



Teleios in the Epistle of James

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Abstract

Teleios is a Greek term which refers to an end, goal, purpose or aim, and it means complete, mature, or fully developed, finished. Teleios signifies consummate soundness, and it includes the idea of being whole. In its numerous forms the term teleios arises around 100 times in the Greek New Testament. Moreover, the term was frequently used in the Epistle of James — τέλειον (James 1:4); τέλειον (James 1:17); τέλειον (James 1:25); τελείτε (James 2:8); ἐτελειώθη (James 2:22); τέλειος (James 3:2). The frequent use of teleios makes it possible to know that the author clearly expressed his perspective through this word. In the previous research on teleios, Patrick J. Hartin argues that the use of teleios in the Epistle of James is rooted in the Hebrew Scriptures and the LXX as a Jewish coloured term. Hartin's view is fair to illuminate that teleios is based on the concept of state of the completeness and whole - hearted mental state. Yet, considering that teleios (James 3:2) is used for explaining the process into completeness, called, maturity, such a view of the author of James' Epistle is closer to the view of the Classical Greek Philosopher, Plato, or the Hellenistic Jewish philosopher, Philo of Alexandria. In addition, teleios (James 1:17) which can be regarded as one of the divine attributes, might be traced back to Platonic or Philonic thinking. Thus, James' author might be considered as a Hellenised Jew who combined a Jewish concept with a Hellenistic perspective through the term, teleios.

Keywords: Teleios, Maturity, Divine Attribute, Philo, Plato

Introduction

Hartin (2012:22) summarises his study of the use of teleios in the Old Testament by identifying three essential aspects, thereby assuming that teleios in the Old Testament is the background of teleios in the Epistle of James:

The conceptual meaning of teleios gives expression to three essential dimensions. First, it expresses the idea of wholeness or completeness, of a being remaining true to its original constitution. Second, it refers to giving oneself wholeheartedly and unconditionally to God in the context of God's people. When persons were grounded in this relationship, they would be whole, perfect. Third, such a wholehearted dedication to the Lord is expressed through obedience to God's will. Since the Torah expresses God's will for God's people, a wholehearted dedication to the Lord embraces a life led in obedience to the Torah, to the laws of the Lord. This threefold understanding of teleios explains James' meaning.

Hartin's attempt to encapsulate the meaning of teleios in the Epistle of James is based on the observation that teleios can refer to the state of completeness or psychic wholeness. Yet, other semantic aspects as to teleios are observed in the Epistle of James — teleios as "maturity" and teleios as one of the divine attributes. Thus, it is asked to trace the origin of teleios as



“maturity” and teleios as one of the divine attributes. For this, one will revisit the epitome of teleios in Jewish lineage tradition (e.g., Hebrew Old Testament, Greek Old Testament, and Qumran), rechecking the validity of Hartin’s view and further, will reveal that teleios in the Epistle of James owes much to the thought of Philo and Plato, centring on maturity and divine attribute through intertextual relevance between the text of the Epistle of James and that of Philo and Plato’s text.

Teleios in the Greek Old Testament

Hebrew tamim translated as Greek teleios refers to complete (unblemished) offerings from a cultic viewpoint (Exodus 12:5). That means teleios in Exodus 12:5 refers to “the perfection of state”.

Exodus 12:5		
שֶׁה תָּמִים זָכָר בֶּן־שָׁנָה יְהִי־לָכֶם מִן־הַכֹּבָשִׁים וּמִן־הָעִזִּים תִּקְחוּ׃	πρόβατον τέλειον ἄρσεν ἐνιαύσιον ἔσται ὑμῖν· ἀπὸ τῶν ἀμνῶν καὶ τῶν ἐρίφων λήμψεσθε.	Your lamb shall be without blemish, a year-old male; you may take it from the sheep or from the goats.

In Deuteronomy 18:13, the Hebrew tamim rendered as teleios is a term related to loyalty to God, namely whole-hearted dedication (Pennington, 2017:72).

Deuteronomy 18:13		
תָּמִים תְּהִיָּה עִם יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ׃	τέλειος ἔσῃ ἐναντίον κυρίου τοῦ θεοῦ σου	You must remain completely loyal to the Lord your God.

Teleios in Qumran

1 QS 8.25-26; 9.1-2 connects the notion of “perfection” into the matter of “purity”. As his way is perfect, he can be enrolled in the community of holiness. Thus, Newton (1985:39) defines that “purity is a prerequisite of perfection” as to the concept of perfection in Qumran.

1QS 8.25-26	
25 אשר לוא ישפוט איש ולוא [יש]אל על כול עצה שנתים ימים אם תתם דרכו 26 במושב במדרש ובעצה [על] פי [ה]רבים אם לוא שגג עוד עד מולאת לו שנתים	25 «He may not judge anyone and [he may] not [be a]sked any advice for two whole years». If his conduct is perfect 26 in the session, in the investigation, and in the council [ac]cor[ding to] the Many, if he has not sinned again through oversight until two full years have passed.

1QS 9.1-2	
1 כיא על {...} שגגה אחת יענש שנתים ולעושה ביד רמה לוא ישוב עוד אך השוגג 2 יבחן שנתים ימים לתמים דרכו ועצתו על פי הרבים ואחר יכתוב בתכוננו ליחד קודש	1 Because for {...} one sin of oversight he will be punished two years; but whoever acts impertinently shall not return again. Only someone who sins through oversight 2 shall be tested for two full years with respect to the perfectness of his behaviour and of his counsel according to the authority of the Many, and shall then be enrolled according to his rank in the Community of holiness.



Given that in James 4:8, “double – hearts” is regarded as the antithesis of “perfection” (teleios), it is fair to judge that the matter of “double – hearts” and purity revealed in James 4:8 owes to the notion from Qumran illuminating the notion of perfection and purity: ἐγγίσατε τῷ θεῷ καὶ ἐγγιεῖ ὑμῖν. καθαρίσατε χεῖρας, ἁμαρτωλοί, καὶ ἀγνίσατε καρδίας, δίψυχοι. (James 4:8).¹

Intertextual Relevance between the Writings of the Epistle of James and Plato’s Writings (or Philo’s Writings), centering on teleios (maturity)

In Old Testament, bridle imagery is observed (Job 30:11; 41:13; Psalms 32:9), delivering the motif of controlling or restraint. Even as in James 3:1-3, bridle imagery is associated with controlling the tongue (Psalms 39:1). However, Plato and Philo’s works may be candidates for the intertextual research of teleios (maturity) revealed in James 3:1-3 if one notes conceptual interconnections between “horse imagery”, the notion of “controlling” and “teleios (maturity)”.

Plato, <i>Laws</i> 653 A-E	
<p>[653] ἐλέγομεν ἡμῖν εἶναι τὴν ὀρθὴν παιδείαν. τούτου γάρ, ὡς γ' ἐγὼ τοπάζω τὰ νῦν, ἔστιν ἐν τῷ ἐπιτηδεύματι τούτῳ καλῶς κατορθουμένῳ σωτηρία. κλ. Μέγα λέγεις. αθ. Λέγω τοίνυν τῶν παίδων παιδικὴν εἶναι πρώτην αἴσθησιν ἡδονὴν καὶ λύπην, καὶ ἐν οἷς ἀρετὴ ψυχῇ καὶ κακία παραγίγνεται πρῶτον, ταῦτ' εἶναι· φρόνησιν δὲ καὶ ἀληθεῖς δόξας βεβαίους, εὐτυχῆς ὄτῳ καὶ πρὸς τὸ γῆρας παρεγένετο· τέλος δ' οὖν ἔστ' ἄνθρωπος ταῦτα καὶ τὰ ἐν [B] τούτοις πάντα κεκτημένος ἀγαθὰ. παιδείαν δὲ λέγω τὴν παραγινομένην πρῶτον παισὶν ἀρετὴν, ἡδονὴ δὲ καὶ φιλία καὶ λύπη καὶ μῖσος ἂν ὀρθῶς ἐν ψυχαῖς ἐγγίνωνται μήπω δυναμένων λόγον λαμβάνειν, λαβόντων δὲ τὸν λόγον συμφωνήσωσι τῷ λόγῳ, <τῷ> ὀρθῶς εἰθίσθαι ὑπὸ τῶν προσηκόντων ἐθῶν· αὕτη ἔσθ' ἡ ξυμφωνία ζύμπασσα μὲν ἀρετὴ, τὸ δὲ περὶ τὰς ἡδονὰς καὶ λύπας τεθραμμένον αὐτῆς ὀρθῶς, ὥστε [C] μισεῖν μὲν ἃ χρὴ μισεῖν εὐθύς ἐξ ἀρχῆς μέχρι τέλους, στέργειν δὲ ἃ χρὴ στέργειν, τοῦτ' αὐτὸ ἀποτεμῶν τῷ λόγῳ καὶ παιδείαν προσαγορεύων, κατὰ γε τὴν ἐμὴν ὀρθῶς ἂν προσαγορεύοις. κλ. Καὶ γάρ, ὦ ξένε, ἡμῖν καὶ τὰ πρότερον ὀρθῶς σοι παιδείας πέρι καὶ τὰ νῦν εἰρησθαι δοκεῖ. αθ. Καλῶς τοίνυν. τούτων γὰρ δὴ τῶν ὀρθῶς τεθραμμένων ἡδονῶν καὶ λυπτῶν παιδείων</p>	<p>[653] our definition of right education. For the safe-keeping of this depends, as I now conjecture, upon the correct establishment of the institution mentioned. clin. That is a strong statement! ath. What I state is this,—that in children the first childish sensations are pleasure and pain, and that it is in these first that goodness and badness come to the soul; but as to wisdom and settled true opinions, a man is lucky if they come to him even in old age; and he that is possessed of these blessings, and all that they comprise, [B] is indeed a perfect man. I term, then, the goodness that first comes to children “education.” When pleasure and love, and pain and hatred, spring up rightly in the souls of those who are unable as yet to grasp a rational account; and when, after grasping the rational account, they consent thereunto through having been rightly trained in fitting practices:—this consent, viewed as a whole, is goodness, while the part of it that is rightly trained in respect of pleasures and pains, so as to hate what ought to be hated, right from the beginning [C] up to the very end, and to love what ought to be loved,—if you were to mark this part off in your definition and call it “education,” you would be giving it, in my opinion, its right name. clin. You are quite right, Stranger, as it seems to us, both in what you said before</p>

¹ In this regard, Elliott (1993:78) comments: “To be holy, according to James, is to be whole – with respect to personal integrity, communal solidarity, and religious commitment.”



οὐσῶν χαλᾶται τοῖς ἀνθρώποις καὶ διαφθείρεται τὰ πολλὰ ἐν τῷ βίῳ, θεοὶ [D] δὲ οἰκτεῖραντες τὸ τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἐπίπνονον πεφυκὸς γένος ἀναπαύλας τε αὐτοῖς τῶν πόνων ἐτάξαντο τὰς τῶν ἐορτῶν ἀμοιβὰς [τοῖς θεοῖς], καὶ Μούσας Ἀπόλλωνά τε μουσηγέτην καὶ Διόνυσον ξυνεορταστὰς ἔδοσαν, ἵν' ἐπανορθῶνται τὰς γε τροφὰς γενόμενοι ἐν ταῖς ἐορταῖς μετὰ θεῶν. ὁρᾷ οὖν χρὴ πότερον ἀληθῆς ἡμῖν κατὰ φύσιν ὁ λόγος ὑμνεῖται τὰ νῦν, ἢ πῶς. φησὶ δὲ τὸ νέον ἅπαν ὡς ἔπος εἰπεῖν τοῖς τε σώμασι καὶ ταῖς φωναῖς ἡσυχίαν ἄγειν οὐ δύνασθαι, [E] κινεῖσθαι δὲ ἀεὶ ζητεῖν καὶ φθέγγεσθαι, τὰ μὲν ἀλλόμενα καὶ σκιρτῶντα, οἷον ὄρχούμενα μεθ' ἡδονῆς καὶ προσπαιζόντα, τὰ δὲ φθεγγόμενα πάσας φωνὰς· τὰ μὲν οὖν ἄλλα ζῶα οὐκ ἔχουσιν αἰσθησιν τῶν ἐν ταῖς κινήσεσι τάξεων οὐδὲ ἀταξιῶν, οἷς δὴ ῥυθμὸς ὄνομα καὶ ἀρμονία· ἡμῖν δὲ οὐς

and in what you say now about education. Very good. Now these forms of child-training, which consist in right discipline in pleasures and pains, grow slack and weakened to a great extent [D] in the course of men's lives; so the gods, in pity for the human race thus born to misery, have ordained the feasts of thanksgiving as periods of respite from their troubles; and they have granted them as companions in their feasts the Muses and Apollo the master of music, and Dionysus, that they may at least set right again their modes of discipline by associating in their feasts with gods. We must consider, then, whether the account that is harped on nowadays is true to nature? What it says is that, almost without exception, every young creature is incapable of keeping either its body or its tongue quiet, [E] and is always striving to move and to cry, leaping and skipping and delighting in dances and games, and uttering, also, noises of every description. Now, whereas all other creatures are devoid of any perception of the various kinds of order and disorder in movement (which we term rhythm and harmony), to us men the very gods, who were given, as we said, to be our fellows in the dance, have granted the pleasurable perception of rhythm and harmony, whereby they cause us to move

Plato, *Phaedrus* 253 C-E

[C] αὐτοῖς τῷ θεῷ, ὃν ἂν τιμῶσι, πᾶσαν πάντως ὃ τι μάλιστα πειρῶμενοι ἄγειν οὕτω ποιοῦσι. προθυμία μὲν οὖν τῶν ὡς ἀληθῶς ἐρώντων καὶ τελετῆ, ἐὰν γε διαπράξωνται ὃ προθυμοῦνται ἢ λέγω, οὕτω καλὴ τε καὶ εὐδαιμονικὴ ὑπὸ τοῦ δι' ἔρωτα μανέντος φίλου τῷ φιληθέντι γίγνεται, ἐὰν αἰρεθῇ· ἀλίσκεται δὲ δὴ ὁ αἰρεθεὶς τοιῶδε τρόπῳ.
34. Καθάπερ ἐν ἀρχῇ τοῦδε τοῦ μύθου τριχῆ διειλόμην ψυχὴν ἐκάστην, ἵππομόρφῳ μὲν δύο τινὲ εἶδη, ἡνιοχικὸν δὲ εἶδος [D] τρίτον, καὶ νῦν ἔτι ἡμῖν ταῦτα μενέτω. τῶν δὲ δὴ ἵππων ὁ μὲν, φαμέν, ἀγαθός, ὁ δ' οὐ· ἀρετὴ δὲ τίς τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ ἢ κακοῦ κακία, οὐ διείπομεν, νῦν δὲ λεκτέον. ὁ μὲν τοίνυν αὐτοῖν ἐν τῇ καλλίονι στάσει ὦν τό τε εἶδος ὀρθὸς καὶ διηρθρωμένος, ὑψαύχην, ἐπίγρυπος, λευκὸς ἰδεῖν, μελανόματος, τιμῆς ἐραστῆς μετὰ σωφροσύνης τε καὶ αἰδοῦς, καὶ ἀληθινῆς δόξης ἐταῖρος,

[C] of the god whom they honour. Thus the desire of the true lovers, and the initiation into the mysteries of love, which they teach, if they accomplish what they desire in the way I describe, is beautiful and brings happiness from the inspired lover to the loved one, if he be captured; and the fair one who is captured is caught in the following manner:—
In the beginning of this tale I divided each soul into three parts, two of which had the form of horses, [D] the third that of a charioteer. Let us retain this division. Now of the horses we say one is good and the other bad; but we did not define what the goodness of the one and the badness of the other was. That we must now do. The horse that stands at the right hand is upright and has clean limbs; he carries his neck high, has an aquiline nose, is white in colour, and



<p>ἄπληκτος, κελεύματι μόνον καὶ [E] λόγῳ ἠνιοχεῖται· ὁ δ' αὖ σκολιός, πολὺς, εἰκῆ συμπεφορημένος, κρατεραύχην, βραχυτράχηλος, σιμοπρόσωπος, μελάγχρως, γλαυκόμματος, ὕφαιμος, ὕβρεως καὶ ἀλαζονείας ἑταῖρος, περὶ ὧτα λάσιος, κωφός, μᾶστιγι μετὰ κέντρων μόγις ὑπέικων. ὅταν δ' οὖν ὁ ἠνίοχος ἰδὼν τὸ ἐρωτικὸν ὄμμα, πᾶσαν αἰσθήσει διαθερμήνας τὴν ψυχὴν, γαργαλισμοῦ τε καὶ πόθου</p>	<p>has dark eyes; he is a friend of honour joined with temperance and modesty, and a follower of true glory; he needs no whip, but is guided only by the word of command and by reason. [E] The other, however, is crooked, heavy, ill put together, his neck is short and thick, his nose flat, his colour dark, his eyes grey and bloodshot; he is the friend of insolence and pride, is shaggy-eared and deaf, hardly obedient to whip and spurs. Now when the charioteer beholds the love-inspiring vision, and his whole soul is warmed by the sight, and is full of the tickling and</p>
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James 3:1-3,16	
<p>¹ Μὴ πολλοὶ διδάσκαλοι γίνεσθε, ἀδελφοί μου, εἰδότες ὅτι μείζον κρίμα λημψόμεθα. ² πολλὰ γὰρ ππᾶίομεν ἅπαντες. εἴ τις ἐν λόγῳ οὐ ππᾶίει, οὗτος τέλειος ἀνὴρ δυνατὸς χαλιναγωγῆσαι καὶ ὄλον τὸ σῶμα. ³ εἰ δὲ τῶν ἵππων τοὺς χαλινοὺς εἰς τὰ στόματα βάλλομεν εἰς τὸ πείθεσθαι αὐτοὺς ἡμῖν, καὶ ὄλον τὸ σῶμα αὐτῶν μετᾶγομεν. ... ¹⁶ ὅπου γὰρ ζῆλος καὶ ἐριθεία, ἐκεῖ ἀκαταστασία καὶ πᾶν φαῦλον πρᾶγμα.</p>	<p>¹ Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers and sisters, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness. ²For all of us make many mistakes. Anyone who makes no mistakes in speaking is perfect, able to keep the whole body in check with a bridle. ³If we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we guide their whole bodies ... ¹⁶For where there is envy and selfish ambition, there will also be disorder and wickedness of every kind.</p>

In James 3:1-3, mature (*teleios*) is expressed focusing on the tongue as a theme — “²For all of us make many mistakes. Anyone who makes no mistakes in speaking is perfect, able to keep the whole body in check with a bridle.” For the author of James’ Epistle, the tongue is regarded as the representative organ in the whole body, which should be controlled, noticing the tongue’s devastating power. Thus, in the Epistle of James, one of the characteristics of maturity is to control the tongue, noting the tongue’s influence on others.

In a similar manner, Plato defines mature man (*τέλειος δ’ οὖν ἔστ’ ἄνθρωπος*) — cf. *τέλειος ἀνὴρ* in James 3:2. First, for Plato, to be mature is to get the truth through education (*παιδείαν*). Therefore, a child is considered as an immature being in need of education, compared to a grown-up as a mature being. Second, for both the authors of James’ Epistle and Plato’s works, body and tongue are the objects to be properly controlled — In Plato (*Laws* 653 A-E), the children are incapable of leaving either body (*σώμασι*) or tongue (*φωναῖς*) quiet as an immature being.

Further, horse (*ἵππων*) and ship (*χαλινοῦς*) imagery in James 3:3 reminds us of Plato’s chariot allegory (*Phaedrus* 253 C-E) in that both the author of James’ Epistle and Plato use horse imagery. In James 3:3, a bit is described as a small one that can control a much larger one, a horse; a ship is depicted as one that can be controlled by a tiny rudder. Similarly, *logos*’ control over *epithumia* in Plato’s chariot allegory (*Phaedrus* 253 C-E) implies that one can control the other one — Plato uses chariot allegory to explain the human’s psyche. According to Plato, the human psyche is a tripartition that is made up of *logos* (charioteer), *thumos* (tamed white horses), and *epithumia* (untamed black horses). In a sound psychic state, *logos* has control



over both thumos and epithumia.² Above all things, it is noteworthy that the author of the Epistle of James uses the horse and ship imagery for emphasising the necessity of controlling the tongue as an indicator of maturity, whereas, Plato uses chariot allegory for striking the necessity of controlling both thumos and epithumia by logos in the aspect of psyche which refers to psychic maturity.

Based on the above-mentioned discussions, one can conclude that the author of James owes his conceptual framework here to Plato's writings in terms of maturity (teleios). Like Plato, James focuses on the maturity of body and tongue (The author of the Epistle of James focuses especially on the matter of maturity of the tongue). Yet, even if the author of the Epistle of James is indebted to Plato's chariot allegory, it seems, the author of James' Epistle uses Plato's chariot allegory not for the psychic maturity of controlling both thumos and epithumia by logos, but the maturity of body and tongue.

Philo, <i>Allegorical Interpretation</i> 3.147	
(147) παρατήρει δὲ πᾶσαν τὴν λεπτολογίαν, οὐδὲν γὰρ λεχθὲν παρέργως εὐρήσεις. Μωυσῆς τὸ μὲν στηθύνιον ἀφαιρεῖται, τὴν δὲ κοιλίαν οὐκ ἀφαιρεῖ μὲν, πλύνει δὲ (Lev. 8:29, 9:14)· διὰ τί; ὅτι ὁ τέλειος σοφὸς ὅλον μὲν τὸν θυμὸν ἰσχύει παραιτήσασθαι καὶ ἀποκόψαι ὀργῆς κατεξαναστάς, τὴν δὲ κοιλίαν ἐκτεμεῖν ἀδυνατεῖ· τοῖς γὰρ ἀναγκαίοις σιτίοις καὶ ποτοῖς ἢ φύσις βιάζεται χρῆσθαι καὶ τὸν ὀλιγοδεέστατον καὶ καταφρονητικὸν αὐτῶν τῶν ἀναγκαίων καὶ ἀσιτίαν αὐτῶν μελετῶντα. πλυνέτω οὖν αὐτὴν καὶ καθαιρέτω ἀπὸ τῶν περιπτῶν καὶ ἀκαθάρτων παρασκευῶν· ἱκανὴ γὰρ καὶ αὕτη παρὰ θεοῦ τῷ φιλαρέτῳ δωρεά. LI.	[147] Do not let any subtle point escape your notice, for you will not find a single pointless expression. Moses removes the breast; the belly he does not remove, but washes (Lev. 8:29, 9:14). Why is this? Because the perfect wise man can, by wholly renouncing anger, utterly avert and drive off the uprising of the spirited element in him, but to excise the belly he is powerless. Even the man of fewest needs who scorns the very necessities of life and trains himself in abstinence from them, is forced by nature to take necessary food and drink. Let him therefore wash the belly and cleanse it from superfluous and unclean provisions; for this too is a sufficiently great gift from God to the lover of virtue.

Philo, <i>Allegorical Interpretation</i> 3.224	
(224) οὕτως ἐπειδὴ μὲν ὁ τῆς ψυχῆς ἡνίοχος ἢ κυβερνήτης ὁ νοῦς ἄρχη τοῦ ζώου ὅλου καθάπερ ἡγεμῶν πόλεως, εὐθύνεται ὁ βίος, ὅταν δὲ ἡ ἄλογος αἴσθησις φέρηται τὰ πρωτεῖα, σύγχυσις καταλαμβάνει δεινὴ, οἷα δούλων δεσπότης ἐπιτεθειμένων·	[224] Just so, when Mind, the charioteer or helmsman of the soul, rules the whole living being as a governor does a city, the life holds a straight course, but when irrational sense gains the chief place, a terrible confusion overtakes it, just as when slaves have risen

² In James 4:1 pleasure (ἡδονῶν) plays a role in kindling contentions. Compared with James 4:1, through the grasp of rational account based on education one can control pleasure (ἡδονή) in Plato, *Laws* 653 A-E: "When pleasure and love, and pain and hatred, spring up rightly in the souls of those who are unable as yet to grasp a rational account"; Even logos allegorised as a charioteer in psychic understanding is linked to ruling elite [philosophers] with reason and epithumia allegorised as black horses in psychic understanding is linked to mass through city-soul analogy in Plato, *Republic* 8. 543A-547C (Evigenis, 2002:590-610). In harmony with this, Plato argues that in an ideal city [the aristocratic city], one of five regimes Plato suggests, ruling elite [philosophers] with reason in society are controlling over mass (McAlear, 2020:229).



τότε γάρ, εἰ δεῖ τάληθές εἰπεῖν, ἐμπίπρραται φλεγόμενος ὁ νοῦς, τῶν αἰσθήσεων τὴν φλόγα ἐγειρουσῶν τὰ αἰσθητὰ ὑποβεβλημένων. LXXX. καὶ Μωυσεῖς μέντοι δηλοῖ περὶ τῆς τοιαύτης ἐμπρήσεως, ἣ γίνεται διὰ τῶν αἰσθήσεων, τοῦ νοῦ, ὅταν λέγῃ·	against masters: for then, in very deed, the mind is set on fire and is all ablaze, and that fire is kindled by the objects of sense which Sense-perception supplies. LXXX. Moses, moreover, gives intimations of such a conflagration of the mind as this, occasioned by the senses, when he says:
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Philo, *Allegorical Interpretation* 2.91

(91) ἀλλά τοί γε ὁ θεὸς τὴν φυγὴν οὐκ ἐπαινεῖ· σοὶ μὲν γάρ, ὦ διάνοια, μήπω τελειωθείση φυγὴν καὶ δρασμὸν τῶν παθῶν ἀρμόζει μελετᾶν, Μωυσεῖ δὲ τῷ τελείῳ παραμένειν τῷ πρὸς αὐτὰ πολέμῳ καὶ ἀντιστατεῖν αὐτοῖς καὶ διαμάχεσθαι· εἰ δὲ μή, ἀδείας καὶ ἐξουσίας λαβόμενα μέχρι τῆς ψυχικῆς ἀκροπόλεως ἀναβάντα πᾶσαν ἐκπολιορκήσει καὶ λεηλατήσει τυράννου τρόπον τὴν ψυχὴν.	[91] But, mark you, God does not applaud his flight. For while it well befits thee, O my mind, who art not yet made perfect, to get practice by flying and running away from the passions, it befits Moses, the perfect one, not to desist from the warfare against them, but to resist them and fight it out. Otherwise, finding nothing to alarm or to stop them, they will make their way up to the very citadel of the soul, and storm and plunder the whole soul after the fashion of a lawless ruler.
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James 3:1-8, 16

<p>¹ Μὴ πολλοὶ διδάσκαλοι γίνεσθε, ἀδελφοί μου, εἰδότες ὅτι μείζον κρίμα λημφόμεθα.</p> <p>² πολλὰ γὰρ ππαιομεν ἅπαντες. εἴ τις ἐν λόγῳ οὐ ππαιοι, οὗτος τέλειος ἀνὴρ δυνατὸς χαλιναγωγῆσαι καὶ ὄλον τὸ σῶμα.</p> <p>³ εἰ δὲ τῶν ἵππων τοὺς χαλινοὺς εἰς τὰ στόματα βάλλομεν εἰς τὸ πειθεσθαι αὐτοὺς ἡμῖν, καὶ ὄλον τὸ σῶμα αὐτῶν μετάγομεν.</p> <p>⁴ ἰδοὺ καὶ τὰ πλοῖα τηλικαῦτα ὄντα καὶ ὑπὸ ἀνέμων σκληρῶν ἐλαυνόμενα μετάγεται ὑπὸ ἐλαχίστου πηδαλίου ὄπου ἡ ὄρμη τοῦ εὐθύνοντος βούλεται.</p> <p>⁵ οὕτως καὶ ἡ γλῶσσα μικρὸν μέλος ἐστὶν καὶ μεγάλα αὐχεῖ. ἰδοὺ ἡλίκον πῦρ ἡλίκην ὕλην ἀνάπτει.</p> <p>⁶ καὶ ἡ γλῶσσα πῦρ. ὁ κόσμος τῆς ἀδικίας ἡ γλῶσσα καθίσταται ἐν τοῖς μέλεσιν ἡμῶν ἡ σπιλοῦσα ὄλον τὸ σῶμα καὶ φλογίζουσα τὸν τροχὸν τῆς γενέσεως καὶ φλογιζομένη ὑπὸ τῆς γεέννης.</p> <p>⁷ πᾶσα γὰρ φύσις θηρίων τε καὶ πετεινῶν, ἐρπετῶν τε καὶ ἐναλίων δαμάζεται καὶ δεδάμασται τῇ φύσει τῇ ἀνθρωπίνῃ,</p> <p>⁸ τὴν δὲ γλῶσσαν οὐδεὶς δαμάσαι δύναται ἀνθρώπων, ἀκατάστατον κακόν, μεστή ἰοῦ θανατηφόρου.</p> <p>...</p> <p>¹⁶ ὄπου γὰρ ζῆλος καὶ ἐριθεία, ἐκεῖ ἀκαταστασία καὶ πᾶν φαῦλον πρᾶγμα.</p>	<p>¹ Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers and sisters, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness. ²For all of us make many mistakes. Anyone who makes no mistakes in speaking is perfect, able to keep the whole body in check with a bridle. ³If we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we guide their whole bodies. ⁴Or look at ships: though they are so large that it takes strong winds to drive them, yet they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs. ⁵So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great exploits. How great a forest is set ablaze by a small fire! ⁶And the tongue is a fire. The tongue is placed among our members as a world of iniquity; it stains the whole body, sets on fire the cycle of nature, and is itself set on fire by hell. ⁷For every species of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by the human species, ⁸but no one can tame the tongue—a restless evil, full of deadly poison</p> <p>...</p> <p>¹⁶For where there is envy and selfish ambition, there will also be disorder and wickedness of every kind."</p>
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Accepting the understanding of a psychical tripartition of Plato, Philo defines true human maturity (teleios) as getting rid of thumos and controlling epithumia — “Because ‘the perfect wise man’ (ὁ τέλειος σοφός) can, by wholly renouncing ‘anger’ (τὸν θυμόν), utterly avert and drive off the uprising of the spirited element in him.” (Philo, *Allegorical Interpretation* 3.147) / “O my mind, who art not yet made perfect (τελειωθείση), to get practice by flying and running away from the passions (τῶν παθῶν), it befits Moses, the perfect one.” (Philo, *Allegorical Interpretation* 2.91). In terms of this, Satlow (2008:506) opines: “True human perfection for Philo, then, entails both excising the seat of anger and rage and standing up to and fighting the inevitable passions.”

Philo, furthermore, applies psychical maturity (teleios) into horse and ship imagery in Philo (*Allegorical Interpretation* 3.224). For Philo, logos, rational part allegorised as charioteer and helmsman, are described as the controlling subject which can control irrational senses.

Similar to Philo, the author of James’ Epistle uses horse and ship imagery for explaining the mature man (τέλειος ἀνὴρ). For the author, one of the characteristics of a mature man is to control the tongue to control the whole body, similar to a bit and rudder which could even control a horse and a ship respectively.

Considering the above discussions, it appears that the author of James’ Epistle alludes to Philonic imagery in the light of the theme of control, particularly the imagery of a horse and a ship. And to both authors, maturity (teleios) is related to the matter of control.

Even if there is intertextual relevance between James 3:1-8;16 and Philo’s writings (Philo, *Allegorical Interpretation* 2.91; 3.147; 3.224), clear discontinuity is that Philo uses imagery as to horse and ship for the psychical controlling matter – epithumia and thumos as the objects which should be controlled by logos, whereas, the author of the Epistle of James uses imagery as to horse and ship to deal with control, especially the tongue.

Platonic or Philo’s teleios (James 1:17) as one of the divine attributes?

πᾶσα δόσις ἀγαθὴ καὶ πᾶν δῶρημα τέλειον ἄνωθεν ἐστὶν καταβαῖνον ἀπὸ τοῦ πατρὸς τῶν φώτων, παρ’ ᾧ οὐκ ἔστι παραλλαγή ἢ τροπῆς ἀποσκίασμα. (James 1:17)

The expression of “the father of lights” (τοῦ πατρὸς τῶν φώτων) in James 1:17 has no clear antecedents from both Jewish and Hellenistic texts (McCartney, 2009:108). Even if clear antecedents do not exist from past texts in terms of “the father of lights” (τοῦ πατρὸς τῶν φώτων), Moo (2021:103) holds that “the father of lights” (τοῦ πατρὸς τῶν φώτων) in James 1:17 refers to “God’s creation of the heavenly bodies”, supposing that the home of “the father of lights” (τοῦ πατρὸς τῶν φώτων) is Jewish tradition:

James therefore cites God’s creation of the heavenly bodies as evidence of his power and continuing care for the world. The OT frequently makes a similar point (see Job 38:4–15, 19–21, 31–33; Ps 136:4–9; Isa 40:22, 26; and note also Sirach 43:1–12).

Even if there is an observation from McCartney (2009:108) – the expression of “the father of lights” (τοῦ πατρὸς τῶν φώτων) in James 1:17 has no clear antecedents from both Jewish and Hellenistic texts, one can find the home as to the expression of “the father of lights” (τοῦ



πατρὸς τῶν φώτων) in James 1:17 if observing the close relationship between sun and lights as the characteristic aspect. At least, in the empirical aspect, “the father of lights” (τοῦ πατρὸς τῶν φώτων) can refer to “sun” at the first phase, ultimately “God” in James 1:17 in that sun plays a role in a father of lights since all lights are generated by the sun like the relation between a father and sons.

Philo stands in the tradition where God is good and described as the sun, similar to James 1:17. Philo calls God “the Good” (Philo, *Allegorical Interpretation* 1.14,47). And for Philo, God is “the sun of sun” (Philo, *On the Special Law* 1. 51, 279). In addition, as in James 1:17, God is described as an unchangeable being, comparing God’s unchangeableness with human’s changeableness (Philo, *Allegorical Interpretation* 2.33).

In the *Republic* of Plato, unlike James 1:17, a god isn’t being described as a sun: Plato uses a sun for expounding the meaning of “good” (Analogy of the sun: *Republic* 6. 507B-509C).³ As a sun not only provides nourishment for the growth but also makes the objects visible, a sun symbolises “good” (Plato, *Republic* 6. 509B). But, the characteristic of good a sun, is closely linked to Plato’s notion “Idea of good, a god”, considering that characteristic of the good is related to the essence of good, namely, “Idea of good, a god”.⁴

If the variation as to the above-mentioned point is excluded, the father of lights, sun, God in James 1:17 sounds the same note as “the god as Idea of good” from Plato. According to Plato, the god as “Idea [Form] of good” (ἡ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ ἰδέα) is “good”, “eternal”, “changeless”, “perfect”, “existing not only in the imperfect universe (immanent), but also apart from it (transcending)” (Burton, 1909:354-355). In this regard, Edwards’ view (1978:309) is noteworthy:

In the second of book of the *Republic*, Plato states the Greek concept of the perfect as the utterly unchanging which has dominated classical supernaturalism through the centuries, despite the fact that it is nowhere to be found in Biblical religion. Plato maintained that the most perfect beings are the most self-sufficient, thus ruling out the possibility that perfection could be changed by anything outside itself (and thus ruling out the possibility that a perfect being could be affected in any way by the world, though not that it could have effects upon the world). Further, God who is ‘in every perfect’ could not be changed even from within by himself.

As in Plato, the author of the Epistle of James asserts that the “good” (ἀγαθή) and “perfect” (τέλειον) present comes from above, the father of lights who is “unchangeable, even making any turning shadows” (παρ’ ὧ οὐκ ἐνι παραλλαγῇ ἢ τροπῆς ἀποσκίασμα), which may express God’s characteristics – good, perfect and unchangeableness.

³ Noting the close relation between Plato’s texts and Philo’s texts with respect to the matter of “good and God”, Wolfson (1962:1.202) opines: “Indeed Philo sometimes calls God “the Good” or “the true Good,” but this is not in the sense that God is the idea of good; it is only in the sense of property of God, which, like all the other properties of God, is considered by Philo as designating the power or action of God.” Thus, Wolfson (1962:1.201-2) judges that Philo’s view as to “God and Good” is taken from the view of Plato; however, at least, while Philo doesn’t accept the notion of “the idea of good” from Plato, Philo regards the good of God as the matter of property of God.

⁴ Wolfson (1962:201) notes intertextual relevance between Plato and Philo, centering on the motif of sun: “Evidently having in mind the passages in Plato where the idea of the good might be taken as identical with God, he says that God is ‘superior to virtue, superior to knowledge, superior to the good itself and the beautiful itself.’ Evidently, again, having in mind Plato’s analogy of the good to the sun, he substitutes God for good.”



James 1:17	
πᾶσα δόσις ἀγαθὴ καὶ πᾶν δῶρημα τέλειον ἄνωθεν ἔστιν καταβαῖνον ἀπὸ τοῦ πατρὸς τῶν φώτων, παρ' ᾧ οὐκ ἔνι παραλλαγὴ ἢ τροπῆς ἀποσκίασμα.	Every generous act of giving, with every perfect gift, is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.

In addition to these, Jesus who holds the divinity like God, is described as the being existing outside of time who can intervene in the world controlled by the flow of time (James 5:9), thereby transcending the rule of time – Jesus who holds the divinity is unlimited or infinite concerning time; for judgment, Jesus will intervene in the world in time (eschatology).⁵

James 5:9	
μὴ στενάζετε, ἀδελφοί, κατ' ἀλλήλων, ἵνα μὴ κριθήτε· ἰδοὺ ὁ κριτὴς πρὸ τῶν θυρῶν ἔστηκεν.	Beloved, do not grumble against one another, so that you may not be judged. See, the Judge is standing at the doors!

Thus, the perception of the author of the Epistle of James as to divinity characteristics owes to that of “Idea of good” from Plato or “the good characteristic of God” from Philo, centring on the motif of “a sun (the father of lights in James 1:17)”. And furthermore, it is likely that the notion of “perfect”, one of the divine attributes, is deduced from Plato or Philo’s notions.

Conclusion

Teleios in the Epistle of James displays various understandings — the state of perfection, the notion relating to psychic undividedness, the concept relating to purity, maturity and one of the divine attributes. Thus, it is likely that the attempts to trace the origin of teleios in James’ Epistle should be based on the semantic observation surrounding the term, teleios, from the pre-texts in the background of this Epistle’s intertextual composition. Hartin’s view that the use of teleios in the Epistle of James is rooted in the Hebrew Scriptures and the LXX as the Jewish coloured term seems fair if noting the aspects such as the state of perfection, the notion relating to psychical undividedness, and the concept relating to purity. However, if taking note of teleios as “maturity” and “one of the divine attributes”, one might conclude that the understanding of James regarding teleios has been coloured by Hellenistic influence. Thus, through the term, teleios, one can gain a glimpse of the author’s identity — it appears that the author of the Epistle of James was a well - educated Jew, knowing both traditions — Jewish and Hellenistic.

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⁵As to “God” in biblical tradition and “a god as the Idea of good” in Plato, the striking difference between them would be that “Plato neither asserts nor denies the personality of deity.” Compared with this, in the biblical tradition, God is regarded as God who has personality (Burton, 1909:355).



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Texts

Used textual sources are as below for this research.

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- Texts and English translations as to The Dead Sea Scrolls are from *Study Edition of Florentino García Martínez & Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar*.
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