Julius R. Weinberg, A Short History of Medieval Philosophy. (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press 1964).

Mohammed 570? - 632 [Muhammad]
Abbasids ... by 750

CHAPTER VI · PHILOSOPHY IN THE ISLAMIC MIDDLE AGES

THOUGH the position of philosophy in the Judaeo-Islamic world of medieval times was superficially analogous to the situation in Christendom, there were several important and profound differences, the most important of which were the place of a formal creed and the character of religious authority. While creeds were formulated by the several different sects in Islam and by the medieval Jews, these creeds never enjoyed universal acceptance by the faithful. And, again, while religious authority was often powerful in a given locality or country, there was never any central authority comparable in power and scope with that of Rome in the Christian West.[1]

On the other hand, it cannot be too strongly emphasized that the position of the philosopher in the Islamic world of the Middle Ages was precarious. After Al-Ghazali's refutation of philosophy, it ceased to develop in the East, and it did not fare well in Muslim Spain after Averroes and Maimonides. Although there were periods favorable to the development of philosophical inquiry (especially when politico-religious authority was limited to a local potentate), there were periods when fanatics engaged in inquisition, imprisonment, execution, confiscation of libraries, destruction of books, and other excesses.[2] In fact, the existence of books by philosophers on the

[1] Another difference, emphasized by Professor Strauss, was the fact that the Roman Catholic Church explicitly used philosophy as *ancilla theologiae* and thus assumed control of it, whereas this was never done in Islam, so that Islamic philosophers enjoyed an autonomy which was not enjoyed by their Christian counterparts. See Leo Strauss, *Persecution and the Art of Writing*, Glencoe, Ill. 1952.

[2] Cf. Leon Gauthier, *Ibn Rochd*, Paris 1948, pp. 17-19; E. I. J. Rosenthal, *Political Thought in Medieval Islam*, Cambridge 1958, p. 177 and *passim*. Even Ibn Rushd (Averroes) said that heretics must be killed. See his *Tahafut al-tahafut* (*The Incoherence of the Incoherent*), trans. S. Van den Bergh, 2 vols., London 1955. My references will be to this work.

"agreement of philosophy and religion" attests, not simply to the twofold interests of their authors, but especially to the necessity of justifying philosophical inquiry in an environment which, at the very best, merely suffered it to exist. In some ways, therefore, although some of the Islamic philosophers went further in the development of doctrines that were in fact inconsistent with any reasonable reading of revealed religion, philosophy in the long run fared better in the Christian world where ecclesiastical limitations on philosophical activity were far more effective and organized.

Among the Muslims, the main sources of authority were generally considered to be the Koran, tradition, the universal agreement of the faithful, and the principle of analogy (legal reasoning by which a general principle could be applied to parallel cases).[3] Universal agreement, however, meant consensus among the religious authorities, and even this principle some Muslim leaders in the Middle Ages rejected in favor of the authority of specially designated Imams. Insofar as it is possible to extract any set of common beliefs, we can designate the following as practically universal: The Koran was the work of God and, by the end of the reign of the Omayades, it was a general dogma that the Koran was eternal.[4] The Eternal Koran was more or less consciously regarded as the Islamic counterpart of the Divine Word of Christendom. This Koran was dictated to the last and most important of the prophets, Mohammed. Although Islam is uncompromisingly monotheistic, the Koran and the Throne of God are co-eternal with the Deity Himself. There are, in addition, mediate beings such as angels as well as the principal evil spirit, Iblis (perhaps from *diabolos*) or Shaitan (cf. Satan), and subsidiary demons, the jinns. Although there are miraculous stories concerning Mohammed (and some of the holy men) which are a part of the "tradition," the great miracle of Islam is the Koran

[3] Cf. Alfred Guillaume, *Islam*, New York 1954, p. 101.

[4] Cf. Carra de Vaux, *Les Penseurs de l'Islam*, Paris 1923, Tome 4, p. 145.

itself; how could a book of such great beauty be the work of the semiliterate Prophet?[5] The Koran had to be the revelation of Allah.

The religious doctrines of the Koran being largely adaptations of Judaic and Christian religious dogmas, a minimal creed involving belief in Resurrection, Judgment, Paradise, and Hell was accordingly general in Islam. In addition to these theoretical principles, the practical obligations of the devout Muslim are essentially prayers, pilgrimage, almsgiving, and fasting. For present purposes, the theoretical principles are most important. The one God created the world by fiat and with a foreknowledge which was also predestinating. This predestinating foreknowledge is contained in the "Preserved Tablet" or eternal Koran. Despite this predestination, man's will is somehow free. These conflicting dogmas produced both philosophical and theological controversies. The Koran speaks as if God has a plurality of attributes, viz., Life, Knowledge, Hearing, Sight, Will, and Speech. The attempt to reconcile this plurality with the absolute unity of God also occasioned intellectual difficulties.

The contact of Islam with Judaic, Greek, and Christian doctrines, both theological and philosophical, made these controversies inevitable. It will be well to sketch the character of these influences and the consequent effects on the development of philosophy. The Christian school of Edessa in Mesopotamia, founded in 363 by St. Ephraim of Nisibis (who taught part of Aristotle's logic), was closed in 489. Its professors continued their work in Persia under the Sassanide King Chosroës. In Syria in the sixth century at Risaina and Kinnesrin, Aristotle and Greek science were cultivated. Thus Greek thought was established in the Near East before the

[5] Cf. Majid Fakhry, *Islamic Occasionalism*, London 1958, p. 133. "It is baffling that this claim for stylistic perfection (sc. of the Koran) should have been accepted with such docility by the greatest of Arabian authors . . . when its legitimacy is all too unwarranted, even from a purely formal point of view."

rise of Islam. The Abbassides of the eighth century patronized the Syrian scholars, and, under this patronage, Euclid, Galen, Aristotle, Theophrastus, and Alexander of Aphrodisias were translated. In the reign of Al-Mamun (813-833), the son of Haroun Al-Raschid, Aristotle was translated from Greek with the help of Syriac into Arabic. The Syrian Honein Ibn Ishaq (d. 876) directed the translations, epitomes, and the writing of Aristotle and the Greek commentators at Bagdad. It is worth remarking that his methods of translation were exact and scholarly. Many Greek manuscripts of a given work were collated in the process of translation.[6] In the ninth and tenth centuries new translations of Aristotle, Theophrastus, Alexander, Themistius, Syrianus, and Anmonius were produced by the Nestorian Syrians. There was a fairly continuous contact between Islamic theologians and Christian theology, and there is little doubt that ideas of Greek and Syrian Christians were responsible for some of the important theological speculations in Islam (this is true of the "liberal" theologians, the Mutazilites, and particularly true of the more "orthodox" Mutakallimun). It should be mentioned here also that the influence of Aristotle was tinged deeply by Neoplatonism. This was due, in part at least, to the fact that some of the Greek commentators had already interpreted some of Aristotle's views Neoplatonically and to the further fact that an epitome of Plotinus' *Enneads* (IV-VI) had been given the mistaken title of *Theology of Aristotle*.[7] Another Neoplatonic work, the so-called *Book of Causes*, actually an epitome of Proclus' *Elements of Theology*, was also ascribed to Aristotle.[8] The antique intellectual heritage of the Judaeo-Islamic world

[6] Cf. *Isis*, VIII (1926), 690.

[7] The source of this confusion is not wholly understood but the mistake already appears in the title of the Arabic version.

[8] Many other pseudonymous works of this sort were in wide circulation in the Judaeo-Islamic world (e.g., pseudo-Empedocles, *On the Five Substances*, a work from which Ibn Gabirol, the Spanish Jewish Philosopher of the eleventh century, drew much of his philosophical inspiration).

thus contained much of the best philosophy, theology, and science but sometimes in a confused form.

The earliest form of philosophical speculation in Islam was probably brought about by the attempt to make the religious doctrines of the Koran internally consistent and intellectually respectable. Doubtless the attitude of the learned Jews and Christians (e.g., John Damascene) spurred on some of the faithful to debate religious issues in the attempt to extend the faith of Islam, or at least to defend it against detractors from outside. One group of theologians, the Mutazilites, attempted to formulate the main principles of Islam somewhat as follows:

1) God is an absolute Unity—a fact which entails His incorporeality. This principle was probably directed against polytheism, but also to some extent against the Trinitarian Doctrine of Christianity.

2) Man's will is free. (God does not like evil, He does not create the actions of men, but God gives man the power to obey the divine precepts.)

3) There are promises of reward and threats of punishment in the Divine revelation.

4) The sinner is in a state intermediate between the infidel and the true believer.

5) Man is under obligation to do good and prevent evil, so that the obligation to engage in the Holy War is, in principle, no different from the obligation to combat the sinner.[9]

The most important of the orthodox groups of the theologians was established by Al-Ashari (d. 935).[10] As the views of Al Ashari and his followers are of some importance in later development of thought both in Islam and in Latin Christendom, I want to discuss them in more detail. First of all Al-

[9] Cf. Carra de Vaux, *Les Penseurs de l'Islam*, Tome 4, p. 135.

[10] Al-Ashari was at first a pupil of one of the important Mutazilite teachers in Bagdad, but he made a public rejection of this rationalistic movement when he was forty years old and defended orthodoxy by the dialectical methods of his Mutazilite antecedents.

Ashari insisted on the literal interpretation of the Koran with all its anthropomorphic language applied to Allah, yet, with equal insistence, held that God is totally unlike anything else. The literal interpretation of the Throne of God, the Pool of the Prophet where the believers drink, the beatific vision—all these are to be accepted. He also adopted the view (derived ultimately from Neoplatonic or Stoic sources) that the eternal Word of God is an idea in His mind. What is good or evil is wholly determined by God's decree. In fact man's will is the creation of God and (inconsistent with this) only man's appropriation (*kasb*) by which he accepts the choice divinely created for him is within his power. It therefore appears that the central tenet of Al-Ashari and his school is the absolute omnipotence of God and the complete dependence of all creatures and their activities on God.[11]

There are two principal contentions which distinguished the Asharite school of Mutakallimun (literally, "Speakers"),[12] the absolute omnipotence of God which means for them that God is the *only* cause, and an unusual version of the atomic theory.[13] The atomic theory amounts to something like the following (although it should be noticed that there was disagreement about the more minute details of doctrine): The universe consists of extensionless particles[14] which are exactly like one another, and the gross bodies are conglomerates of these ultimate particles. Unlike the atoms of Democritus, however, these atoms are not eternal. The doctrine that God is the sole cause of existence and change required the continuous recreation of the atoms and of their accidents (qualities).

[11] See the creed of Al-Ashari in *Al-Ibānah 'an 'Usal al-Dujānah*, Hayderabad, 1321 A.H.

[12] The Latin philosophers of medieval Christendom (e.g., St. Albert and St. Thomas) refer to them as *loquentes in lege Maurorum*.

[13] For speculation as to the origin of *this* atomism, see S. Pines, *Beiträge zur islamischen Atomenlehre*, Berlin 1936, pp. 95-123.

[14] See H. A. Wolfson, *An Unknown Pseudo-Democritean Fragment and the Muslim Unextended Atoms*, Festgabe für Eric Voegelin, Munich 1962, pp. 593-606.

The word for accident was applied in the broadest sense to refer to everything truly assertible of atoms so that some Asharites held that annihilation of a body is produced when God created the accident of extinction in it. Even time and space were atomized. Motion consists, according to these theologians, of the displacement of an atom of body from one point of space to another in an atom of time. This would seem to mean that an atom was successively recreated in successive positions in successive moments of time. Difference of velocity then consists in the fact that some atoms are recreated more often in a given fixed position than others. The accidents of a gross body are accidents of the atoms composing it. Again there is a difference between this atomism and that of Democritus or that of Epicurus. The former denied that atoms had any qualitative accidents, whereas the latter supposed that qualitative accidents belong only to composites of atoms.

From the accounts of the Asharite doctrines preserved by Sharastani, Maimonides, Averroes, *et al.*, it is clear that both the doctrine about causality and the atomic theory were defended on logical and epistemological grounds. The main point here was the so-called "Maxim of Admissibility"[15] according to which "everything conceived by the imagination is admitted by the intellect as possible." This means that whatever is free from contradiction must be admitted as possible for God to accomplish; hence, the ordinary routines in the natural world, the order of the various parts of the universe, and the like are only the result of God's customary way of acting. Without any absurdity resulting therefrom, God could change His custom or habit and the universe would be different. We shall observe later how Al-Ghazali used this view in an attack on the "Philosophers" in Islam (particularly directed against Avicenna).

The views of the Asharites exerted considerable influence

[15] See Moses Maimonides, *Guide to the Perplexed*, Pt. 1, ch. 73, proposition 10.

not only in medieval Islam but among the Jews living in countries dominated by Islamic culture. Maimonides devoted many pages of his *Guide to the Perplexed* to a refutation of their doctrines, and his Islamic contemporary, Averroes (Ibn Rushd), attacked them in his *Incoherence of the Incoherence*.[16] Aquinas attempted to refute the causal theory of the Asharites in his *Summa Theologiae* and especially in his *Summa Contra Gentiles*, and there is some evidence of influence even among the philosophers of the seventeenth century.[17]

The philosophical ideas of the Mutakallimun have most often been described as naive. This has been due, in part, to the fact that our knowledge of their speculations has come largely from hostile critics. Yet I venture to suggest that when we have a better understanding of their views and arguments they will appear to us as subtle critics of the philosophical notions of *their* opponents.[18]

The kind of philosophy which most influenced the intellectual currents of the thirteenth century in the Christian West is represented by a series of Islamic writers who have been miscalled Aristotelians. It is true that their language and many of their interests are determined by the works of Aristotle. But it is more correct to call them Neoplatonists (Averroes is, to a great extent at least, an exception). The first important writer of this group was Al-Kindi (d. 873). A series of his works survive in Latin form: *On Intellect and What is Understood*,

[16] *Tahafut al-tahafut*, trans. S. Van den Bergh.

[17] Cf. Leibniz, *Discourse on Metaphysics*, §7.

[18] I understand that H. A. Wolfson will soon publish a volume devoted to the Mutakallimum. Meanwhile, I shall give but one example of this subtlety: Aristotle (*Physics*, VIII, 1, 251^a15–251^b28 and Simplicius in *Physics*, 466, 13f. See Sir Thomas L. Heath, *Mathematics in Aristotle*, Oxford 1949, p. 103) had argued that it is logically impossible for time and motion to begin. The careful wording of a passage from Shahrastani [*Summa Philosophiae*, ed. Alfred Guillaume, p. 4.], viz., "Something that temporal things do not precede is itself temporal," suggests to me a clear understanding that there is no contradiction involved in the temporal beginning of the universe. This seems confirmed by Al-Ghazali, *Tahafut, al-Falasifah*, Lahore 1958, pp. 40-41; S. Van den Bergh, *Averroes' Tahafut al-tahafut*, I, 41-48.

On Sleep and Vision, On the Five Essences, Introduction to the Art of Logical Demonstration, as well as a *Treatise on the Magical Arts.*[19] According to the title of the work known as the *Theology of Aristotle*, Al-Kindi corrected the first Arabic translation (the book is actually not, as the title states, a commentary, but an epitome of Plotinus *Enneads* IV to VI). Although the full title makes it plain that the work is not by Aristotle, it seems to have been attributed to him in Islam, if not when it first appeared, then sometime later.[20] This is of great importance for understanding Al-Kindi and his "peripatetic" successors in Islam. He attributes to Aristotle, or at least finds no incongruity in accepting as compatible with Aristotelian thought, notions which are plainly Neoplatonic.

His treatise *On the Intellect* is one of a long series of works by that title, or with the same subject matter, which came from Islamic philosophers, such as those of Al-Farabi, Avicenna, and Averroes. The theme common to these treatises is the explanation of Aristotle's doctrine of the active reason (*νους ποιητικός*). Following the lead of Neoplatonic doctrines of emanation, these philosophers explain the active reason as a separate spiritual being, the last of the Intelligences emanated from God. This doctrine in Averroes is associated with the notion that there is but one active reason for all human beings. The logical consequence of this view is the doctrine that there is no personal survival. Whether Averroes actually denied the idea of personal survival is another question.

In the case of Al-Kindi, there is certainly a plurality of individual souls which, as he says,[21] survive the death of the

[19] There are extensive quotations from the last-mentioned work in Giles of Rome, *Errores Philosophorum*, ed. J. Koch and trans. J. O. Riedl, Milwaukee 1944, pp. 47-55. The other works are in BGPM, Münster 1897, Band II, Heft 5.

[20] See Alfred Guillaume, *Legacy of Islam*, London 1931, p. 252. See also F. Dieterici, *Die Sogenannte Theologie des Aristotles*, Leipzig 1883.

[21] *Liber Introductorium in Artem Logicae Demonstrationis*, BGPM, Band II, Heft 5, p. 62, "Et post mortem fit anima Angeli caelestis spiritualis, sempiterni esse, delectabilis guadere semper."

body. Nonetheless there is an Intelligence always actual from which man acquires his intellect.[22] Al-Kindi also divides intellect into four species: the intellect which is always in act, the intellect which is in potency in the soul, the intellect which passes from potency to act, and finally the demonstrative intellect. This doctrine is explicitly attributed to Plato and Aristotle, but it hardly need be said that it is not to be found there. Aristotle only distinguishes the active from the passive intellect. Al-Kindi's more elaborate classification, however, seems to be the prototype of similar distinctions made by Al-Farabi and Avicenna.

The influence of Neoplatonic ideas on Al-Kindi is nowhere better illustrated than by the *Treatise on the Magical Arts.* In this treatise he holds that if it were given to anyone to comprehend the whole condition of the celestial harmony, he would know the world of the elements with all its contents in every place and every time, as that which is caused is known by the cause. If indeed he knew anything of this world in its entire condition, the condition of the celestial harmony would not be hidden from him, since he would comprehend the cause by means of its effect—for all things acting in the world of elements, however small, are effects of the heavenly harmony. And things, whatever they are and whatever they are to be, are denoted in that harmony. Wherefore one who would have complete knowledge of the heavenly harmony would know the past and the future completely. This doctrine is elucidated in terms of the theory that everything which exists in the physical world sends out rays in every direction so that everything contains rays derived from everything else. Thus the complete knowledge of any single thing in the world represents, as a mirror, the total condition of the heavenly harmony.[23] Thus

[22] *Ibid.*, pp. 5-7.

[23] The "mirror" figure of speech (which occurs later, e.g., in Cusanus and Leibniz) as well as the whole doctrine, is derived from the Neoplatonists. Cf. especially Proclus, *Elements of Theology*, ed. Dodds, p. 254 and Plotinus, *Enneads*, V, 8, 4, and is ultimately traceable to the Stoics.

everything is necessitated. He also held that the heavenly harmony is the true cause of everything although people popularly suppose that one thing acts on another by its own rays. This doctrine is connected with a belief in the efficacy of natural magic.

The tendency to reconcile Plato and Aristotle is characteristic of the early philosophers in Islam. Al-Kindi wrote a short tract "reconciling" the Aristotelian and Platonic definitions of the soul,[24] and Al-Farabi wrote a more extensive *Harmony between Plato and Aristotle.*[25] Works of this sort seem to be attempts to reconcile Aristotle and Neoplatonism.

But Al-Kindi is a Muslim and therefore has several problems which are characteristic of religious philosophy in the Middle Ages. Creation is dealt with in part in a short treatise on *The Agent in the Proper Sense and in the Metaphorical Sense*, in which creation from nothing is distinguished from other kinds of natural causation.[26] The language suggests a modification of the Neoplatonic system of emanation and some of the statements in this little tract also suggest that, properly speaking, God alone is cause in the sense that reminds us of the doctrines of the Mutakallimun. There is also the problem of the nature and value of philosophy. Al-Kindi gives several definitions of philosophy derived from "the ancients," viz., the love of wisdom, attainment of moral perfection, contemplation of death, science of sciences, man's knowing himself (a Socratic maxim which Al-Kindi turns into the study of one's self as the study of the microcosm), and, finally, philosophy as knowledge of the eternal universal things.

[24] This tract is translated in full in *Isaac Israeli* by A. Altmann and S. M. Stern, London 1958, p. 43.

[25] There is some division of opinion as whether Arabic translations of any of the Platonic dialogues existed. There were paraphrases and epitomes (e.g., Galen's), but F. Rosenthal (*Islamic Culture*, XIV [1940] 387-422) has produced convincing evidence that the Islamic philosophers were mainly, and perhaps exclusively, dependent on indirect sources for their knowledge of Plato's dialogues.

[26] See Altmann and Stern, *Isaac Israeli*, pp. 68-69 where this treatise is translated in full.

These conceptions are closely connected in Al-Kindi's mind: self-knowledge involves a knowledge of the contents of the active Intelligence which, for Al-Kindi, is the totality of the forms of things.[27]

Religious philosophy must explain the phenomena of prophetic revelation (this is especially true of Islam, a religion in which prophecy is the greatest miracle). Accordingly Al-Kindi explains that the knowledge of the prophets is obtained directly and requires neither research nor acquired logical skill. It is, in fact, dependent upon the will of God and the purification of the prophets.

Al-Kindi employs several methods for proving the existence of God. Since man is a microcosm, i.e., a small-scale replica of the universe, he sees in himself indications of the nature of things as a whole, and the analogy between the individual human being and the universe leads Al-Kindi to employ the argument from design, that is, from the evidences of order and arrangement in the sensible world, to establish the existence of a Divine Arranger. For every organization there is an organizer.

He goes on to argue that the universe could not have existed from eternity. Otherwise an infinite sequence of events would have been realized, a conclusion Al-Kindi regarded as absurd. Since time (as well as body and motion) is limited, the universe has limited duration; hence, it must have been created, and since a created thing entails a creator, there must have been a creator.

While he adheres to the general Neoplatonic scheme which we find in the pseudo-Aristotelian writings (*Theology of Aristotle*, etc.), he modifies it "in a small but not unimportant detail."[28] "The highest sphere of the heavens . . . , having been created from nothing by God, will last as long as God so wills,"[29] so that the universe will perish when God wishes.

[27] Altmann and Stern, *ibid.*, pp. 37, 159.

[28] R. Walzer, *Oriens*, 1950, pp. 7ff.

[29] R. Walzer, *ibid.*, p. 8.

Although he makes no attempt to prove the limited temporality of the universe, just as he does not attempt a philosophical justification of the resurrection of the flesh, he evidently, as a Muslim and a Mutazilite, felt obliged to accept these dogmas.

It is clear from his views about the extraphilosophical nature and origin of prophecy that Al-Kindi believed that there is a source of knowledge superior to philosophy which requires no philosophical preparation. This not only makes philosophy ancillary to theology but also connects Al-Kindi, historically, with the Athenian Neoplatonists rather than with the Alexandrines for whom philosophy was not essentially distinct from religion.[30]

Al-Farabi (d. 950) appears to have presented a more systematic form of philosophy. His works cover the systematic treatises of Aristotle and some works on Plato, whom Al-Farabi appears to have known only through epitomes. He also wrote some works on the *Ideal State* and on *The Ideas of the People of the Virtuous City*. For a long time, the *Gems of Wisdom* and the *Sources of Questions* were attributed to him, but the attribution of the second is very doubtful, and of the first almost certainly wrong.[31] It is, therefore, very difficult to say what ideas may safely be attributed to him. The famous distinction between essence and existence which has an important place in the Christian philosophy of the thirteenth century was attributed to him but, as this comes from doubtful or wrongly ascribed works, it is no longer safe to say much about this in connection with Al-Farabi.

It seems reasonably clear that Al-Farabi placed philosophy in the highest position of human aspiration. Not only does

[30] R. Walzer, *op.cit.*

[31] See S. Pines in *Revue des Études Islamiques* (1951), pp. 120ff. and F. Rahman, *Prophecy in Islam*, London 1958, pp. 21-22. My use of the "Sources of Questions" has been sparing, and I would have avoided it altogether had some other of Al-Farabi's genuine writings been available to me.

he deny the resurrection of the flesh, but he explicitly accords to metaphysics the highest rank. Theology (i.e., Kalam) is secondary because it employs dialectical methods whereas metaphysics uses demonstration. This distinction foreshadows that of Ibn Rushd (Averroes). The idea lying behind it is the distinction between philosophers and ordinary people. The latter cannot be expected to comprehend philosophical truth and so must be instructed in concrete and picturesque language.[32] Thus the "lurid escatology"[33] was treated by many enlightened Muslims as figurative language suited to the uncultivated nomads to whom Mohammed brought the Revelation. Ibn Al-ʿArabi of Murcia (1164-1240), Ibn Tofail (1100-1184), Ibn Rushd (1126-1198), all take this view which, as Walzer has observed, is an inheritance from the Alexandrine Neoplatonists. Perhaps this is the closest that medieval philosophers came to any independence of philosophy from revealed religion. This does not mean that genuine philosophical independence was achieved. For, although their thought may have been relatively free from limitations imposed by religion and its authorities, most of these Islamic philosophers were limited by their dependence on their Greek sources. I do not mean that they were all consciously intellectual subjects of the Greek philosophers. (This might apply, however, to Averroes.) Nevertheless, their problems and solutions move within the boundaries of Aristotelian and Neoplatonic conceptions.

Being is the most universal concept (although some other concepts, such as Unity, Truth, Goodness, are coextensive and therefore convertible with *Being*). It is also the simplest concept and cannot, strictly speaking, be defined. Some things can be regarded as *possible* beings since their essence does not imply the necessity that they exist. Another thing is such that,

[32] *The History of Hayy ibn Yaqzan*, trans. S. Ockley, revised and introduced by A. S. Fulton, London 1929, p. 30.

[33] The distinction between "the learned and the vulgar" is, of course, very old and can be traced back to Greek Antiquity. The distinction among rhetorical, dialectical, and demonstrative arguments is derived from Aristotle.

and Eriugena and also certain views of the thirteenth-century Christian theologians, e.g., Thomas Aquinas).[39] Yet Al-Farabi does not hesitate to say of God that He is Infinite, Immutable, Simple, One, Intelligent, the Truth, Life, etc.[40]

The main aim of man is to become like God. This Al-Farabi elaborates in terms of self-improvement and then the improvement of the community (i.e., the family or the political community). There is no doubt that he, like the several other philosophers (*falāsifah*) of Islam,[41] held that happiness can be found only in the political community and that the intellectual life can be perfected only within the community. But there is also no doubt that intellectual perfection is the ultimate aim.[42] How this intellectual perfection is to be achieved and the condition of consciousness which characterizes it can be understood only in terms of Al-Farabi's theory of the intellect.

The Islamic philosophers in general, and Al-Farabi is no exception, assume that whatever exists free from matter is an intellectual being.[43] In the *Model City* Al-Farabi gives an argument for this to the effect that God, because He has nothing of the material in His nature, is an intellect. The argument is: That which prevents forms from being intellects and from engaging in actual thinking is matter. Now if a thing does not require matter in its being, then it is already an actual intellect.[44] Moreover matter is the cause of the fact

[39] See SCG, I, 14 and 34.

[40] *Der Musterstaat, op.cit.*, pp. 13-23.

[41] Excepting Ibn Bajja (Avempace) who is a special case. See E. I. J. Rosenthal, *Political Thought in Medieval Islam*, ch. 8.

[42] See Rosenthal, *op.cit.* ch 6, and p. 274 n.30. This view has its ultimate origins in Plato, Aristotle, and Plotinus.

[43] In the Latin translations the single Arabic word for intellect ('aql) is sometimes rendered by "Intelligentia" (intelligence) and sometimes by "intellectus" (intellect) depending on the context. Very frequently, *Intelligentia* is used to denote the celestial emanations and *intellectus* to denote the human mind.

[44] This goes back ultimately to Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, Book Delta, 9, 1075^a3-5: "Since thought and the object of thought do not differ in things containing no material, they will be identical and the act of thinking will be identical with theorized thought."

that a thing is not immediately and entirely intelligible. But since God is free from matter, He is also essentially intelligible; hence, since God is also absolutely simple, His intellect, Its intelligible object, and the act of understanding are identical.[45]

Now in the case of man who is material as well as spiritual in nature, thinking is not originally identical with the object of thought. Indeed, Al-Farabi holds, as did Al-Kindi, that there are several intellects (or, better, several stages in the development of intellect) in man. Man has, at first, a merely potential intellect which is gradually perfected until a contact is made with the Agent Intelligence, which is the last of the purely spiritual beings in the hierarchy of intelligences emanated from God. These several stages of the intellect are: the potential intellect, the *intellectus in effectu* (i.e., in act), and the acquired intellect. Some forms are abstracted from matter, while others do not exist in matter and hence need not be abstracted therefrom. When these separate forms become forms for the human intellect, it becomes the acquired intellect. The Agent Intellect abstracts forms from sensible material things for us and, when it becomes an object of thought for us, our intellect reaches the stage of acquired intellect. It seems, then, that this contact with the Agent Intelligence is the highest achievement for man and human beatitude consists in this conjunction or union with the Agent Intelligence.

What this means for human immortality is not easy to see. Ibn Tofail[46] complained that Al-Farabi in a work on morality asserted that the souls of evil men would be subject to eternal torments whereas in other writings he held that such souls cease to exist and that perfect souls alone are immortal.

[45] *Die Musterstaat*, p. 13. This doctrine is related, as is obvious, to Aristotle's description of God's activity as being a "thinking about (his own) thinking." Cf. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, XII, 9, 1074^b35.

[46] Spanish philosopher of the twelfth century, an older contemporary and friend of Averroes (Ibn Rushd).

Ibn Rushd (Averroes) had similar complaints, and even held that Al-Farabi denied personal immortality altogether.[47] In the *Model City* Al-Farabi states that when good men die their souls join similar souls and, in this blessed state, the arrival of new souls increases the happiness of those already in Paradise. This is in direct conflict with a statement of Ibn Rushd to the effect that the survival of the individual as a separate form is an old wives' tale. It is possible, as R. Walzer has suggested, that Al-Farabi was capable of giving out an orthodox view for popular consumption, and concealed his actual beliefs from the masses.[48] In any case, ambiguity on this question of personal immortality, deliberate or inadvertent, is to be encountered in many of the Islamic philosophers. One of Al-Farabi's accusers, Ibn Tofail himself, is very vague on this point.[49] There is something about Al-Farabi's statement in the *Model City* which suggests absorption of the individual into the Agent Intelligence.

Another interpretation of Al-Farabi's psychological theory given recently by F. Rahman makes the theory more consistent and removes some of the grounds for the criticism which later Islamic philosophers directed against it. According to Rahman, the intelligible forms which the human intellect becomes are abstracted from sensibles. The Agent Intelligence only illuminates the sensibles and the intellect of man, but does not actually radiate forms into the human mind. This clearly differentiates Al-Farabi's doctrine from that of Avicenna (according to whom the forms themselves are radiated into the human mind by and from the Agent Intelligence).

Again, according to Rahman, Al-Farabi "consistently and boldly declares that those human beings in whom this potential intellect does not become actual perish with the death of

[47] See S. Munk, *Mélanges de philosophie juive et arabe* (reprint, 1927), pp. 347-349.
[48] R. Walzer, *Islamic Culture*, XIV (1940), 387ff.
[49] See his *History of Hayy ibn Yaqzan, op.cit.*, pp. 88-93.

the body,"[50] and Rahman supports this with a text of Al-Farabi which seems conclusive. Thus Al-Farabi seems to hold that (1) only the souls of intellectually cultivated individuals survive bodily death,[51] and (2) this survival is individual, i.e., there is no absorption of the individuals into the Agent Intelligence. This interpretation of the doctrine, while not wholly consonant with orthodoxy, comes closer to it than the other interpretation.

Perhaps the most important philosopher in Islam, Avicenna (Ibn Sina, 980-1037) owes much to Al-Farabi. On his own admission[52] it was Al-Farabi's work *On the Objects of the Metaphysics* which made clear to Avicenna the meaning of Aristotle. And many details, especially of metaphysics and psychology, are common to the two men. Yet there are important differences, and Avicenna's influence both in the Islamic and the Christian world of the Middle Ages was far more extensive (indeed it can hardly be overestimated). Avicenna's philosophy is taken as representative of the philosophers whom Al Ghazali attempts to refute in his *Incoherence of Philosophers*. Shahrastani devotes to Avicenna an extensive section of his *Religious and Philosophical Sects in Islam*. In the Christian West, he is, as Gilson has demonstrated, the chief influence on the development of early thirteenth-century Scholasticism. He was as famous as a scientist and physician as well as a philosopher, and his medical writings were widely used down to modern times.

According to Avicenna, it is in the science of Being (metaphysics) that the existence of God must be demonstrated. Therefore, he prefers the proof for the existence of God from the possible character of things in the world rather than from

[50] F. Rahman, *Prophecy in Islam*, p. 25.
[51] The degree of beatitude is thus a function of the degree of cultivation. This becomes quite clear in later writers, e.g., Levi ben Gerson.
[52] See his autobiography, trans. A. J. Arberry, in *Avicenna on Theology*, London 1951. Another translation into French is in Avicenna, *Le Livre de Science*, Paris 1955, Vol. I.

arguments taken from natural science (e.g., the argument from physical motion to a First Mover). Accordingly, he begins his reflections by a careful and detailed analysis of the notion of *Being*.[53] This part of Avicenna's philosophy is both the most important and the most difficult to grasp. For it is clear from all his writings on the subject of metaphysics that Being, as well as the principal terms associated with it (*necessary*, *possible*, etc.), does not admit of either definition or description. *Being* cannot be defined because there is no concept more general than *Being* in terms of which it could be defined; again it cannot be described because nothing is better known than *Being* (and *descriptions*, according to Avicenna, state properties of a thing in order that we may have some knowledge of it when we do not know its essence. Since there is nothing cognitively more primitive than *Being*, a description leading to a knowledge of *Being* cannot be found).[54]

That *Being* is the primary notion is argued by Avicenna in a number of ways. One of these, while not entirely original, is elaborated by Avicenna in his own way and is of importance for his psychology as well as his metaphysics. This is the argument of the "flying man." Suppose that a man were to exist anew with full powers of understanding but suspended in space in such a way that he could not perceive any part of his body nor be stimulated by any of his senses, he would still know that he *existed*.[55] This shows, not only that man's

[53] Avicenna gives several statements of his metaphysical views: The main and longest account is in *The Book of Healing* (sc. of the Soul) (*Kitab al-Šifā*), an encyclopaedia which contains a metaphysics, physics, psychology, etc. The short compendium of this work is the *Book of Salvation* (*Kitab al-Najāt*). In addition, there are two other outlines of his entire philosophy: *The Books of Directives and Remarks* (*Kitab al-Išarat wa-l-Tanbihat*) and a work in Persian *The Book of Science* (*Danesh-nâmè*). The metaphysical, physical, psychological parts of the "Book of Healing" were translated into Latin in the twelfth century, parts of the "Salvation" into Latin and French in recent times. There are also French translations of the other aforementioned works.

[54] *Le Livre de Science* (*Danesh nâmè*), I, 94.

[55] Ibn Sina, *Le Livre des directives et remarques*, trans. A. M. Goichon, Paris 1951, pp. 303-309; cf. the same argument used in Avicenna's great

self-knowledge does not depend on a prior knowledge of his actions or sense-experiences, but also that the primary concept is that of *Being*. Now as primary and nongeneric, *Being* can and must be known without definition. We can, of course, say something about *Being* and the concepts of *Unity*, *Possibility*, *Necessity*, and *Essence* which are associated with *Being*. But we cannot give either a definition or descriptions.[56]

Being is used, in its most general sense, to include any object of discourse and is applied in an analogical sense to each member of the hierarchy of *Being* starting from God, and going on through created substances without matter, substances conjoined to matter, forms of corporal things, and matter. *Being* is applied also to objects of consciousness even though they have no counterpart in the world outside of consciousness (e.g., fictions of imagination).

Now *Being* belongs to a thing *per se* in which case it is a substance, or accidentally, in which case it is an accident. These represent degrees of being. The most important division of *Being*, however, is between essence and existence. Avicenna deals with this distinction at length in all his philosophical works. A few characterizations of this distinction must suffice here.

In order to grasp the distinction[57] we must consider that some characteristics belong to the nature of a thing as explicitly

Metaphysics, which is translated by Goichon (*La Distinction*, p. 14) and E. Gilson (*Les Sources greco-arabes de l'augustinisme avicennisant*, Archives d'histoire litteraire et doctrinale du moyen âge, 1929-1930, pp. 40-41 for the Latin text). It also occurs in the psychological part of the Najāt (See F. Rahman, *Avicenna's Psychology*, London 1952, pp. 10-11.) The source of this argument is Plotinus (*Enneads*, IV, 8, 1) and, ultimately, perhaps Plato (cf. *Theaetetus*, 185-186).

[56] The difference between *definition* and *description* was introduced by the Stoics, and was well-known in Islam through Galen and Alexandrian commentators. See *'Išārāt*, trans. Goichon, pp. 106-107; *Danesh nâmè, Le Livre de Science*, vol. 1, p. 94.

[57] Goichon, *La Distinction*. For a criticism of this point of view, see F. Rahman, *Essence and Existence in Avicenna*, Medieval and Renaissance Studies, Warburg Institute, London 1958, IV, 1-16. The distinction appears to have been derived from Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics*, II, 92^{b}9-20; I, 2,

constituting its nature, others belong to it as properties which are logically connected with this nature. But from the definition of such a nature it cannot be discovered whether or not such a nature exists, i.e., whether it is concretely realized or instantiated. A nature or essence is simply what it is and we cannot know, merely by knowing this "what," whether or not it is instantiated or realized. Hence, because *that something of a given kind exists* is different from *what its nature is*, Avicenna argues that existence is extrinsic to essence. For Avicenna this in turn implies that everything whose essence and existence are thus distinct requires a cause which gives such an essence existence, i.e., brings it into concrete being.

Now to say that existence is external to essence seems to treat existence as an accident and, therefore, as some sort of attribute. But it is not wholly clear that this is Avicenna's intention.[58] What is meant by existence, then, remains somewhat obscure. It is nonetheless true that Avicenna repeatedly asserts in his various philosophical works that existence is an accidental attribute of essence.

Another distinction of *being* related to the one just mentioned is the difference between possible and necessary being. The necessary being (literally "the necessary of existence")[59] is that being, the supposition of whose nonexistence implies a contradiction, whereas in the case of a possible being, no contradiction results whether we suppose it to exist or not to exist.[60] Every being whose essence is not its existence is thus a possible being, whereas a being in which essence and existence are the same is an absolutely necessary being. Yet Avicenna also holds that beings, possible when considered in themselves, are necessary when they are caused to exist by a being which

72ª23-24; Goichon also calls attention to Plotinus, *Enneads*, VI, 11, 6. See her translation of *'Išārāt*, *Le Livre des directives et remarques*, p. 356, n. 1.

[58] See F. Rahman, *op.cit.*, pp. 8-9.

[59] *Wājib al-Wujūd* or *al-Wājib al-Wujūd*.

[60] *Kitab al-Najāt*, 366 (*Metaphysices Compendium*, Lib. 1, 2 Pars, 1 Tract. Cap. 1, Carame 66-68); see Goichon, *La Distinction*, pp. 159ff.

is absolutely necessary. From this it seems to follow that whatever exists and is caused is possible in itself and necessary in virtue of its cause. And so, it would seem, there is no real contingency in Avicenna's universe.

There are two ways by which the existence of the necessary being is established. Usually Avicenna argues from the existence of possible beings to that of a necessary being.[61] We are certain that in this world below (i.e., in the sublunar part of the universe) something exists. Either this thing which exists is possible or absolutely necessary. If it is absolutely necessary then we have proved that there is an absolutely necessary being. Suppose that it is possible. We can show that the existence of anything that, in itself, is possible, ultimately derives from the existence of an absolutely necessary being. For there cannot be an infinite series of merely possible beings each responsible for the existence of another. Since every possible being requires a cause, we must ultimately assume a necessary being which causes all beings which in themselves are merely possible and which yet exist.

Avicenna also suggests another way[62] in one of his works. Although this work was not translated into Latin and so had no influence on the Christian philosophers, it is of interest because it finds a parallel in Duns Scotus[63] whose principal inspiration in metaphysics was certainly those works of Avicenna which were translated into Latin. To prove the existence of

[61] This argument, *ex possibilitate*, is used by Moses Maimonides, *Guide to the Perplexed*, Pt. 2, ch. 10, pp. 152-153 of M. Friedländer's translation, London 1928. It is the third of the "Five Ways" of Thomas Aquinas; see his *S.th.*, 1, q. 2, a. 3. It occurs in Avicenna in the *Metaphysics of the Šifā'*, II, 521; see the translation of M. Horten. In the metaphysics of the *Najāt* (Carame, 91-93), the *Išārāt* (Goichon's translation, pp. 357-360) Goichon also translates the argument from the *Nājāt* (*La Distinction*, ch. 35, pp. 166-167, n. 4).

[62] *Išārāt* (Goichon's translation, *Le Livre des directives et remarques*, pp. 371-372).

[63] See Duns Scotus, *De Primo Principio, Text and Translation*, Evan Roche, Franciscan Institute, St. Bonaventure, N.Y., 1949. E. Gilson, *Avicenne et le point de Départ de Duns Scotus*, AHDL, II (1927), 89-149.

the Necessary Being we need only analyze the idea of Being; we do not have to reflect on anything other than Being itself. Here we understand that Necessary Being contains its own existence, and we see Necessary Being as such. When we contemplate the nature of Being, it attests its own existence. Now since we can obtain the idea of being by knowing our own existence without the aid of our senses, we have a direct intuition of the Necessary Being. Avicenna seems to have supposed that this method is available only to the most just individuals,[64] while others less good must employ the argument from possibility.

The Necessary Being is absolutely *one* and absolutely simple. This Being, identified with God, Allah, is without any essence, properly speaking, and, properly speaking, is not a Substance. Only one such Being is possible. The question arises how the multiplicity of the world can be derived from this unique and absolutely simple Source.

Avicenna's system of the emanation of the universe is clearly derived from Al-Farabi with, of course, some further elaborations. Following the principle that a single simple cause can have but one effect, Avicenna holds that but one being can proceed from the First Being. Plurality is, then, the result of a differentiation existing in the first emanated being. Since it is entirely free from corporeality, it will be an Intellect (or *Intelligence*). God also is an Intelligence, on this consideration, but in God, the knower, the known, and knowing are all one. In the first emanated Intelligence, however, there is an intrinsic multiplicity. For insofar as this Intelligence thinks of its Source, it emanates a second Intelligence. Thinking of itself as necessary (in virtue of the fact that it is necessarily emanated from the absolutely Necessary Being) it emanates the form of the outermost celestial sphere, and thinking of itself as possible (since all but God is, in itself, only possible) it emanates the body of the outermost celestial

[64] Siddīqīn (similar to *zaddukim* in Hebrew).

sphere.[65] This process goes on: the second Intelligence generates a Third Intelligence as well as the matter and form (=soul) of the next outermost sphere (the sphere of the fixed stars), and so on as the Intelligences, souls, and spheres of the five planets, the Sun, and the moon are produced. From the Intelligence which has generated the sphere of the moon comes a final Intelligence which is too far removed from the Source of existence to generate another Intelligence. Each stage in this hierarchy is, so to speak, causally feebler than its predecessor so that the last Intelligence lacks the power to produce another Intelligence. Nevertheless, the last Intelligence is a very important part of Avicenna's cosmology, for from it comes the world of terrestrial matter with its forms.[66] In fact, this last Intelligence, the so-called Agent Intelligence, plays a crucial role in Avicenna's psychology and epistemology.

It must be understood that the emanation of the world from the First Cause is an *eternal* and a *necessitated* process. Hence the dependence of the world upon God is causal, not temporal. This, though formally incompatible with the literal meaning of the Koran, is very clear in Avicenna's discussion. God, by knowing his own essence, knows the effects which necessarily follow from Him. He knows the singular things insofar as they are universal, that is to say, by knowing the universal causes and their mutual concurrences.[67]

[65] The account of this process can be found in the *Metaphysics of the Sifā'* (*Metaphysica*, IX, 6); see M. Horten's translation *Die Metaphysik Avicennas*, pp. 602-603; in the *Nājāt* (see trans. of Carame, *Metaphysices Compendium*, pp. 194ff). The best discussions I have found are in E. Gilson, AHDL, I (1926), especially pp. 37ff.; and Goichon, *La Distinction*, pp. 238-244. As Mlle Goichon remarks, this is perhaps the best-known part of Avicenna. It is expounded by Al-Ghazali (in his *Tendencies of Philosophers* and in his *Incoherences of Philosophers*; see *Averroes' Tahafut al-tahafut*, trans. S. Van den Bergh, p. 109), and discussed and rejected by Averroes (*Tahafut*, *op.cit.* p. 111), and expounded and rejected by Thomas Aquinas (SCG, II, q. 42).

[66] See *Išārāt*, p. 175 (Goichon, *Livre des directives et remarques*, p. 431).

[67] The text of the *Šifā'* and *Nājāt* on this subject is translated by Goichon, *La Distinction*, pp. 266-272; cf. Carame, pp. 118-125. M. Horten, *Die*

But this view of things is impossible for an orthodox Muslim to accept, and the eternity and necessity of the world as well as the doctrine that God knows particulars only by knowing their universal causes will be attacked by Al-Ghazali.[68] Certainly Avicenna emphatically affirms that God knows *all* particular things and events. At the same time, it is difficult to see how his system can prove this or even make a place for it. Some of the Christian Scholastics (e.g., Thomas Aquinas), will object that knowledge of particulars through their universal causes is unsatisfactory.[69] The main difference between Aquinas and Avicenna is that, for the former, God acts freely and man's actions are not all necessitated, whereas Avicenna holds to the absolute necessitation of all events.

The sublunar world of matter is a world in which there is constant change, the coming-into-being and perishing of individual material things. How does this come about? Avicenna must explain (1) how there is a plurality of individuals of the same form, and (2) how a given form comes to characterize a given part of matter.

Avicenna accounts for the plurality of individuals of the same nature by matter existing under determined dimensions. Thus when matter is determinate in quantity, position, etc., it suffices to differentiate one individual from another in the same species. In a word, determinate matter is the principle of individuation. The forms of all material things are radiated from the agent Intelligence, the Giver of Forms (*Donator Formarum*). That a given bit of matter will receive one such form is determined by its "preparation," i.e., when there is a particular mixture (of determinate proportions) of the four elements, this material mixture is prepared to receive one of

Metaphysik Avicennas, Halle 1907, p. 522, lines 16-22, and generally pp. 522-528.

[68] See his "Deliverance from Error," translated by W. Montgomery Watt in *The Faith and Practice of Al-Ghāzalī*, London 1953, pp. 37-38.

[69] See SCG, I, 63; *S.th.*, I, q. 14, a. 11.

the forms constantly radiated from the Agent Intelligence.[70]

Avicenna's doctrine of the human soul and of human knowledge must now concern us. I have already alluded to the argument that man can know that he exists without recourse to his bodily senses. For Avicenna this not only supplies man with a direct knowledge of existence but also assures him that his soul is a substance capable of existing apart from the body. His argumentation reminds the reader of Descartes's radical distinction of body and mind and of Descartes's proof of his own existence. Avicenna devotes some time, in fact, to proving the substantiality of the soul from the unity of consciousness. From this substantial character of the soul, Avicenna deduces its immortality.[71]

There are vegetative souls (of plants), animal souls (with motive and perceptive powers), and rational souls (of human beings). Now the rational human soul has, so to speak, two faces. The one face, the practical faculty, looks down to the body and the external physical world. Its function is to govern and direct the body. The other face, the theoretical faculty, has the function of looking upward to the celestial world whence come knowledge and, ultimately, blessedness.

The human intellect begins as a material intellect and, under the action of sense experience and the illumination of the Agent Intelligence, becomes necessarily the intellect in effect, the intellect in habit, and the acquired intellect. In this final stage, human potentiality effects some kind of contact with "the first principles of all existence."[72] This will be clearer when an account of the relation of perception and knowledge is set forth.

[70] For some further details of this complex theory see E. Gilson, *Pourquoi St. Thomas a critiqué St. Augustin*, AHDL, I (1926), p. 38.

[71] He denies the Platonic doctrines of preexistence of the soul and transmigration. See, for all this, F. Rahman's *Avicenna's Psychology*, London 1952, chs. 10-15. (This is a translation of the psychological part of the *Nājāt*.)

[72] Rahman, *op.cit.*, ch. 5.

The external senses are affected by the action of physical objects, and leave impressions in the imagination. Man has a further capacity (the estimative faculty, which is shared with other animals) of discerning "nonmaterial intentions," that is, that certain external objects are beneficial and that others are to be avoided. While imagination can represent objects even in their absence, the images of things in consciousness are presented with all their sensible details. In other words, these faculties cannot separate the forms in abstraction from their material and accidental accompaniments. Now while perception and induction are certainly aids to human reason in acquiring knowledge, the forms of things must be abstracted to perfect this knowledge. Avicenna speaks of the human reason abstracting these forms, but this, as Rahman has pointed out,[73] is only a figure of speech. For the images in consciousness only "prepare" the soul for the reception of these forms which are radiated into human consciousness by the Agent Intelligence. Thus the Agent Intelligence not only gives forms to things in the material world, but is also the source of forms as we cognize them in our consciousness. When, therefore, we cease to be actually thinking of a given form (e.g., the form of horse), the human intellect ceases to have that form in itself. In order to think of such a form again, consciousness must be again prepared by the images of things in order to receive the appropriate radiation from the Agent Intelligence.

The form which is thus received is considered in itself as an essence. From the standpoint of the concept in the mind this essence is *one*; as duplicated in the physical world (as many times as there are individuals possessing such a form), it is many. But considered as an essence, it is neither one nor many but simply the essence or common nature. Avicenna's famous formula: *Equinitas est equinitas tantum* (Horseness is simply horseness) means that an essence, considered in itself

[73] F. Rahman, *Prophecy in Islam*, London 1958, p. 15.

(i.e., in its content), is neither one nor many but simply what its logical content reveals.[74]

This doctrine that a common nature considered in itself is neither one nor many is part of the solution of the problem of universals which was to be adopted by many scholastics in Christendom in the thirteenth century. Both Aquinas and Scotus use it in different ways to deal with the question. On the other side, both Al-Ghazali and William Ockham reject it in their nominalistic resolutions of the problem.

The Islamic philosophers of the Eastern part of the Islamic world were constantly opposed by the orthodox. Perhaps the effective culmination of this opposition is to be seen in the attack on philosophy by Abu Hamid Muhammad al-Ghazali (b. 1058 in Persia–d. 1111). The nature and purpose of this attack was explained by Al-Ghazali in an autobiographical account of his intellectual career, the "Deliverance from Error."[75] In the interests of orthodox Muslim doctrine, Al-Ghazali set out to master the doctrines of the philosophers and the several philosophical sciences (logic, physics, and metaphysics). The three points of the philosophers which he singled out for criticism and refutation are: the denial of bodily resurrection; the denial that God knows particulars (i.e., that God's knowledge comprises only universals); and the affirmation that the world is eternal.[76] Al-Ghazali also engaged in criticizing certain religious sects in Islam but this is of little interest to philosophy.

[74] F. Rahman, *Avicenna's Psychology*, ch. 7, p. 38; see Goichon, *La Distinction*, pp. 71ff. for translations of the passages in the *Šifā'* pertinent to this question.

[75] Translated in Watt's *The Faith and Practice of Al-Ghāzalī*, pp. 19-86.

[76] See *The Faith and Practice of Al-Ghāzalī*, pp. 37-38, and also Averroes' *Traité Décisif* (*Fasl al-maqāl*), ed. and trans. Léon Gauthier, 3rd edition, Alger 1948, p. 11. "Abu-Hâmid [Al-Ghazali] has formally accused [Al-Farabi and Ibn Sina] of infidelity in his *Incoherence of Philosophers* on three points, namely, the affirmation of the eternity of the world, that God does not know particulars, and about the interpretation of passages of the Revelation with regard to the resurrection of the body and with regard to several matters of the future life."

As he explained in the *Deliverance from Error*, it is necessary first to expound the doctrines accurately and then to criticize them. Accordingly he wrote an extensive work *The Tendencies of the Philosophers* which is mainly an exposition of Avicenna's views. This was followed by *The Incoherence of the Philosophers* (*Tahafut al-falasifah*).[77]

This attack on philosophy is a very remarkable work. Its earliest modern students recognized the similarity of Al-Ghazali's critique of causality with that of the French Occasionalists and Hume.[78] But it is replete with acute criticisms of many other philosophical doctrines, such as the doctrine of potentiality and actuality, the doctrine of real universals, and so on. I shall restrict myself to an account of the attack on causality which best illustrates the acuteness of Al-Ghazali as a critic.

Following the line already taken by the Asharite Mutakallimun, Al-Ghazali holds that God is the only real cause, and that the apparent and alleged causal connections among things other than God are really due to God's direct action.

On the other hand, one of the essential doctrines of the philosophers is that necessary causal connections are to be encountered throughout the universe. We must not forget that Avicenna regarded causal connection as necessary. Al-Ghazali attempts to show that the arguments of the philosophers to this end come short. The philosophers, especially

[77] The *Tendencies* was translated into Latin by Dominic Gundisalvi in the twelfth century and so was known to the thirteenth-century Scholastics. The *Incoherence*, however, was not translated into Latin until 1328. As the preface of the former work was omitted from Gundisalvi's translation (a preface which explained the purely preliminary and expository character of the work), the thirteenth-century scholastics read Al-Ghazali as one of the "Philosophers" and did not realize that he was actually an enemy of philosophy. The *Tahafut* has recently been translated by A. Kamali: *Al-Ghazali, Tahafut al-Falasifah*, Pakistan Philosophical Congress (Mohammed Ashraf Darr, 8 Meleo Road, Lahore, India), 1958. The important sections are reproduced by Averroes. See *Averroes' Tahafut al-tahafut*, trans. S. Van den Bergh.

[78] E. G. Renan's famous statement about the critique of causality: "Hume n'a dit plus." Cf. Sir William Hamilton, *Lectures on Metaphysics*, Boston 1859, pp. 541-542.

Al-Farabi and Avicenna, held that the connection between causes and effects is one of logical necessity, in other words, that the existence of a cause without its appropriate effect (or *vice versa*) is impossible. In the interests of the religion of Islam this argument must be contested. For unless it is false, miracles are impossible, since a miracle consists of the divine interruption of the common course of nature.

There are a number of arguments which serve our purpose. First of all there is the logical argument. Impossibility consists in the simultaneous affirmation and negation of the same thing, and all impossibilities ultimately amount solely to the assertion of a self-contradictory statement.[79] It is also the case that all necessity reduces to logical necessity[80] since the necessary is that the denial of which is impossible. If we apply this to the causal nexus we get the following result: "According to us the connection between what is usually believed to be a cause and what is believed to be an effect is not a necessary connection; each of the two things has its own individuality and is not the other, and neither the affirmation nor the negation, neither the existence nor non-existence of the one is implied in the affirmation, negation, existence and non-existence of the other. . . ."[81] Attempts to meet this argument are countered by pointing out that the necessity of causal connection (i.e., the impossibility that a certain event is not causally connected with another event), depends on what is conceptually included in the descriptions of the events in question. Events can be so described that the existence of one involves that of the other.[82] But this depends on the description, not on the events themselves.[83]

There is also an empirical argument against the alleged

[79] Van den Bergh, *op.cit.*, pp. 52-53, 328-329.

[80] Van den Bergh, *op.cit.*, p. 60.

[81] Van den Bergh, *op.cit.*, p. 316.

[82] Van den Bergh, *op.cit.*, p. 329.

[83] Thus, if we describe a man as a father, this description logically connects that man with a child.

empirical evidence for causal connection. The philosophers appeal to observation to show, for example, that it is the contact of a flame with a piece of cotton that brings about combustion of the cotton. But "observation proves only a simultaneity, not a causation, and in reality there is no other cause but God."[84] Some passages of the *Incoherence* seem to suggest that causal belief is associated with habit, but it is not wholly clear that Al-Ghazali has anticipated Hume to this extent.[85]

This illustrates the sort of destructive criticism which Al-Ghazali brings against all of the contentions of philosophers. The use of philosophical methods to discredit philosophy was not invented by Al-Ghazali. Not only was he indebted to the Mutakallimun, but they, in turn, to the Christians and ultimately to the Greeks. The phenomenon of a philosophical attack on philosophy is itself not unique. The ancient Sceptics used it, Judah Halevi later imitated Al-Ghazali in this endeavor, and we find several instances in the fourteenth century (especially, Nicolas of Autrecourt). Scepticism in the interests of religion occur again in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in Italy, France, and England.

Al-Ghazali's critique was certainly one of the causes of the decline of philosophical speculation in the Islamic East. He achieved great fame for his *Revival of the Religious Sciences* and encouraged orthodoxy and mysticism at the expense of philosophy. The next important philosophers in Islam flourished in Muslim Spain in the twelfth century.

The earliest philosophers in Spain were, like those of the Islamic East deeply influenced by Neoplatonic works. But, in

[84] Van den Bergh, *op.cit.*, p. 317; see also the Latin translation of Averroes' *Tahafut*: *Destructio Destructionis* in *Aristotelis Opera*, Venice 1574 (Junta) Vol. IX, "Et ipsi (sc. philosophi) non habent rationem visi testimonium adventus combustionis cum tactu ignis. Sed testimonium indicat, quod advenit cum eo, et non indicat, quod advenit ex eo, et quod non sit causa alia praeter eum."

[85] See Van den Bergh, *op.cit.*, p. 324, and M. C. Hernandez, *Historia de la filosofia español*, Madrid 1957, I, 164.

the case of the Spanish philosophers, a work ascribed to Empedocles (actually a Neoplatonic compilation) was very influential. The main difference between the emanation theories which were adopted in the East and those which came out of Pseudo-Empedocles was the theory that the first emanation from God was prime matter. This doctrine is defended by Ibn Masarra of Cordova (883-931). It was also adopted by the Jewish philosopher, Ibn Gabirol, of whom I shall say something later.

The first important Islamic philosopher in Spain was Ibn Bajja (Avempace) who lived from about 1070 until 1138. Many of his writings are lost, but there remain two works of importance: *The Regime of the Solitary* and *Treatise on the Union of the Intellect with Man.*[86] He was one of the links between Al-Farabi and Ibn Rushd (Averroes), and his views on physical questions are discussed by the latter. The main concern of Ibn Bajja is how man can achieve his ultimate aim, blessedness, which is to know and love God. While the other philosophers in Islam all maintained that human happiness can be achieved only in existing political states and had made it clear that the philosopher shares political responsibilities with other members of the community in which he finds himself, Ibn Bajja is almost or entirely alone in holding that the quest for happiness must be the result of the philosopher's own efforts. The imperfection of existing states forces the philosopher to pursue his ultimate happiness by himself or with a few like himself who share his aims.

Only human actions can determine purposes or ends. Now the solitary philosopher should set for himself the goal of perceiving spiritual things. The further a substance is removed

[86] The first part of Ibn Bajja's treatise on the "Regime of the Solitary" has been translated by Dunlop, in the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (1945), pp. 61-81; E. I. J. Rosenthal "The Place of Politics in the Philosophy of Ibn Bajja," *Islamic Culture*, XXV (1951), 187ff., has discussed the doctrine in general terms. S. Munk, *Mélanges de philosophie juive et arabe*, pp. 383ff. gives an extensive analysis.

from anything corporeal, the more it merits the term spiritual; and the things which most merit such a designation are the Agent Intelligence (also called "Active Intellect") and the substances which move the heavenly spheres. Altogether there are four kinds of spiritual forms: the Intelligences which move the spheres; the active and emanated intellect; the forms of material things, which are abstracted from physical objects; and finally the ideas of the common sense (*sensus communis*), of imagination, and of memory.

By means of sensation, memory, etc., we are led to the higher forms. Now, whereas forms abstracted from matter exist in the human mind in a condition different from their existence combined with matter, it is altogether different in the case of forms which never existed in matter. If we know such completely separate forms, their existence in our consciousness is the same as their existence in themselves. Hence, when man's potential intellect is actualized and becomes acquired intellect, man knows himself as an intellectual substance. But the acquired intellect now is, as it were, the substratum for the higher spiritual forms, especially for the Agent Intelligence.

The Agent Intelligence is an indivisible purely spiritual form and all the specific forms of material things are in it as one undivided form. When, therefore, we finally arrive at a conception of this unity of all specific forms, namely, the conception of the Agent Intelligence, we know it as it is in itself, we are united with it, and thus have achieved the final end, and human blessedness. So by essentially intellectual means and without any antiphilosophical mysticism,[87] Ibn Bajja holds man can achieve union with the Agent Intelligence and so beatitude. The two characteristics which appear to differentiate the views of Ibn Bajja from most of the other

[87] It is true, of course, that prophetic inspiration achieves this union without the usual intellectual stages of the process. Cf. Munk's translations of ch. 6 of the "Regime" in *Mélanges de philosophie juive et arabe*, p. 399. Munk's account of Ibn Bajja is the best I am acquainted with.

philosophers (*falasifah*) of Islam are that (1) philosophical knowledge *can* be achieved outside existing society, and (2) it can be achieved rationally and without special benefit of Islam.

The Spanish philosopher Ibn Tofail (1100-1184), known to the Latin world as Abubacer, provides a version of the solitary metaphysician, doubtless influenced by Ibn Bajja, but presenting some interesting features of its own. In the form of a philosophical novel, Ibn Tofail presents his philosophy in the biography of *Hayy ibn Yaqzan* (The Living One, Son of the Vigilant).[88]

Again and again, Ibn Tofail emphasizes that multiplicity reduces to unity so that the multiplicity of individuals reduces to the unity of their species, and, by the extension of this notion, the whole world, vital as well as inanimate, has a unity.[89] This world requires a cause because all its contents are produced anew. It makes no difference whether the world as a whole is eternal or not, for in either case there must be an Agent (which is neither a body nor something joined to a body) to which all things owe their existence. Hence, the world is logically, if not temporally, dependent on God. Moreover, the design we discover in the world attests to the intelligence of its cause. God is pure existence, a Being existing necessarily by its essence. Since man can comprehend this completely incorporeal Being, his own essence must be incorporeal, and because the incorporeal is incorruptible, man's essence cannot be dissolved. Knowing that God exists, man desires to behold God continuously. The method of coming

[88] For an English translation, see *The History of Hayy ibn Yaqzan*, trans. S. Ockley, revised by A. S. Fulton, London 1929. This has the defect that it lacks Ibn Tofail's important introduction. The best and most reliable translation is that of Léon Gauthier, *Hayy ibn Yaqdhân, roman philosophique d'Ibn Thofaïl*, Beirut 1936. The Latin translation of Pococke of 1671 and 1700 is thought by some to have influenced Defoe in his *Robinson Crusoe*.

[89] "That all multiplicity reduces to unity" is the Neoplatonic doctrine that the reality of the multiple depends on some unity. See, e.g., Proclus, *Elements of Theology*, I, I.

to know God consists in abstracting from one's own and all other limited essences so as to see only the one permanent Being.

The problem of the complete identification of the individual human self with God now confronts Ibn Tofail. On the one hand, it can be argued that one who has knowledge of the Divine Essence, has that essence, and since this Essence can be nowhere save with Itself, and as the presence of the Essence is the Essence, it would appear that the individual is identical with the divine Essence. On the other hand, "We cannot say of these separate essences which know the essence of this True One, that they are *many* or *one*, because they are immaterial. There is *multiplicity* because of the separation of one essence from another, and there can be no unity but by *conjunction*, and none of these can be understood without compound notions which are mixed with matter. But the explication of things in this place is very straight and difficult; because if you go about to express, by way of multitude, or in the plural, according to our present way of speaking, this insinuates a notion of *multiplicity*, whereas they are far from being many; and if you speak of them by separation, or in the singular, this insinuates a notion of *unity*, whereas they are far from being one."[90] So Ibn Tofail concludes that there is, in some sense, a union with the Divine Essence, and in some sense a multiplicity of human essences each, in someway, united with the Divine Essence.

Ibn Rushd (Averroes) is, after Avicenna, the Muslim philosopher whose works had the greatest influence in medieval Christendom. A younger contemporary of Ibn Tofail, with whom he was associated, Ibn Rushd (born in Cordova in 1126), was a judge and a physician as well as a philosopher, and the greatest commentator on Aristotle since the close of

[90] Ockley-Fulton translation, p. 144; cf. Plotinus, *Enneads*, v, 7, 1. See *Plotinus*, by A. H. Armstrong, London 1953, p. 82, "We ought not to be afraid of the infinity which this introduces into the intelligible world; for it is all in an indivisible unity. . . ."

the schools in Athens in the sixth century. Although the jurists and the theologians of his time made Muslim Spain an uncongenial place for philosophy, Ibn Rushd was protected by his royal patrons. His temporary disgrace and exile must be explained as a political gesture of his patrons to protect him from the zealots. He died in 1198.

His commentaries on Aristotle won him the title of "The Commentator" (Dante, who imaginatively encountered him along with Euclid, Galen, Aristotle, Avicenna, Plato, *et al.* in Limbo, calls him the one "who wrote the great comment.")[91] His attitude toward Aristotle was evidently one of unbounded admiration. Scattered throughout his commentaries are extravagant praises of the Philosopher. The passages most often referred to in this connection are in the prologue to his commentary on Aristotle's *Physics*. There are other instances of it in his commentary on Aristotle's *On the Parts of Animals* and *On the Generation of Animals*.[92] Ibn Rushd expresses himself on the matter as follows: Aristotle discovered physics, logic, and metaphysics because nothing written on these subjects before him could be considered a satisfactory foundation of these sciences. Moreover, Aristotle has completed these sciences, for, when his works appeared, men turned away from earlier investigations and no one in fifteen hundred years has been able to add anything to them that is worthy of notice. To find all this in one man is so remarkable that one must consider him almost divine. We incessantly thank God who has given

[91] Dante, *Inferno*, Canto IV, line 144. Ibn Rushd wrote three kinds of commentary on each of Aristotle's main works; The *Lesser Commentary* (or Epitome), the *Middle Commentary* which paraphrases the text, and the *Great Commentary* which is a detailed discussion of every paragraph. The style of the *Lesser Commentary* was adopted by earlier thirteenth-century Christian writers (e.g., Albertus Magnus), while Thomas Aquinas adopted the style and method of the *Greater Commentary* in his *Commentaries on Aristotle*. The Jewish philosophical authors of the thirteenth and later centuries also adopted the style of Averroes' commentaries.

[92] See S. Munk, *Mélanges de philosophie juive et arabe*, pp. 316, 411. See also, E. Gilson, *History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages*, New York 1954, p. 220 and p. 642 n. 17.

us such a man, from whose works we can learn all that can be known. As Aristotle reached the pinnacle of human intellectual perfection, so is his doctrine the supreme truth. The reason for this is simple: Aristotle discovered both the art of demonstration and the basic premisses of the sciences, that is, he found propositions that are necessary, essential, and primary from which, by absolutely certain deductions, the irrefutable conclusions follow. No perception of the senses, therefore, can conflict with these demonstrations.

The question immediately posed by such approbation from an avowed Muslim is whether there can be a conflict between scientifically demonstrated propositions and the tenets of Islam. This question has been answered in many ways.[93] The important point to make here is the difference between the Ibn Rushd of legend and the Ibn Rushd of fact. In the Christian world of the thirteenth century he was made responsible for the doctrine that the world was eternal, that God does not know singulars (individual things) and does not exercise particular providence, that there is only one intellect for all men, that personal survival after death is impossible, and that there are truths of philosophy which are theologically false (and *vice versa*).[94] We shall indicate how the Ibn Rushd of fact stands in the face of these indictments. It is necessary to say that the interpretation offered here is only one of many possible interpretations, and that there is a profound division of opinion among the closest students of the subject.[95]

The first point to be made is that Ibn Rushd explicitly

[93] For a summary of the several *recent* interpretations, see Hernandez, *Historia de la filosofia española*, II, 81-103.

[94] See, e.g., Thomas Aquinas, SCG, III, 76 and I, 63; *S.th.*, I, 76, 2; I, 117, 1; and I, 46, 1.

[95] See E. I. J. Rosenthal, *Political Thought in Medieval Islam*, p. 177. "(Ibn Rushd) was a Moslem first and a disciple of Plato, Aristotle and their commentators second, but I do not deny that Ibn Rushd is not always constant and unambiguous." See also Léon Gauthier, *Ibn Rochd*, pp. 32-33 and S. Van den Bergh, *op.cit.*, II, 203-204 and *passim.*

denied the so-called doctrine of double truth, i.e., that there are truths of philosophy which are formally inconsistent with truths of theology. "If these religious precepts are of good quality and if they invite us to the speculation which leads to the knowledge of true Being, then we Muslims know decisively that speculation based on demonstration cannot lead to contradiction of the teachings of the Divine Law. For truth cannot contradict truth; rather truth agrees with truth and truth testifies in favor of truth."[96] If there is an apparent conflict between the Divine Law (Koran) and proved philosophical truth, the Law admits of an interpretation according to the canons of interpreting the Arabic tongue. Such an interpretation sometimes involves passing from the literal to the metaphorical or figurative use of an expression. But there is no possibility of a genuine conflict. We may well wonder how Ibn Rushd was thought to have held to the double-truth doctrine. Max Horten has shown how some of the later translations of Ibn Rushd may have led to such a misinterpretation. Averroes was an avowed enemy of the Mutakallimun, the followers of Kalam or orthodox theology. When the Arabic text states that some philosophically untenable doctrine is valid according to theology, i.e., Kalam, the Latin text reads "*Hoc est verum secundum theologiam*," and it was perhaps such misleading renderings that were partially responsible for the misapprehension. But this is not the whole story. Some of the philosophers in thirteenth-century medieval universities were said to have professed that certain propositions of Aristotle, though demonstrable according to natural reason, were plainly contradictory to the Christian faith. There is little doubt that this doctrine was actually maintained, although it is difficult to identify those who maintained it. There is, likewise, little doubt that the commentaries of Ibn Rushd in their Latin version were partially responsible for this view.

This possibility of holding that Aristotle's philosophy is

[96] Averroes' *Traité Décisif*, ed. and trans. Gauthier, p. 8.

true and yet does not conflict with Islamic beliefs has been explained lucidly by Leon Gauthier, and it will make Ibn Rushd's position clearer if Gauthier's theory is set forth. The only way recognized in Islam to resolve conflicts about belief was to appeal to *ijma* (the universal consensus of Islam, which for practical expediency was interpreted to mean the consensus of the learned and competent men of a given epoch). In cases of dogmatic conflict over theoretical principles, in contrast to matters of religious practice, the consensus had to be *proved*. But this law again was practically impossible to administer because it was impossible to set precise limits to the epoch, to determine who was competent: because of the plurality of sects and political authorities in the Islamic world (which at Ibn Rushd's time extended from Muslim Spain to China) there was no *de facto* religious authority qualified and empowered to interpret ambiguous texts, define dogmas, and make adjustments between religion and philosophy. Furthermore, there is, according to Gauthier (although here some authorities are in disagreement) nothing in Islam to correspond to the Mysteries of the Christian faith; hence, Gauthier concludes, the Muslim philosopher was free to interpret the Koran in the light of reason. Now it is true that the zealots among the jurists and theologians as well as a fanatical caliph or emir were free to denounce or persecute the philosopher. But the situation in medieval Islam was sufficiently different from that of medieval Christendom to account for the possibility of an Al-Farabi, an Ibn Sina, or, above all, an Ibn Rushd.

In his treatise on the agreement between religion and philosophy, Ibn Rushd devised an unusual theory about the nature of revelation (Koran). In the effort to end theological debates which had produced a multiplicity of warring sects, as well as to defend philosophy against charges of heresy, Ibn Rushd held the following views: The Koran exhorts us to study philosophy. It makes no difference whether our predecessors were Muslims or not if they discovered truth which

can aid a Muslim in his philosophical pursuits. The ancient philosophers had made a thorough investigation of the sciences, and we must examine what they said, accept what is true, and reject the false.

There are three different kinds of men, i.e., three different human temperaments: those who form judgments by philosophically demonstrative reasoning, those who are convinced by dialectical arguments, and finally those who are brought to assent by exhortation.[97] The Koran was intended for all men and so invites all to study it, according to their capacities and temperaments. Here we must remember that, as a Muslim, Ibn Rushd held to the equality of all members of Islam and as a student of Plato and Aristotle, to the importance of the community for all human life. As he also maintained that religion, in addition to being true, was indispensable to the welfare of the state, he was obliged to adopt some view that would make a place for the philosopher without jeopardizing civil peace and without weakening the effect of religion on the masses. It is just as well then, he maintains, to restrict philosophy to those who are capable of it, and to appeal to men of other capacities by dialectic or exhortation. The Mutakallimun are objectionable precisely because they attempted to bring philosophical issues to the masses who were incapable of understanding them.[98] The deepest truths of religion are understood in their purest form only by the philosophers. But as few can attain to this, the Koran was deliberately revealed so that the humblest intellects could benefit by it.

This doctrine does not mean that there are no limits to the philosopher's interpretation of revelation. Ibn Rushd explicitly states that anyone who holds that the doctrine of future

[97] The origin of this classification is probably due to Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, Book Alpha, 3, 995[a]6, and to the Stoics. See S. Van den Bergh, *op.cit.*, II, p. 98.

[98] Of course, Ibn Rushd also objects to the Mutakallimun because they used arguments that were, in his opinion, at best dialectical and at worst sophistic.

rewards and punishments was taught merely in order to safeguard the stability of society is an infidel and deserves to be executed. He defends the philosophers against the charges of Al-Ghazali, and holds firmly that God both knows and provides for particular things in the world, and that there is an afterlife.[99]

In his philosophy, Ibn Rushd follows Aristotle as closely as possible. He rejects Al-Ghazali's denial of causal connection on the grounds that (1) "one who denies the effect of the causes or the results of them, also denies philosophy and all the sciences. For science is the knowledge of things by their causes, and philosophy is the knowledge of hidden causes. To deny the causes altogether is a thing altogether unintelligible to human reason. It is to deny the creator, not seen by us. For the unseen in this matter must always be understood by a reference to the seen,"[100] i.e., a knowledge that there is a God can be obtained only by an inference from observed causal connection to the First Cause; (2) the occurrence of necessary causal connection is self-evident, i.e., the existence of causes and effects is a primitive principle whose denial leads to absurdities.[101] Thus Ibn Rushd does not attempt to prove the

[99] The sources of this account are principally:
1) Ibn Rochd, *Traité Décisif*, ed. and trans. Léon Gauthier, *op.cit.*
2) Averroes' *Tahafut al-tahafut*, trans. S. Van den Bergh, *op.cit.*
3) *The Philosophy and Theology of Averroes*, trans. Mohammed Jamil-Ur-Rehman, Baroda 1921. (This is a translation of the *Decisive Treatise*, *The Appendix*, and *An Exposition of the Methods of Arguments Concerning the Belief of the Truth*, etc. There is also a more reliable Spanish translation by M. Alfonso (*Teologia de Averroes*, Madrid 1947). Only one of these tracts, the *Exposition of Methods of Arguments* was available to the Christians in the Middle Ages in Raymond Martin's *Pugio fidei*.

[100] *Exposition of the Methods of Arguments*, (Rehman, *op.cit.*) pp. 276-277.

[101] See Van den Bergh, *op.cit.*, pp. 318-319, 273: "If life could proceed from the lifeless, then the existent might proceed from anything whatever, and there would be no congruity between causes and effects. . . ." This argument has its origin in the Aristotelian principle that the effect must be like its cause, as Van den Bergh (II, 150, n. 4) observes. In statement, however, it is much closer to Epicurus, in *Diogenes Laertius*, x, 39 (cf. Lucretius, *De rerum natura*, I, 125).

principle of causality, but rather defends it dialectically, since he holds (following Aristotle here) that absolutely first principles cannot be proved. He simply takes it as self-evident.[102]

With the principle of causality, Ibn Rushd proceeds to establish the existence of God. Against Avicenna he argues that the existence of God should be proved in physics, not in metaphysics, for he rejects the distinction of essence and existence on which the metaphysical proofs of Avicenna depend.[103] Against some of his predecessors, he holds that the arguments from the order and mutual adjustment of things, while instructive and persuasive, are not absolutely conclusive; it does not absolutely prove the existence of God but rather enables us better to understand the divine wisdom.[104] The only absolutely demonstrative argument for the existence of God is Aristotle's proof in the eighth book of his *Physics* to the effect that the eternity of matter, motion, and time require a first unmoved mover, a pure form.[105]

God is an Intelligence because (as with other Islamic philosophers) every Pure Form (i.e., form unmixed with matter) is an Intelligence.[106] He is active in some way for otherwise He would be superfluous and the highest imitation of Him could not be a form of activity.[107]

As the First Mover, God is the cause of all celestial movements. Ibn Rushd opposes the emanation doctrines of Al-Farabi and Avicenna, and holds instead that a multiplicity of

[102] Cf. M. Horten, *Die Hauptehren Averroes nach seiner Widerlegung Gazalis*, Bonn 1913, p. 296: "Eine Ableitungsmöglichkeit des Kausalgesetzes leugnet Averroes also; denn der hier genannte Syllogismus würde den Grund für das Kausalgesetz enthalten, dieses also erwiesen. Für Averroes ist das Kausalgesetz also etwas innerlich Evidentes, Unerweisbares."

[103] Van den Bergh, *op.cit.*, p. 236.

[104] *Exposition of the Methods of Arguments*, (Rehman, *op.cit.*) pp. 207-220; Gauthier, *Ibn Rochd*, p. 145. See also Averroes, *Die Epitome der Metaphysik*, trans. S. Van den Bergh, Leiden 1924; E. Gilson, *History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages*, p. 644.

[105] Van den Bergh, *Tahafut*, p. 261.

[106] Gauthier, *Ibn Rochd*, pp. 145ff.

[107] Van den Bergh, *Tahafut*, p. 300; also Ibn Rushd, in *Metaphysicorum XII*, comment 44.

Intelligences can come directly from the First Being.[108] With respect to the existence of these Intelligences nothing more can be understood save the idea of their connection and dependence.

We can say, speaking analogically, that God has a *nature*[109] and that He can be described,[110] we can attribute Intellect to God and say that, in knowing Himself he knows other things including particular things and events.[111] His eternity requires the eternity of the world but this does not mean that the world is eternal by itself.

God's absolute unity and uniqueness are proved by showing that any multiplicity in God or of gods would be logically incompatible with the Simplicity of the Divine Nature.[112] Hence the multiplicity of divine attributes must be "constituted through relation," i.e., many different things may be attributed to God in terms of the relations of the world to God.[113]

The problem of the relation of the Agent Intelligence to human minds is one of the most difficult points in Ibn Rushd's philosophy.[114] The solution he gave to it, as understood in thirteenth-century Christendom, earned for him the reputation of having denied individual immortality. Ibn Rushd attempts to explain one of the most obscure passages in Aristotle's *De Anima* (III, 4, 5) which asserts that the part of the soul which thinks cannot be mixed with the body. Now throughout nature we find the distinction between the agent and the patient. A similar distinction must exist in the soul (ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ).[115] Intellect (νοῦς) must therefore be regarded as one thing insofar

[108] See H. A. Wolfson, *Crescas' Critique of Aristotle*, Cambridge, Mass. 1929, p. 667.

[109] Van den Bergh, *Tahafut*, p. 272; Gauthier, *Ibn Rochd*, p. 147.

[110] Here Ibn Rushd seems to differ from Avicenna and others among the "philosophers." See Van den Bergh, p. 222.

[111] Van den Bergh, *Tahafut*, pp. 206-207, 261-265, 280.

[112] *Ibid.*, p. 173.

[113] *Ibid.*, II, p. 115.

[114] See Ibn Rushd's *Commentary on de Anima*, III, comment 5, where he insists on the great difficulty of the subject.

[115] Aristotle, *De Anima*, III, V, 430ª10-14.

as it becomes everything (i.e., becomes the *forms* of the objects it contemplates) and it must be regarded as another thing insofar as it makes all things (ὁ δὲ τῷ πάντα ποιεῖν), i.e., insofar as it actualizes the forms of things perceived. Now intellect in the sense of agent is separable from the body, unmixed with the body, and is not the recipient of any action of the body (ἀπαθὴς). Now only intellect in the active sense is immortal but, because it cannot be acted upon, we do not remember (our present life). This seems to mean that survival of the individual personality with its memories, etc., is out of the question. Aristotle goes on to say that the mind as passive is destructible and cannot think without the active intellect. It is possible also to read the last line of Aristotle's chapter (430ª24-25)[116] as meaning that nothing can know without the intellect considered as passive. The Greek commentators, especially Alexander of Aphrodisias and Themistius, strongly disagreed on the matter. Alexander held that the passive intellect is a mere potentiality which does not survive the body, whereas Themistius maintained that the passive intellect "is a real spiritual entity, or substance independent of the lower parts of the soul, though associated with them during life, and hence is not subject to generation and corruption, but is eternal."[117] Alexander identified the Active Intellect with God.

Ibn Rushd expounds the views of these commentators and then attempts a synthesis of the parts of each which he regards as correct.[118] The Active Intellect comes from the Sphere of the Moon and is, therefore, not God. Its function is to actual-

[116] As W. D. Ross (*Aristotle*, 5th ed., London 1949, p. 152) observes, the last words of the chapter may be interpreted in at least four different ways.

[117] I. Husik, *History of Medieval Jewish Philosophy*, New York 1916, pp. 332-333.

[118] The clearest easily accessible accounts of this matter are: Munk, *Mélanges de philosophie juive et arabe*, pp. 445-455 (only the last sentence on p. 451 seems to me erroneous); Husik, *op.cit.*; Léon Gauthier, *Ibn Rochd*, pp. 238-245; *The Summary of Cajetan of Thiene*, translated in Gilson, *History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages*, pp. 645-646.

ize forms in human consciousness and to actualize forms in material things. The passive Intellect is only the Active Intellect when the latter is conjoined to the human soul. When the imaginative power of man is supplied with images from the operation of the senses, it furnishes these images to the passive intellect. The forms, existing potentially in such images are actualized by the Active Intellect. The result of this is that human consciousness is supplied with concepts, judgments, inferences and so has become the *acquired intellect.*

Now this means that the only beings which are *purely spiritual* in nature and which enjoys a *purely spiritual immortality* are the Intelligences. The denial of Themistius' view that the passive intellect is a purely spiritual substance, one for each human being, would, therefore, seem to involve Ibn Rushd in a denial of human survival after death. Yet, as we shall see, this is not the case.

Ibn Rushd holds that, because matter is the principle of individuation, it is impossible that many forms specifically identical and free from matter should exist. From this it follows that a plurality of human souls could not survive without any bodies while retaining their individuality.[119] On the other hand, Ibn Rushd holds that those who deny individual immortality should be put to death as being wrong, irreligious, and a threat to the community. Consequently, those who hold to "the survival and numerical plurality of souls" must maintain that they survive "in a subtle matter, namely the animal warmth which emanates from the heavenly bodies."[120] Now these parts of subtle matter (which are associated with individual souls) preserve their numerical distinction and must be images of the earthly bodies of men because "that which has perished does not return individually."[121]

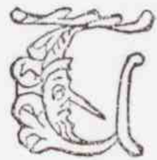
Ibn Rushd insists that the individual survival guaranteed

[119] Van den Bergh, *Tahafut*, p. 14. [120] *Ibid.*, p. 357.
[121] *Ibid.*, p. 362.

by Revelation is a fact. On the other hand, he holds with Aristotle that the soul, qua perfection of the organic body, cannot exist without a body. The doctrine of the Resurrection of the body came to his rescue here. For if bodily resurrection (or, more correctly, the celestial body taking the place of the corrupted physical body) occurs, the continuity of individual personality is possible on terms which are consistent both with Aristotle and with Revelation. Thus although the Averroes of medieval Christendom denied personal immortality, the Ibn Rushd of fact affirmed it. It must be said by way of explaining this discrepancy that the work in which Ibn Rushd makes his position clear was not available in Latin until the fourteenth century.

Ibn Rushd was the last of the great philosophers in Islam, or at least, the last of those who had any influence on Western Christendom. His interpretations of Aristotle in their Latin form influenced philosophers in the Christian West from the thirteenth to the seventeenth century, and, as we shall see, played a decisive rôle in the crucial change of thought which took place after 1277 when the Bishop of Paris, Étienne Tempier, condemned the propositions which were associated with the name of Averroes.

CHAPTER VII · THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE JEWS IN THE MIDDLE AGES



THE Jewish writers of the Biblical period were moralists, poets, historians, and legislators rather than philosophers. Still, many of their views about God, man, and the influence of God in history suggested philosophical questions which were asked and answered when Judaism came under the influence of Greek thought. Moreover, before the advent of anything among the Jews that can properly be called philosophy, such doctrines as the eternity of the Law (Torah) and the quasi-personification of Wisdom (Hochma) in the so-called Wisdom Literature (Proverbs, Wisdom of Solomon, Sayings of Jesus Son of Sirach) were points of departure for philosophical discussions. In the period of the formation of the Talmud, the questions concerning the indispensable theoretical elements of belief, as well as practical questions, occupied the attention of the Talmudic scholars. We find, for example, some of the authors of the Gemara maintaining that the belief in certain dogmas is one of the conditions for a "Portion of the Future World."[1] At the same time it was early maintained that "the righteous of all peoples have a portion of the World to come,"[2] the *righteous* defined as those who observe the ethical commandments of the Decalogue.[3] The search for the basic dogmas

[1] Gemara, ch. Helek, tract. Synhedrin; see David Neumark, *The Principles of Judaism*, Cincinnati 1919, pp. 38-39.

[2] See the Soncino edition of Genesis, *Genesis*, p. 33.

[3] This doctrine of general salvation of the righteous of all nations is connected with the doctrine of the Noachite laws. The covenant with Noah (considered as representative of mankind) guaranteed God's favor with the righteous men of all peoples: hence the notion of the Noachite laws, i.e., the fundamental religious and moral precepts for mankind. See also *Tosefta Sanhedrin*, xiii, 2, and *Mishnat Rabbi Eliezar* (ed. H. G. Enelow, New York 1934, p. 121). The "righteous," however, are those who accept the Laws of the Sons of Noah as divinely revealed. See also Steven Schwarzschild, "Do Noachites Have to Believe in Revelation?", *Jewish*

of Judaism has, therefore, a somewhat different significance than that of the attempts to formulate a creed in the Christian or Islamic world. Moreover, though the notion of a heretic occurs, it applies in practice to the members of the Jewish community. There are several somewhat conflicting definitions of "heresy." For instance, the "Shulkan Aruch" defines heretic (*Apikoros*, from *Epicurus*) as one who does not believe in the divine origin of the Law (Torah) or Prophecy;[4] Maimonides includes among heretics those who hold that there is no God and that the world is without a governor; the Mishnah (Sanh. x. 1, Gem. 90ª) states "He who says that there is no resurrection, he who says that the Law has not been given by God, and an Apikoros will not have a share in the future world." Yet it is clear (from *Sifra*, *Behukkotai*, iii, 2) that rejection of the "laws and ordinances" was the decisive criterion for atheism. Although a creed or body of dogma was not a completely settled affair, and was not as important for medieval Judaism as it was for Christianity, the contact of Jews with other civilizations made the eventual development of a religious philosophy a necessity.[5]

As already mentioned, Philo of Alexandria was the first important Jewish philosopher. His use of the allegorical method to make Scripture concordant with reason and experience and his view that philosophy is the servant of theology have already been discussed. Philo's philosophical theology is a blend of Platonism and Judaism: God is the most general

Quarterly Review, Vol. LII, no. 4, pp. 298ff., Vol. LIII, no. 1, pp. 30ff., and Jacob Katz, *Exclusiveness and Tolerance*, London 1961, especially pp. 115ff. and ch. 14.

[4] Josephus, *Antiquities*, 158, 2, refers to Epicureans as those who deny Providence. See *Jewish Encyclopedia*, New York 1901-1906, Vol. 1, Article *Apikoros*.

[5] Yet it should be added that some of the medieval Jewish philosophers approved the view that heretics should be put to death. See Maimonides' *Epistle to Yemen*, trans. Boas Cohen, Academy for Jewish Research, New York, 1952, and reproduced, in part, in *Introduction to Contemporary Civilization*, 3rd ed., New York 1960, Vol. 1, especially pp. 40-41.

and the highest existence; He is above knowledge, virtue or goodness. We do not reach God by reasoning (i.e., demonstration) but by an immediate subjective certainty. Still, the principle of causality leads us to some knowledge of God. As Philo sometimes argues, no work of skill makes itself; hence, we must necessarily assume a divine Artificer. God is simple, one, free and omnipotent. He is the place of the world because He encompasses all things.[6] The highest of the divine forces is the Logos (*Sophia*, *Hochma*). This is the divine Reason encompassing all Forms. This modification of Plato was required by the monotheistic commitments of Philo and is one of the prototypes of those Neoplatonic schemes in which the Realm of Forms is united with the Divine Mind. The Forms are also described in Stoic terms as Powers (δυνάμεις, λόγοι) and Philo said that they were produced before the creation.[7] The aggregate and unity of these forms are called the Logos and Intelligible Cosmos (*κόσμος νοητός*) and also the divine Reason. Unfortunately and inconsistently, it is described also as a being distinct from God. On the one hand, the absolute transcendence of God makes any description of Him impossible, but on the other hand, the doctrine of Providence requires that there be Ideas in God. Again, as the Forms (Ideas) are instrumentalities of God they must somehow be in God, yet, as God must be distinct from the world, Forms must function as intermediaries and intervene between God and the world. The difficulty recurs throughout philosophy and we find medieval Jewish philosophers (e.g., Gabirol and Maimonides) troubled by it.

In *On the Creation of the World* (*De Opificio Mundi*) God is described as having created the world from a preexisting matter,[8] yet a little later in the same tract Philo writes as if

[6] Cf. Philo, *De Somniis*, I, 11. Cf. H. A. Wolfson, *The Philosophy of Spinoza*, Cambridge, Mass. 1924, I, 297-298.
[7] Cf. Philo, *De Opificio Mundi*, Book IV, where the forms are called "the elder Creation."
[8] *Ibid.*, Book V.

matter itself had been created.[9] In any case Philo holds that time either originated with the world or after it was created.[10] Only *one* world was created.[11] The human soul is treated as distinct from the body and as an emanation of God.

The question of Philo's *direct* influence on the subsequent development of philosophy is still *sub judice*,[12] but there is little question of some kind of indirect influence. Most of the main themes of religious philosophy in the Middle Ages are foreshadowed or adumbrated in Philo's writings, as H. A. Wolfson has copiously demonstrated.

Medieval philosophy among the Jews begins properly with Isaac Israeli (about 855 to 955, born and lived in Egypt). His works are largely compilations from other authors[13] yet he has some importance in the history of medieval Christian philosophy because his writings were translated into Latin and frequently quoted by the Christian Scholastics of the thirteenth century. He is mainly influenced by Neoplatonism and shows especial dependence on Al-Kindi. Another and far more important philosopher was the Egyptian-born Jew, Saadia ben Joseph Al-Fayyumi (892-942) who became head of the religious academy at Sura. It will be worth while to indicate some of his thoughts on religious philosophy. Saadia is interesting as a religious philosopher for a number of reasons. While the larger part of his work is devoted to questions that are particularly or exclusively concerned with Judaism, his point of departure is that of the religious philosophers generally. Moreover, he is influenced to a large extent by the Mutakallimun but little, if at all, by Neoplatonism.

[9] *Ibid.*, Book VII. Nevertheless, most authorities seem to think that Philo accepts a world-formation out of a matter originally without qualitative determination.
[10] *Ibid.*
[11] *Ibid.*, Book LXI.
[12] See H. A. Wolfson, *Philo*, Cambridge, Mass. 1947, II, 158 and E. R. Dodds, *The Parmenides of Plato and the Origin of the Neoplatonic "One,"* *Classical Quarterly*, XXII (1928), 140.
[13] See A. Altmann and S. Stern, *Isaac Israeli*, London 1959, for translations of and commentaries on his work.

Saadia begins his philosophy by an investigation of the sources of knowledge,[14] by what has been called his "quest for certainty."[15] The main "roots" of knowledge are sense-perception, reason, inference, and reliable Tradition (this last includes both the Written Law (Scriptures) and the Oral Law (Talmud). In order to refute Scepticism, Saadia employs a number of familiar arguments, one similar to the *cogito* argument already encountered in Augustine, Plotinus, and Avicenna.[16] His defense of inference is especially illuminating. In addition to the truth vouchsafed by perception and the self-evident deliverances of Reason, knowledge can be obtained about things not immediately accessible by means of logically necessary inference.[17] If anything discovered by sense-perception is such that its existence logically necessitates the existence of other things, we must acknowledge the other things. Thus by logically necessary inference we infer the existence of the unknown causes of the events we perceive. Saadia adds that we must be sure that only one cause can explain the observed event, that our inference does not contradict known facts, that further it is self-consistent, and finally that in accepting the theoretically inferred things we have not adopted a theory worse than those we have rejected.

After these preliminary investigations which are intended to provide a firm foundation for knowledge, Saadia raises the question: why should we speculate about religious and moral questions? Since we have been given a revelation, why should we investigate further? Because we can then discover by our reason what has already been vouchsafed by revelation and

[14] The principal literature accessible to the reader will be: (1) The complete translation of Saadia's main philosophical work: *The Book of Beliefs and Opinions*, trans. S. Rosenblatt, New Haven 1948; (2) an abridged translation of the same: *The Book of Doctrines and Beliefs*; (3) M. Ventura, *La Philosophie de Saadia Gaon*, Paris 1934.

[15] See the excellent monograph by A. Heschel "The Quest for Certainty in Saadia's Philosophy," *Jewish Quarterly Review*, N.S., Vol. XXXIII, and the literature cited there, especially the essays of H. A. Wolfson.

[16] See A. Heschel, *op.cit.*, p. 273, n. 43. [17] Rosenblatt, *op.cit.*, p. 21.

we can thus defend Revealed Doctrine against its detractors. Yet if reason can do this, why was there a Revelation at all? Here Saadia anticipates an answer, given in several variants by later medieval philosophers, e.g., Maimonides and Thomas Aquinas. Revelation was given in advance of rational argument because rational argument (which comprises the sciences) takes a long time to be discovered and elaborated and "we should have existed without religion for some time until the work of speculation was completed"; many people are unwilling or unable, or lack sufficient time, or are assailed by intellectually crippling doubts.[18] Thus revelation must precede reason, while reason can complete and perfect our knowledge of what has already been revealed.

Saadia's arguments for the existence of God owe much to the Kalam. He begins by discussing whether or not the world was created. Saadia, using the last of four theories on this subject (eternity of the world in its present form, Manichean dualism, eternity of matter, and creation from nothing), attempts to prove that the world was created from nothing. His arguments depend *inter alia* on the denial of the possibility that an infinite series of events precedes the present state of things, and on a kind of argument to design.[19] Since things cannot create themselves, there must be a Creator who created them from nothing.[20] The fact that Saadia examines and rejects the theory of emanation is indication that he does not mean by "creation from nothing" a creation out of the divine substance.

Having proved the existence of a Creator, Saadia turns to the question of the attributes of God. He attempts to prove that God has such attributes as *Unity*, *Life*, *Power*, *Wisdom*, *Incomparability* (a list that is fairly typical: we find similar

[18] Cf. Altmann and Stern, *op.cit.*, pp. 44-47; Rosenblatt, *op.cit.*, pp. 27-33.

[19] For the details, see H. A. Wolfson, *Kalam Arguments for Creation in Saadia, Averroes, Maimonides, and St. Thomas*, Saadya Anniversary Volume, New York 1943, pp. 197ff.

[20] Altmann, *op.cit.*, pp. 58-62. And M. Ventura, *op.cit.*, pp. 113-171.

lists in both Islamic and Christian authors). How can such a plurality of attributes be consistent with the divine unity and simplicity? According to Saadia, these attributes elucidate the meaning of *Creator* and then denote the ways the creature is related to God. In other words, Saadia's theory of attributes foreshadows Maimonides' doctrine that they are "attributes of action" and not a plurality of characteristics in the divine Nature.[21]

Saadia also deals with the anthropomorphisms in the Scriptures by holding that some of them can be interpreted allegorically. Some must, however, be taken literally, especially the visions of Daniel and Ezekiel. These mystical visions do not mean that any of the prophets actually saw God, but only that they beheld an appearance of light created by God.

As to the soul, Saadia seems to take a dualistic view, and his language suggests that the soul consists of a subtle matter.[22] From the introspective evidence that we choose without felt compulsion he argues that the human will is free.[23] There is a discussion of human freedom in connection with divine foreknowledge. The bulk of Saadia's work concerns religious and moral questions, some of which are restricted in their interest to Judaism. Saadia is primarily of interest because he was far more original than any of his predecessors and exhibits a freedom from Neoplatonism that is rare among philosophers in the early Middle Ages.

Of far greater interest and influence is Solomon Ibn Gabirol (born about 1021 and died about 1058). He was one of the first philosophers in Andalusian Spain, preceded only by Ibn Masarra of Cordova (883-931), and flourished at a time when Jewish intellectual culture had moved from Babylonia to Spain. His fame among the Jews as a poet outlived his reputation as a philosopher although his greatest poem, "The Royal

[21] But, as Altmann (*op.cit.*, p. 84, n. 1) observes, Saadia is not very consistent on this subject.

[22] Altmann and Stern, *op.cit.*, p. 152; Rosenblatt, *op.cit.*, p. 256.

[23] Altmann and Stern, *op.cit.*, pp. 118-125; Rosenblatt, *op.cit.*, 188ff.

Crown," contains important features of his philosophy. His philosophical work is contained in *The Fountain of Life*, originally written in Arabic, translated into Latin in the twelfth century under the title *Fons Vitae* and attributed to Avicebron, Avencebrol, etc. (all corruptions of Ibn Gabirol). This work is so free of any specifically or uniquely Jewish elements that some of the medieval Christian theologians who read it were inclined to think it was written by a Christian.[24] The only important Jewish philosopher who mentions Gabirol's *Fountain of Life* criticizes it severely as being non-Jewish.

Gabirol is a Neoplatonist, but the variety of Neoplatonism he expounds differs in certain ways from the systems most common in the Judaeo-Islamic world of the Middle Ages. One of the chief influences on him, and also on Ibn Masarra, was the pseudo-Empedoclean *Book of the Five Substances*.[25] According to this Neoplatonic work, matter and form are to be found throughout all the created world so that even incorporeal substances have in them matter and form. The matter of the subhuman (i.e., terrestrial) world is distinguished by the form of corporeity. As Altmann remarks, there is no place in the pseudo-Empedoclean system for the division of the universal soul into a series of hypostases (i.e., distinct substantial emanations).[26]

The main features of the universe, according to Ibn Gabirol are: God, the divine Will (or Creative Word), universal mat-

[24] E.g., William of Auvergne, *De Universo* 1, p. 1, cap. 25, quoted by J. Guttmann, *Die Scholastik des dreizehnten jahrhunderts, etc.*, Breslau 1902, p. 26. It was not until 1845 that S. Munk discovered the true authorship of the "*Fons Vitae.*"

[25] The best secondary accounts of Gabirol are: S. Munk, *Mélanges de philosophie juive et arabe*, reprint, Paris 1927, pp. 151-306; J. Guttmann, *Die Philosophie des Judenthums*, Munich 1933, pp. 102-119; I. Husik, *History of Medieval Jewish Philosophy*, New York 1916, pp. 59-80. The Hebrew abbreviation of the *Fountain of Life* is translated in Munk, *op.cit.*, pp. 3-148, and the entire third book is translated by F. Brunner, *La Source de Vie, Livre III*, Paris 1950.

[26] Altmann and Stern, *op.cit.*, p. 168.

ter and universal form, universal intellect, universal soul, universal nature, and finally the substance of the categories. Excepting God, matter and form, as noted before, are encountered throughout the series of emanations. Now this doctrine that matter is to be found throughout the universe (God excepted, of course) has its origin in Plotinus.[27] It is the doctrine of hylomorphism which many of the Christian Scholastics, especially the Franciscans, were to adopt. Another closely related doctrine which the Scholastics later debated is the plurality of substantial forms, and this, too, is to be traced to Ibn Gabirol. According to this doctrine, there are several different forms determining a single substance, e.g., the corporeal, vital, and rational form in man. Universal hylomorphism and the plurality of substantial forms are thus usually found together in the doctrinal syntheses of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

Matter is, then, the underlying substratum for all beings excepting God. It emanates from the creative Will and forms the basis for all subsequent emanations.[28] The spiritual substances of the celestial (= intelligible) world have matter underlying their forms.[29] For matter is intelligible or spiritual, with the exception of the matter having the form of body (or corporeity). Thus there are gradations of matter of which only the lowest is corporeal.[30]

Man is a microcosm or little world and all the features of the great world or macrocosm are found in man.[31] The Will is the force which holds matter and form together throughout the universe. This force suffers diminution as we proceed down through the hierarchy of beings and when we reach the lowest part, body, we find it inert and incapable of exercising any action.

[27] *Enneads*, II, 4.
[28] *Fons Vitae*, V, 333-335; Munk's translation of the Hebrew abbreviated version, V, 67-69.
[29] *Fons Vitae*, IV, 8ff.; Munk, *op.cit.*, IV, 1. [30] *Fons Vitae*, IV, 243.
[31] *Fons Vitae*, III, 200; Munk, *op.cit.*, III, 27ff.

Since man is a microcosm, it is possible for man to know the universe. If man succeeds in knowing himself he will understand the universe. This is because man's nature encompasses all things and somehow penetrates all things. Man's ultimate end is to know the Universal Will. Man cannot hope to know God because the finite cannot encompass the Infinite. God can, therefore, be known only through His effects especially as they are exhibited on the working of the Will. The soul of man may know the Universal Reason (because it is somehow similar to it). It can even, by a suprarational intuition, attain to Universal Matter. The somewhat mystical and poetic description of the stage of human consciousness when it reaches this highest stage claims that man will see himself as contained in the spiritual substance of the higher world. In knowing universal matter we know the most immediate expression of God.

The point of originality in Gabirol's philosophy is the doctrine of Will. But it is also the most ambiguous feature. On the one hand, it seems to be identical with God when we forget about its activities. Considered as the active cause of all things and the force holding the world together, it is represented as distinct from God. Thus Ibn Gabirol appears to vacillate between a view of the divine Will which would be pantheism and a view which does not explain the relationship between Will and God. Perhaps the notion of Will as the instrument of creation was intended to emphasize Ibn Gabirol's desire to avoid the necessitarian character of Neoplatonism.[32] Indeed, he states that the world has just the existence which God freely wishes to confer upon it. But it is difficult to introduce this free volition of God into a framework originally designed by Plotinus for whom the emanation of the world was necessitated by the divine nature.

[32] Cf. H. A. Wolfson, *The Problem of the Origin of Matter in Medieval Jewish Philosophy*, Proceedings of the Sixth International Congress of Philosophy, New York 1927, pp. 602-605.

It is necessary to pass over very able philosophers such as Joseph Ibn Zaddik, Abraham Ibn Daud, and Judah Halevi (this last the Jewish counterpart of Al-Ghazali by whom he was much influenced) to discuss the most significant figure in medieval Jewish thought: Moses Maimonides.

Maimonides (b. Cordova 1135–d. Egypt 1204) wrote his main philosophical work, the *Guide to the Perplexed*, for the purpose of removing the doubts and perplexities of learned Jews who were troubled by the apparent conflict between philosophical and scientific doctrines and the doctrines of the Bible and the Rabbinic treatises. Thus his work is primarily theological, its purpose is "apologetic and concordistic,"[33] and involves philosophy only when this suits the occasion. Yet it does contain a philosophical doctrine which was to be influential, not only among his coreligionists, but also, in its Latin version, in the Christian world of the thirteenth century and after. His influence among the Jews was permanent and decisive, and the saying, "From Moses (the Law giver) to Moses (Maimonides) there was none like unto Moses (Maimonides)," expresses this well.

Like his great contemporary in Muslim Spain, Ibn Rushd, he does not recommend the study of metaphysics for the mass of mankind. The subject itself, he tells us, is very difficult, human intelligence at the outset is inadequate, and the preparatory studies require a long time to complete. Moreover, the moral virtues or moral perfection must precede the study of philosophy (a point derived from Aristotle and frequently emphasized by many of the Islamic philosophers). Finally, the cares of life as well as the distraction of luxuries prevent most people from the successful pursuit of the subject. If one is to pursue the truth in philosophy he must be free from passion and, disregarding custom, follow reason and evidence. The preliminary conditions for philosophical study, therefore, are: the ability to reason logically, the grasp of the natural

[33] I. Husik, *History of Medieval Jewish Philosophy*, p. 239.

sciences, and moral perfection (since one cannot judge soundly if he is the victim of unruly passions).[34]

One of the sources of difficulty in reconciling the Scriptures with the theories of the philosophers is the failure to understand that many words of the Bible applied to God are really homonyms, i.e., equivocal words, which is to say, words which have several meanings which have nothing in common with one another. We must not, therefore, expect a literal agreement between revelation and science. On the other hand, correct exegesis must identify and explain these homonyms. When this is done we shall see whether revelation and science are in conflict.

Among the Jews, Maimonides states, there have been two main philosophical affiliations: some have followed the Kalam; others, Aristotle's views. In order to discover which of these philosophical systems is to be preferred we must ask first of all how successful they are in establishing what they propose to show. Accordingly, Maimonides gives a systematic account of the Kalam and of the Aristotelian system as he understood it.

The system of the Mutakallimun when examined is found to be defective on two principal counts: Its theory is internally defective and its attempt to prove the existence of God is built on shaky foundations. If the temporal finitude of the world could be conclusively proved, the existence of a Creator would be assured. But the arguments the Mutakallimun employ do not really prove the newness of the world.

On the other side, the Aristotelians claim that the world is eternal and insist that this very fact requires an eternal unmoved mover whom they identify with the God of Scripture. Yet when the Aristotelian system is confronted with the facts of celestial motion, it is unable to provide a completely satisfactory theory. More important than this is the fact that the

[34] *Guide to the Perplexed*, II, 23, M. Friedländer's translation, London, 1928, p. 195.

Aristotelians do not provide a conclusive proof of the eternity of the world.

In the face of this deficiency on both sides, what are we to do? The Scripture teaches the creation of the world in time, but Maimonides thinks that perhaps exegetical devices might bring about a reconciliation if such were demanded by philosophical demonstrations of the eternity of the world. It is not clear, however, that we must resort to such stratagems because the eternity has not been definitely shown. We may, however, take the doctrine of the eternity of the world as a *provisional* aid in the proof of God's existence. If we can prove the existence of God on this provisional hypothesis, we know that it can be proved in any case, because it is admitted that a Creator is required if the world has endured for only a finite time in the past. It will then be appropriate to inquire what can be said in favor of the creation-hypothesis.

Maimonides then expounds several proofs which he derived from his Greek and Islamic predecessors. The first is the proof from motion given by Aristotle in the eighth book of the *Physics* based on the eternity of time and motion. This proof is elaborately prefaced by twenty-five propositions which are established by Aristotle (in the *Physics* and *Metaphysics*) and by his commentators. The eternity of movement and these twenty-five propositions together imply that a first unmoved mover must be assumed. It follows, by some additional elucidation, that the unmoved mover is *one* and *incorporeal*.

The second proof is derived from Al-Farabi and Avicenna, namely, the argument for the existence of a necessary Being. There is a third proof based on the notion of potentiality and actuality, and a fourth which depends again on the notions of "moving" and "being moved." These proofs also establish the uniqueness and incorporeality of the First Being.

Thus the existence, uniqueness, and incorporeality of God can be established on the provisional hypothesis that the world is eternal. Now additional considerations show that on any

hypothesis God is one and incorporeal; hence, on any hypothesis (i.e., whether or not the world has always existed), the existence of God, together with His unity and incorporeality, are assured.

Since the eternity of the world has not been proved, if we can find any positive grounds for creation, it will be better to accept this hypothesis. Now the world gives evidence of having been the result of an intelligent plan, and, therefore, presupposes a Designer who preceded and caused the realization of that design. The situation, then, is this: As neither eternity nor temporal finitude of the world can be demonstrated and as there are considerations favoring creation we should accept the latter. Moreover, the latter agrees with the obvious meaning of Genesis.

It is important to notice to what extent Maimonides adopts, and to what extent he rejects, the doctrine of emanation. In the *Guide*, he makes it clear that nine Intelligences account (more or less satisfactorily) for the heavenly movements, and that the tenth Intelligence (the Active Intellect) must be assumed to explain how the human intellect passes from potentiality to actuality.[35] He also holds that the soul or form of each sphere originated in the Intelligence corresponding to it, and more generally, that the Intelligences must be *emanated*, because there is no matter which would individuate them. He then points out that a number of points of the emanation doctrine are agreed to by the Scriptures and the Sages (i.e., the Rabbis whose teachings are found in Talmud, Midrash, etc.). Thus the Scriptures and Sages agree that the spheres are animated, that the spheres exercise influences on terrestrial phenomena, that angels (i.e., intelligences) are intermediaries between God and man. But, whereas Aristotle, Neoplatonically interpreted, of course, believed the Intelligences to be coeternal with God, we [Maimonides speaking for the Jews] believe that God *created* the Intelligences and spheres, and

[35] *Guide*, II, 4.

endowed them with the powers they exercise.[36] Thus ". . . the creative act of the Almighty in giving existence to pure Intelligences, endows the first of them with the power of giving existence to another, and so on down to the active Intellect, the lowest, which is the sphere of the moon. After the latter follows this transient world, i.e., the *materia prima* and all that has been formed of it. In this manner the elements receive certain properties from each sphere, and a succession of genesis and destruction is produced. We have already mentioned that these theories are not opposed to anything taught by our Prophets and Sages."[37] The important difference here between Maimonides and his Islamic sources (especially Al-Farabi and Avicenna) is the insistence that the first Intelligence was created *ex nihilo* by God, and that the universe as a whole is of finite temporal duration.[38]

A few words must be devoted to Maimonides' doctrine of divine Attributes. That God is one and incorporeal, he never stops insisting. He also states that God is an Intellect and a Providence. But, since a plurality of attributes would violate the unity and indivisibility of the divine Nature, Maimonides insists with equal vigor that God's attributes must be conceived negatively. We can only state what God is not, not what He is. This is the doctrine of negative theology and Maimonides carries it to the limit. God transcends, and is utterly incomparable with, anything in the created universe. The things said of God are, therefore, only "attributes of action," i.e., they express God's effects on and in the world but in no way describe His own being.

[36] *Ibid.*, chs. 5, 6.

[37] *Ibid.*, ch. 11, p. 168. See also G. Vajda, *Introduction à la pensée juive du moyen âge*, Paris 1947, pp. 137-138.

[38] From *Guide*, II, 2. It is clear that Maimonides follows Avicenna in a number of other particulars, viz., in maintaining (1) the necessity of a *Giver of Forms* (the Active Intellect) both to things and to human minds; (2) that matter must be "prepared" to receive forms and likewise that the human mind requires preparation; (3) that prophetic inspiration comes from the active Intellect and affects the imagination as well as the intellect of man.

With regard to God's knowledge, Maimonides maintains that God, because He exercises a particular providence, knows all individual things. In other words, God's knowledge is not limited to a general knowledge of things by way of their universal or general causes. He must hold this doctrine because he insists on the free will of man and, therefore, on the element of contingency in the world of men. We cannot conceive how God can know particulars, but must be content to say that, by knowing Himself, He knows all that results from His creative activity.

In his psychological theory, Maimonides is largely dependent on his predecessors, Al-Farabi and Avicenna (in details he follows Al-Farabi). In particular, as already noticed, he accepts the doctrine that the Active Intellect is necessary for human cognition to take place; and he adopts their views in order to explain prophecy. He is also indebted to the same sources for his explanation of immortality. Here his rationalism carried him so far that he held that only the acquired intellect is immortal, i.e., the only part of consciousness which survives bodily death is the thesaurus of knowledge that is acquired during earthly existence. This puts the cultivation of intellectual virtues above that of the moral virtues (which, however, are indispensable means to the intellectual virtues; but only means, since even the ideal of earthly life is to know God). Thus knowledge is a necessary condition of survival after death.[39] This explains why Maimonides insists on informing all people about the existence, uniqueness, and incorporeality of God, and why he formulated a creed which comprises the intellectual minimum of belief. The least among the people are thus guaranteed a portion of the world to come after death if they accept a minimum of correct philosophical principles. In this respect Maimonides differs from his great

[39] *Guide*, III, 51, 54. See Guttmann, *Die Philosophie des Judentums*, p. 200; and Vajda, *Introduction à la pensée juive du moyen âge*, p. 143. See also Maimonides, *Mishnah Torah*, Yesode ha-Torah IV, 9. (The passage is translated in H. A. Wolfson, *Philosophy of Spinoza*, II, 290-291).

contemporary Ibn Rushd. The latter had prohibited any philosophical teaching to the masses, whereas Maimonides, in order to amass a measure of immortality to the least philosophical of men, insists that all have a correct idea of the nature of God even if they cannot master the philosophical proofs.

Maimonides had considerable influence, not only on the subsequent development of Jewish philosophy in the Middle Ages, but also on Christendom. Although he is severely censured in the *Errors of Philosophers* of Giles of Rome, Aquinas follows him on a number of important points and always quotes him with respect.

Two other philosophers among the medieval Jews deserve some mention here: Levi ben Gerson and Hasdai Crescas. The former is of especial interest as an example of a more extreme Aristotelian than most of the other Jewish philosophers, the latter as an avowed critic of Aristotle and his medieval Jewish followers.

Levi ben Gerson (1288-1344) was famous, not only as a religious philosopher, but also as a scientist.[40] His commentaries on part of Aristotle's *Organon*, in Latin translation, were included in the Latin editions of Aristotle of the sixteenth century. Like many of the other religious philosophers, ben Gerson believes in the essential harmony between the revealed Scriptures and philosophy.

[40] His book on an astronomical instrument was translated into Latin in 1377 on the instructions of Pope Clement VI.

CHAPTER VIII · PHILOSOPHY IN THIRTEENTH-CENTURY CHRISTENDOM

IN THE thirteenth century in Christian Europe, the two great developments for philosophy are the consolidation of the great universities and the gradual acceptance of the main works of Aristotle in the curriculum of studies. The faculties of arts and theology both found need and use for Aristotle's writings, but it was a long time before all his major writings were officially permitted to be studied, and various decrees of the Arts Faculty at Paris and Oxford attest to the suspicion and alarm which the apparent or real incompatibility of Aristotle's opinions with Christian dogma occasioned. And before the century had run its course, some of the essential doctrines of Aristotle were officially condemned by the Bishop of Paris.

By the middle of the century, as we are informed by a Statute of the Faculty of Arts (March 19, 1255), the following treatises were read: *The Old Logic* (*Logica Vetus*) consisting of the *Introduction* of Porphyry, *Categories*, and *On Interpretation*, as well as the *Divisions* and *Topics* of Boethius; *The New Logic* (*Logica Nova*) consisting of Aristotle's *Topics*, *Sophistical Refutations*, and *Prior* and *Posterior Analytics*; the *Nicomachean Ethics*, *Physics*, *Metaphysics*, *On Animals*, *On the Heaven*, *The Meteorology* (Book 1), the *Short Natural Treatises* (*On Sense*, *On Memory*, *On Sleeping and Waking*).

In addition to Aristotle, Porphyry, and Boethius, the Pseudo-Aristotelian *De Causis*, Costa ben Luca's *On the Difference of Spirit and Soul*, as well as Priscian and Donatus, were also regularly read.

There were regulations fixing the age and condition required for teaching, and the various grades in the faculties of bachelor, licentiate, and master were determined. The