, as well as in the West, as we have seen through Rufinus's translation of *Or. 2*.

In so many respects, Gregory of Nazianzus can be fruitfully compared with his contemporary, Emperor Julian, who studied in Athens at the same time as Gregory and who was emperor at the beginning of Gregory's writing career.³³ Gregory wrote *Or. 2* around the same time as or within a year after Julian wrote his oration *To the Uneducated Cynics*, which can be dated to June 362.³⁴ Julian himself gives three definitions of philosophy: "as some people do, as an art of arts and a science of sciences or as an effort to become like God, as far as one may, or whether, as the Pythian oracle said, it means 'Know thyself.'" ³⁵ Note that the emperor claims to follow a tradition in using the phrase "art of arts and science of sciences." In teaching the Cynics what true philosophy is, Julian says that these three definitions are closely allied. He considers the importance of knowing oneself, in the ἀρχαί (principles) of both one's own soul and body, as that which controls every science and art.³⁶ Susanna Elm mentions the phrase in her study on Gregory and Julian in different contexts, but she does not explicitly compare the two on this point.³⁷ Did Gregory borrow this phrase from Julian? If Gregory wrote the oration around Easter of 362, the answer would be no, since Julian wrote his text in June of that year. If, as Elm

³¹ τῷ ὄντι γὰρ αὐτῇ μοι φαίνεται τέχνη τις εἶναι τεχνῶν, καὶ ἐπιστήμη ἐπιστημῶν, ἀνθρωπῶν ἄγειν, τὸ πολυτροπώτατον ζῶον καὶ ποιικιλώτατον, Gregory of Nazianzus, *Or. 2.16* (SC 247.110; PG 35.425A).

³² For that medicinal comparison in Diodorus Siculus 1.49, see SC 247.111n4.

³³ See Susanna Elm, *Sons of Hellenism, Fathers of the Church: Emperor Julian, Gregory of Nazianzus, and the Vision of Rome* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012).

³⁴ For slightly different reckonings in scholarship, see McGuckin, *Saint Gregory of Nazianzus*, viii; Brian E. Daley, S.J., *Gregory of Nazianzus*, *The Early Church Fathers* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 9; and Elm, *Sons of Hellenism, Fathers of the Church*, 153.

³⁵ ὡσπερ τινὲς ὑπολαμβάνουσι, τέχνην τεχνῶν καὶ ἐπιστήμην ἐπιστημῶν, εἴτε ὁμοίωσιν θεῶν κατὰ τὸ δυνατόν, εἶθ', ὅπερ ὁ Πύθιος ἔφη, τὸ "Γνώθι σαυτὸν," Julian, *Or. 6.3* (183A) in *The Works of the Emperor Julian*, trans. Wilmer Cave Wright, Loeb Classical Library (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1913), 2:11 (slightly altered).

³⁶ Julian, *Or. 6.3* (183D).

³⁷ Elm, *Sons of Hellenism*, 137 (on Julian), 166 (on Gregory), and 333 (on Julian).

argues, Gregory’s famous oration was written later, then the answer is possibly yes.³⁸ However, Julian clearly recognizes that the phrase is common and familiar. Even if Gregory’s text is post hoc, it is not necessarily propter hoc.

In fact, both Gregory and Julian can be compared with their older contemporary, the famed political philosopher in the Aristotelian tradition and orator/statesman in Constantinople, Themistius (d. 387?). Both Gregory and Julian have connections to Themistius; Julian disapproved of Themistius’s political philosophy and Gregory approved of Themistius’s eloquence.³⁹ Themistius uses the phrase in full in a fragment, dated to around 360, discussing how the arts perform their services for both the good and the bad alike.⁴⁰ A knife maker does not know, and cannot control, whether his knife will go to a murderer. A shipbuilder may be making a ship for a robber. A helmsman who saves someone from drowning does not know the quality of good or evil in that person’s life. Themistius concludes that what is meant by a “science of sciences” or “art of arts” is a higher order that establishes the first principles or monitors how they are put to use in lower areas. In his translation of Themistius’s work, Robert J. Penella notes the terminological parallel to Plato’s *Charmides* 170c (and see 166b–76d) and the two citations from Macrobius’s *Saturnalia* that we have already considered. He writes, “but the manner in which these passages elaborate on the terminology makes them conceptually unparallel to Themistius,” and concludes with the reference to Julian’s oration *To the Uneducated Cynics*.⁴¹

Penella’s reference to Plato’s *Charmides*, although dismissed as unparallel to Themistius, can assist our present study. This passage from Plato’s dialogue on σωφροσύνη (temperance or sound-mindedness) does bear upon the search for a “science of sciences.”⁴² Three variants of that phrase appear in *Charmides*: τῶν ἄλλων ἐπιστημῶν ἐπιστήμη (“science of the other sciences,” 166e), ἐπιστήμη ἐπιστήμης (“science of science,” many times, e.g., 169b), and ἐπιστημῶν ἐπιστήμη (“science of sciences,” 170c,

³⁸ Elm, *Sons of Hellenism*, 153.

³⁹ See Gregory’s ep. 24, and *Letter to the Philosopher Themistius* in *The Works of the Emperor Julian*, 2:202–37.

⁴⁰ Translated in *The Private Orations of Themistius*, translated, annotated, and introduced by Robert J. Penella (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 235–36, with dating to ca. 360 (xiii). For the text, see Glanville Downey, A. F. Norman, and Heinrich Schenkl, eds., *Themistii orationes quae supersunt* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1974), 3:4–5.

⁴¹ Penella, *The Private Orations of Themistius*, 236n4.

⁴² Plato, *Charmides* in *Platonis Opera* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1903; repr., 1968), 3:153a–176d.

174d). The dialogue characterizes such a science as ruling over the other sciences and crafts, such as doctoring, piloting, cobbling, etc. (173–74). Such a science would be especially concerned with good and evil (174b), and would be closely associated with two kinds of people, the seer or prophet (173c–d, 174a) and also a superlatively scientific person who knows everything (174a). Socrates concludes not only that σοφροσύνη is not such a science but also that such a science, apparently, does not exist (175b–d).

When we step back into the third century we find the phrase in the most famous of Christian exegetes of that era. In his *Commentary on the Gospel of John*, Origen of Alexandria (d. ca. 253) reflects upon the verse “That he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together” (John 4:36b). For any art or science, according to Origen, the one who discovers the first principles sows, whereas others then harvest in receiving and elaborating upon these principles.⁴³ He then makes the application:

But if this is true in the case of certain arts and sciences, how much more is it evident in the case of the art of arts and the science of sciences? For those who come later, by having elaborated the discoveries of former persons, have handed on the resources for one body of truth to be gathered with wisdom to those who next approach these discoveries with diligent inquiry. So, when every task of the art of arts has been completed, and God who repays gathers all people to one end, “he who sows and he who reaps rejoice together.”⁴⁴

Origen says that the sowers, in this case, are Moses and the prophets who have sown the principles in the field of Scripture; the reapers are the apostles and all those who become disciples of the Son of God. Origen then gives an exhortation: “As genuine disciples of Jesus, therefore, let us also lift up our eyes and see the fields that have been sown by Moses and the

⁴³ Origen, *Commentary on the Gospel of John* 13.46.302, on John 4:36 (SC 222.196).

⁴⁴ Εἰ δὲ τοῦτο ἐπὶ τεχνῶν ἐστὶν ἀληθὲς καὶ τινῶν ἐπιστημῶν, πόσῳ πλέον ἐπὶ τῆς τέχνης τῶν τεχνῶν καὶ ἐπιστήμης τῶν ἐπιστημῶν ἔστι συνιδεῖν. Τὰ γὰρ εὐρεθέντα ὑπὸ τῶν προτέρων ἐπεξεργασάμενοι οἱ μετ’ αὐτοῦς παραδεδώκασι τοῖς ἔξῃς ἔξεταστικῶς προσιοῦσιν τοῖς εὐρεθεῖσιν ἀφορμὰς τοῦ τὸ ἐν σῶμα τῆς ἀληθείας μετὰ σοφίας συναχθῆναι. Πληρωθέντος δὴ τοῦ παντός ἐξ ἑοῦ τῆς τέχνης τῶν τεχνῶν, “ὁ σπείρων ὁμοῦ χαίρει καὶ ὁ θερίζων,” τοῦ ἀμειβομένου θεοῦ εἰς ἓν πάντας τέλος συνάγοντος, Origen, *Commentary on the Gospel of John* 13.46.303–04, on John 4:36 (SC 222.198), trans. Ronald E. Heine, *Origen: Commentary on the Gospel according to John, Books 13–32* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1993), 131–32.

prophets, that we may see their [the fields’] whiteness and how it is possible to reap their fruit to eternal life.”⁴⁵ This use indicates Origen’s overarching concern that Christians interpret Scripture fruitfully.

Cécile Blanc gives a lengthy note on the phrase in her *Sources Chrétiennes* edition of Origen’s *Commentary on the Gospel of John*.⁴⁶ She begins by giving the Latin quotation “Philosophiam artem esse artium et disciplinam disciplinarum” from Macrobius’s *Saturnalia* 7.15.14, which we saw above in O’Donnell’s treatment of Gregory the Great. Following Johann B. Hofmann and Anton Szantyr in their *Lateinische Grammatik*, Blanc says that the phrase was a “hellenism.”⁴⁷ She then adduces citations of the augmentative genitive from Aeschylus (*Persians* 681), Sophocles (*Oedipus Rex* 465 and *Oedipus at Colonus* 1238), and Euripides (*Andromache* 520), referring the reader to Schwyzer’s *Griechische Grammatik*.⁴⁸ Blanc continues with Latin testimonia from Plautus (*Trinummus* 309, *Cuculio* 388, *Truculentus* 25) and, later, Martial (6.4.1; 1.100.2; and 7.70.1) and Florus (*Epitome* 4.12.13; 2.6.35). She concludes that this genitive construction is found quite early, citing Erich Hofmann, but she says that other expressions, such as “heaven of heaven” and “ages of ages” seem to be of Hebraic origin and therefore independent (again referring to J. B. Hofmann and Szantyr).⁴⁹ Once more, we find a scholar appealing to the early fifth-century Macrobius as the benchmark for assessing the phrase found in a Christian text, this time in a third-century Greek text—well before Macrobius or even the thought of Praetextatus presumably transmitted by Macrobius.

But Origen is not the only known Greek writer of the second and third centuries to have used the phrases “art of arts” and “science of sciences.” The second-century Maximus of Tyre does so as well, in writing on whether virtue is an art:⁵⁰ “Do you call science the art of arts? I hear you. The science of sciences? I understand and admit what you say, if you only grant

⁴⁵ Ως γνήσιοι τοίνυν καὶ ἡμεῖς Ἰησοῦ μαθηταὶ ἐπάρομεν τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς καὶ τὰς χεῖρας τὰς ἐσπαρμένας ὑπὸ Μωσέως καὶ τῶν προφητῶν θεασόμεθα, ἵνα ἴδωμεν τὴν λευκότητα αὐτῶν καὶ τίνα τρόπον ἤδη θερίσαι ἔστιν αὐτὰς καὶ συνάγειν καρπὸν εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον, Origen, *Commentary on the Gospel of John* 13.308, on John 4:36 (SC 222.200), trans. Heine, 132–33; cf. Teleanu, *Livre de Contemplation*, xvii.

⁴⁶ SC 222.198–99n3.

⁴⁷ J. B. Hofmann and Anton Szantyr, *Lateinische Grammatik* (Munich, 1965), 2:55.

⁴⁸ Eduard Schwyzer, *Griechische Grammatik* (Munich, 1959), 2:116.

⁴⁹ Cf. E. Hofmann, “Ausdrucksverstärkung,” in *Ergänzungsheft zur Zeitschrift für vergleichende Sprachforschung auf dem Gebiet der indogermanischen Sprachen*, no. 19 (Göttingen, 1930), 51–55.

⁵⁰ See Maximus of Tyre, *Diss.* 27; M. B. Trapp, *Maximus Tyrius Dissertationes*, Bibliotheca scriptorum Graecorum et Romanum Teubneriana (Stuttgart-Leipzig: Teubner, 1994).

me a very trifling particular. Call art the art of arts, call science the science of sciences.”⁵¹ While not generally recognized as a particularly outstanding thinker, Maximus is a witness to a classicizing tendency and to an eclecticism of second-century Middle Platonism worth our attention.⁵²

IN PHILO

Having reviewed appearances of the phrase from the sixth back to the second century, along with select scholarly references that go back as far as Plato, we now turn to the earliest known figure to have written “art of arts and science of sciences,” Philo of Alexandria (d. AD 50). Presently, there seems to be no study devoted to that phrase in his thought.⁵³ The phrase appears once in complete form, and again in abbreviated form in a different text. Because of his primacy in the history of the phrase’s appearances, we will consider Philo’s uses of it at some length. While subsequent uses are certainly not restricted by how Philo deploys the phrase, his texts suggest how the phrase is, in fact, adopted through the centuries.

The phrase appears in its entirety once in Philo’s corpus, in Book 4 of his *On the Special Laws*. This is not adequately appreciated, as even Teleanu’s survey of “art of arts and science of sciences” omits this reference. Commenting on the more particular statutes in the Mosaic Law, Philo organizes his treatment with reference to the Decalogue. Book 4 deals with those particular laws—and also particular virtues—that especially pertain to the

⁵¹ τέχνην τεχνῶν τὴν ἐπιστήμην καλεῖς; ἀκήροα· ἐπιστήμην ἐπιστημῶν; μαθᾶνω, καὶ ἀποδέξομαι τοῦ λόγου ἐὰν ἔν τί μοι δῶς μικρὸν πάνυ. τέχνην τεχνῶν τὴν τέχνην λέγε, ἐπιστήμην ἐπιστημῶν τὴν ἐπιστήμην λέγε, Maximus of Tyre, *Diss.* 27.7, trans. Thomas Taylor, *The Dissertations of Maximus Tyrius*, vol. 1 (London: C. Whittingham, 1804), 176. Here is a more recent, but less literal translation: “Do you call knowledge the science that deals with sciences? I hear what you say. Do you call it knowledge of forms of knowledge? I understand, and I will accept your definition if you will grant me just one trifling concession. Call science the science that deals with sciences, and knowledge the knowledge of forms of knowledge,” trans. M. B. Trapp, in *Maximus of Tyre: The Philosophical Orations* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 229.

⁵² See John Dillon, *The Middle Platonists 80 B.C. to A.D. 220*, revised ed. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996), 399.

⁵³ Roberto Radice, David T. Runia, et al., *Philo of Alexandria: An Annotated Bibliography 1937–1986*, supplements to *Vigiliae Christianae* 8 (Leiden: Brill, 1988; 2nd ed. 1992); Runia, *Philo of Alexandria: An Annotated Bibliography 1987–1996*, supplements to *Vigiliae Christianae* 57 (Leiden: Brill, 2000), Runia, *Philo of Alexandria: An Annotated Bibliography 1997–2006 with Addenda for 1987–1996*, supplements to *Vigiliae Christianae* 109 (Leiden: Brill, 2012); and the bibliography of Philonic studies in subsequent volumes of the *Studia Philonica Annual*.

eighth, ninth, and tenth commandments, and then focuses on the virtue of justice. Discussing this virtue, Philo takes the ruler (ὁ ἄρχων) as the exemplar of the just man. Among the questions concerning governance is how the ruler should be chosen. Philo takes issue with the suggestion that rulers should be appointed by lot. He begins to make his case against election-by-lot on the basis of the common experience of other bad rulers chosen by lot and by drawing analogies with other fields of work. Physicians gain their posts by the test of experience, and people do not appoint ignorant helmsmen, given the danger of sailing even in fair weather and the importance of cargo and crew. Anyone who would direct a ship should be trained from youth, have gained experience through multiple voyages on a variety of waters, have studied landing places, and so forth. He then quips, “Shall one who is to have in his hands great and populous cities with all their inhabitants, and the constitutions of the cities and the management of matters private, public and sacred, a task which we might well call ‘art of arts and science of sciences,’ be the sport of the unstable oscillation of the lot and escape the strict test of truth, which can only be tested by proofs founded on reason?”⁵⁴ The political ruler, responsible for the care of great populations, must be prepared to stay a course of action no matter what.

Philo turns to the all-wise Moses, who says nothing about appointment by lot, but recommends instead election by the people and by God, who cares for the community.⁵⁵ In addition to being generous to the poor, the ruler should commit himself to the daily study of the law, even by copying it out *in toto* so as to facilitate memorization. Thus the ruler better participates in the governance of God, dealing equitably with his subjects and progressing on what Moses calls “the royal road” between excess and defect.⁵⁶

The person in this highest and most important office should choose assistants to help him govern and judge, because the work is beyond even

⁵⁴ πόλεις δέ τις μεγάλας καὶ πολυανθρώπους, μεστὰς οἰκητόρων, καὶ πολιτείας ἐγχειρίζεσθαι μέλλον καὶ πραγμάτων ἰδιωτικῶν τε καὶ δημοσίων καὶ ἱερῶν ἐπιμέλειαν, ἦν οὐκ ἂν ἀμάρτοι τις εἰπὼν τέχνην τεχνῶν εἶναι καὶ ἐπιστήμην ἐπιστημῶν, πρὸς ἄστατον κλήρου φορὰν ταλαντεύσει τὴν ἄκριβη βάσανον τῆς ἀληθείαςφυγῶν, Philo of Alexandria, *On Special Laws* 4.156–57, trans. F. H. Colson, in *Philo*, vol. 8, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1939; repr., 1968), 105 (slightly altered).

⁵⁵ Philo, *On Special Laws* 4.157; Deut 27:16–17. For Moses in Philo, see Louis H. Feldman, *Philo’s Portrayal of Moses in the Context of Ancient Judaism* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007).

⁵⁶ Philo, *On Special Laws* 4.166–68. The phrase “royal road” is from Num. 20:17, and also taken up by Christian authors, such as Gregory of Nazianzus (*Or.* 2.34).

the ability of Moses. But the ruler should reserve the greater cases to himself—those, that is, in which the people are so poor and vulnerable that they can look only to justice to save them from calamity.⁵⁷ For, as Moses has written, God has no respect of persons (Deut. 10:17–18).⁵⁸ In this, the ruler imitates the Creator, who brings order from disorder, existence from nothing, harmony from the discordant.⁵⁹ Imitating God, the ruler is said to be “assimilated to God.”⁶⁰ But irresolvable cases should be referred to the priests (Deut. 17:8–9), and especially the leader and chief of the priests, who is blessed with prophetic insight.⁶¹

From this reading, several ideas emerge about Philo’s interpretation of the phrase “art of arts and science of sciences.” The phrase applies especially to the art or office of ruling, which is like other arts, in that training and experience are prerequisite, but it surpasses them on account of its greater trust, its proximity to God, and the variety of situations it involves. This office of ruler finds its exemplar in Moses, most importantly, because he was also an interpreter, a medium, for God’s own creativity and governance. The ruler should impress the Mosaic Law on his mind, so as to live it out carefully, taking special notice of the weak.

The phrase “art of arts” appears also (this time without “science of sciences”), in Philo’s *On Drunkenness*, which takes its name and starting point from the drunkenness of Noah in Genesis 9:20–29. The first part of the work treats the “drunkenness” of foolishness. Here “art of arts” appears as a kind of anti-foolishness: “Wisdom, which is the art of arts, seems to change with its different subject matters, yet shows its true form unchanged to those who have clearness of vision and are not misled by the dense and heavy wrappings which envelop its true substance, but decry the form impressed by the art itself.”⁶² Philo develops the theme of unity in variety, having just explained that “life is many-sided [πολύτροπος], and

⁵⁷ Philo, *On Special Laws* 4.170–72.

⁵⁸ Philo, *On Special Laws* 4.177.

⁵⁹ Philo, *On Special Laws* 4.187.

⁶⁰ ἔξομοιώσεως τῆς πρὸς θεόν, Philo, *On Special Laws* 4.188. For the divinization of Moses, see M. David Litwa, “The Deification of Moses in Philo of Alexandria,” *The Studia Philonica Annual* 26 (2014): 1–27.

⁶¹ Philo, *On Special Laws* 4.192.

⁶² ἡ σοφία τέχνη τεχνῶν οὐσα δοκεῖ μὲν ταῖς διαφοραῖς ὕλαις ἐναλλάττεσθαι, τὸ δ’ αὐτῆς ἀληθές εἶδος ἀτρεπτον ἐμφαίνει τοῖς ὀξυδοροκοῦσι καὶ μὴ τῷ περιοχουμένῳ τῆς οὐσίας ὄγκῳ μεθελομένοις, ἀλλὰ τὸν ἐνεσφραγισμένον ὑπὸ τῆς τέχνης αὐτῆς χαρακτῆρα διορῶσι, Philo, *On Drunkenness* 88, in *Philo*, vol. 3, trans. F. H. Colson and G. H. Whitaker, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1930; repr., 2001), 363 (translation slightly altered).

requires a master at the helm with a wisdom of manifold variety [ποικιλωτάτου].”⁶³ Before we analyze further how the phrase appears in Philo, we ought to consider the argument that his use of the phrase preserves material derived from Chrysippus.

The assertion that this occurrence preserves a fragment from Chrysippus was made by Hans von Arnim in 1903,⁶⁴ but so far as we can tell, this hypothesis has little support. Philo, who was influenced, in part, by Stoicism, does not refer to Chrysippus or the Stoics in this passage. Scholars sometimes uncritically adopt von Arnim’s position. For example, Teleanu says that in his opusculum *On Drunkenness*, Philo develops the *Fragmenta moralia* of Chrysippus in order to describe wisdom—ὄτι ἡ σοφία, τέχνη τεχνῶν—as an ideal encyclopedic entry of the art of arts.⁶⁵ Yet, those who have worked extensively on Chrysippus and the Stoic tradition in recent decades are more reticent to accept von Arnim’s claims that Philo is preserving fragments from Chrysippus. Anthony A. Long gives the following summary:

[There is] a remarkable discrepancy between the way von Arnim drew on Philo for what is still the standard collection of evidence for early Stoic philosophers (*Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta*) and citations of Philo by contemporary scholars of Stoicism. The Index volume for von Arnim’s collection lists some 190 passages from Philo. . . . A. A. Long–D. N. Sedley (*The Hellenistic Philosophers*, Cambridge, 1987) excerpt only 10 texts from Philo, B. Inwood–L. P. Gerson (*Hellenistic Philosophy. Elementary Readings*, Indianapolis 1989) none at all, while K. A. Algra, J. Barnes, J. Mansfield and M. Schofield (*The Cambridge History of Hellenistic Philosophy*, Cambridge 1999) cite only 17 passages in their Index Locorum.⁶⁶

⁶³ πολύτροπος γὰρ ὢν ὁ βίος ποικιλωτάτου δεῖαι τὴν σοφίαν τοῦ πηδαλιουχῆσοντος κυβερνήτου, Philo, *On Drunkenness* 86 (translation altered). Homer uses πολύτροπος in the first line of *The Odyssey* and elsewhere to express Odysseus’s distinguishing characteristic, the cleverness that enables him to navigate a great variety of dramatic situations.

⁶⁴ See Hans von Arnim, *Stoicorum veterum fragmenta*, vol. 3 (Leipzig: Teubner, 1903), no. 301.

⁶⁵ See Teleanu, *Livre de Contemplation*, xv; cf. Stephen Halliwell, *The Aesthetics of Mimesis: Ancient Texts and Modern Problems* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002), 265–66; and Stephen Halliwell, “Unity of Art without Unity of Life? A Question about Aristotle’s Theory of Tragedy,” *Atti Accademia Pontianana, Napoli—Supplemento N.S.* 61 (2012): 25–40, at 32.

⁶⁶ See Anthony A. Long, “Philo on Stoic Physics,” in *Philo of Alexandria and Post-*

Rather than continue a claim that Philo is a cipher for Chrysippus, let us look at Philo on his own terms.

For Philo, wisdom is the art of arts because of its constancy and competency across the range of possible life-situations. The wise man (in addition to being a steady helmsman) is like a sculptor whose work is unmistakable whether he works in ivory or gold.⁶⁷ The “sculptures” of wisdom are human activities or virtues: “Under the name of piety and holiness it deals with the attributes of the Really Existent; under that of nature-study, with all that concerns the heavens and the heavenly bodies,”⁶⁸ and so on. Wisdom pertains also to ethical action in its various forms: politics, house-management, legislation, conviviality, and kingcraft, which deals with matters of authority over people.⁶⁹ The wise man is omni-competent, but among his activities divine worship of the Existent is first and last.⁷⁰

Therefore, in *On Drunkenness*, it is not the office of ruling that is called “art of arts,” but rather wisdom. Yet many of the same motifs remain. The wise man is skilled like a helmsman, but in a superlative way. Wisdom displays a supreme fluidity, present in every virtue, theoretical and practical, and in every activity, especially those having to do with worship and political rule. Again, the “art of arts” is significantly distinct from political rule. It remains when the politician has retired from political pursuits, and it is present in human beings primarily under the name of piety and holiness.

To what sources could Philo have been indebted in these reflections? Once again, no extant text confirms scholars’ various assertions that the phrase “art of arts” originates from Chrysippus or Aristotle.⁷¹ Perhaps to

Aristotelian Philosophy, ed. Francesca Alesse (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 121–40, at 121; cf. Loren Kerns, “Platonic and Stoic Passions in Philo of Alexandria” (PhD diss., Kings College, 2013) 19n36, digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1005&context=gfes. See also John W. Martens, *One God, One Law: Philo of Alexandria on the Mosaic and Greco-Roman Law* (Boston: Brill, 2003), 137.

⁶⁷ For a consideration of the “art of arts” in Philo’s ambivalence toward statues, see Karl-Gustav Sandelin, *Attraction and Danger in Alien Religion*, Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 290 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012), 61 and 74–75.

⁶⁸ πραγματευομένη γὰρ τὰ περὶ τοῦ ὄντος εὐσέβεια καὶ ὁσιότης ὀνομάζεται, τὰ δὲ περὶ οὐρανοῦ καὶ τῶν κατ’ αὐτὸν φυσιολογία, Philo, *On Drunkenness* 91.

⁶⁹ Philo, *On Drunkenness* 91.

⁷⁰ Philo, *On Drunkenness* 86.

⁷¹ For another example considering Stoicism and hypothesis of an Aristotelian origin, see Karlheinz Hünsler, *Die Fragmente zur Dialektik der Stoiker: Neue Sammlung der Texte mit deutscher Übersetzung und Kommentaren*, vol. 2 (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 1987), frag. 415A, 440, citing Philo’s *On Mating with the Preliminary Studies* 144, *On Drunkenness* 88, and *On Special Laws* 4.156.

Plato’s *Charmides*? But that is far from certain. Another close antecedent to “art of arts” is found in *Oedipus Rex* 380–81:

ὃ πλοῦτε καὶ τυραννὶ καὶ τέχνῃ τέχνης
ὑπερφέρουσα τῷ πολυζήλω βίῳ⁷²

The grammar here of τέχνῃ τέχνης, according to the Liddell-Scott-Jones *Greek-English Lexicon*’s entry for ὑπερφέρω, is that the genitive receives the action of the participle. The phrase can be translated, “O richness and sovereignty and art surpassing art in much-desired life.” Although not of the same grammar as “art of arts,” the phrase, inclusive of the participle, does communicate the idea of a surpassing art—that art is about political rule in a complex, “much-desired” life, whose complexity Oedipus the King comes to realize in this tragedy.

It is possible that Sophocles inspired the tradition, and perhaps the exact phrase was used before the time of Philo—but in the absence of evidence, these remote origins are murky. Philo’s usage of the phrase does seem to be squarely within the tradition. For Philo, “art of arts and science of sciences” is evocative of a number of motifs central to his thought: wisdom, worship, knowledge of God, governance, Moses, and the Logos. The mobility of wisdom covers a range of offices without causing confusion. The ruler can be a wise student of the law without being a priest; the household-manager can be wise without ruling a city. Moses can be a ruler and also a prophet.

CONCLUSION

As we saw earlier, in dealing with the phrase “art of arts” in Gregory the Great’s *Book of Pastoral Rule*, J. J. O’Donnell comments, “But a textual history needs to be kept in mind, for those words are familiar ones.” This study has considered occurrences of the phrase in authors before Gregory and shown that the words have a more complex textual history than O’Donnell suggests. If our work had continued through eighth-century literature, it would have explored how John of Damascus, that remarkable conveyer of so much that went before, borrows the phrase both from Gregory of Nazianzus in the context of leading the human being,⁷³ and from the

⁷² Oedipus Rex, 380–381 in *Sophocles*, vol. 1, *Oedipus the King*, *Oedipus at Colonus*, *Antigone*, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1956), 38.

⁷³ John of Damascus, *Sacra Parallela* no. 512 (PG 95.1541D); cf. Andrew Louth, *St John Damascene: Tradition and Originality in Byzantine Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 24–25.

fifth of six definitions of philosophy found in Ammonius.⁷⁴ Often the phrase in antiquity not only denotes the superlative in a field (whether art or science), but also indicates a set of principles for guidance within that field or as offering a description of a person's task of guiding others in life. Whereas scholars regularly point to the early fifth-century Macrobius as the benchmark for the ancient use of this phrase, the earliest known use of "art of arts and science of sciences" is in Philo's texts—four hundred years before Macrobius. Moreover, while scholars repeatedly speculate that Aristotle and Chrysippus used the phrase long before the common era, there is no firm evidence that they did so. Plato's *Charmides*, as an extant text, has greater relevance, even if "science of sciences" is used in a way that seems futile or dreamlike in the end. Scholars routinely miss the reference to Sophocles's *Oedipus Rex* in the variant of the "art of arts" used for political power. The phrase has several different uses in history, and yet one can see in conclusion of this study that Philo's uses of the phrase, in his two instances, anticipate what we find later in antiquity.

Philo's treatment of the phrase in *On Special Laws* anticipates its application to the art of guiding human beings. John Chrysostom knows, in the fourth century, that it has been used in a secular, political context, but it is also used by such writers as Gregory of Nazianzus and Gregory the Great for leaders within the Christian Church. Nilus of Ancyra applies the phrase to monastic spiritual direction and emphasizes that its practitioner needs abundant experience.

In Philo's *On Drunkenness* we see the phrase applied to wisdom. This anticipates what we find in a number of texts in later centuries. In connection to wisdom, Philo emphasizes the life of virtue, which is the very subject of Maximus of Tyre's text where we see "art of arts" and "science of sciences." At first glance, the classicizing Maximus may seem to have little in common with Philo, but one should not forget the shared philosophical milieu widely known as Middle Platonism which embraces both authors.⁷⁵ Emperor Julian understands philosophy to be the art of arts and science of sciences, and Isidore of Pelusium thinks various philosophers propose philosophy to be just that. Taken in the sense of this philosophical milieu, wisdom bears some relation to what is found in Macrobius and the philosophical tradition of Ammonius and his successors concerning the very definition of "philosophy," which literally, of course, means "love of wisdom." Indeed, the breadth of "wisdom" in *On Drunkenness* can be related

⁷⁴ John of Damascus, *Fount of Knowledge's* Philosophical Chapters no. 3, on philosophy (PG 94.533C).

⁷⁵ See John R. Levison, *The Spirit in First-Century Judaism* (Boston: Brill, 2002), 155.

to Augustine’s two uses, one with respect to dialectic, which is for Augustine the discipline of how to teach and how to learn, and the other regarding the divine law. This breadth of “wisdom” can also be related to John Chrysostom’s use of the phrase for almsgiving as an example of wisdom applied to living virtuously.

Philo’s two uses of the phrase, in *On Special Laws* and *On Drunkenness*, are in works that comment on the Pentateuch. His exegesis anticipates Origen’s use of the phrase in his *Commentary on John* about Moses and the prophets sowing principles in the field of Scripture.⁷⁶ Whereas Philo speaks in *On Special Laws* about the work of the ἄρογον, Origen about two centuries later speaks of the ἄρογαί sown.⁷⁷ While the phrase has a genitive construction found earlier in Greek, Philo’s familiarity with the Septuagint’s Hebraicisms may be relevant to his use of the phrase—even though he was not adept in Hebrew. The similar biblical use of the grammatical construction did not escape the attention of Didymus the Blind. This Alexandrian, who lived three centuries after Philo, noted the phrase’s similarity in genitive construction to the “vanity of vanities” in Ecclesiastes.⁷⁸

David Runia cautions against Francesco Trisoglio’s overly enthusiastic claim for Philo’s influence on Gregory of Nazianzus. In his magisterial *Philo in Early Christian Literature*, Runia writes, “Gregory stands squarely in a tradition of thought in which Platonism and Philonism have been so thoroughly integrated that characteristic themes, terms, and language appear in nearly every other sentence. The chief vehicle for this tradition has been the Alexandria school of Clement, Origen, Athanasius, and Didymus, whose writings Gregory will have studied with great diligence. It seems to me not unlikely that he made a cursory study of Philo’s works as well, but that this did not result in allusions to or adaptations of particular passages.”⁷⁹ Neither Trisoglio nor Runia adduces the particular parallels of Gregory’s *Or.* 2.16 in Philo’s *On Special Laws* and *On Drunkenness* regarding (1) “art of arts and science of sciences,” (2) their application of the phrase to the ruling

⁷⁶ For a survey of Philonic reception in Origen, see Runia, *Philo in Early Christian Literature: A Survey*, *Compendia Rerum Iudaicarum ad Novum Testamentum* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 157–83.

⁷⁷ See Teleanu, *Livre de Contemplation*, xv.

⁷⁸ For Philonic influence in Didymus’s *Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, see Runia, *Philo in Early Christian Literature*, 199–200.

⁷⁹ Runia, *Philo in Early Christian Literature*, 243. The enthusiastic claim is found in Francesco Trisoglio, “Filone alessandrino e l’esegesi cristiana: Contributo alla conoscenza dell’influsso esercitato da Filone sul IV secolo, specificatamente in Gregorio di Nazianzo,” in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt II* 21.1, ed. Wolfgang Haase (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1984), 588–730.

of human beings, and (3) their pairing of the same two adjectives πολύτροπος and ποικιλώτατος to describe those who are ruled. These two adjectives are, admittedly, frequently paired by ancient authors, such as by Plutarch, Diogenes Laertius, Origen, Basil of Caesarea, Didymus the Blind, and John Chrysostom.⁸⁰ Gregory of Nazianzus may be indebted to Philo directly, but that is not certain, especially given that the pair of adjectives and the phrase appear in Origen's *Commentary on the Gospel of John*, although not in the same location.

What Runia says about Philo's presence in Gregory's thought could be applied more broadly. Many authors became indebted to Philo, even if they did not study him directly and in great depth. By studying the "art of arts and science of sciences" in antiquity, we not only find a common *paideia* as well as distinctive contours of thought in several writers, we also discover that Philo's position in the history of this idea—so important for philosophy, theology, and politics—deserves to be better appreciated.

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⁸⁰ See Plutarch, *Marcellus* 12.6.4–5, *Marius* 3.1.1, and *Quomodo adolescens poetas audire debeat* 25.D.3–4; Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae philosophorum* 4.47.7–8; Origen's *Commentary on the Gospel of John* in 20.27.239 (SC 290.274); Basil of Caesarea, *Asceticon magnum sive Quaestiones: Regulae fusius tractatae* (PG 31.973A); Didymus the Blind's *On the Trinity* 2.5.1 and frag. 841.9–10 on the Psalms; and John Chrysostom's *On Holy Eustathius the Antiochene* (PG 50.599.36–37), *ep.* 8 to Olympias 4.34–35 (SC13bis 174), *Sermons on Anna* (PG 54.653.10–11), and *1 Thess. hom.* (PG 62.424.12).

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