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Editorial

We are very pleased to present the inaugural volume of the *Maimonides Review of Philososphy and Religion*, which is an annual collection of double-blind peer-reviewed articles mainly stemming from research conducted under the aegis of the Maimonides Centre for Advanced Studies (MCAS) at Universität Hamburg. The *Maimonides Review* replaces the *Yearbook of the Maimonides Centre for Advanced Studies* (4 volumes; 2016–2019), which was published under the general editorship of Giuseppe Veltri with Bill Rebiger (2016–2018) and Yoav Meyrav (2019) acting as volume editors.

The *Maimonides Review* seeks to provide a broad international arena for an intellectual exchange of ideas between the disciplines of philosophy, theology, religion, cultural history, and literature and to showcase their multifarious junctures within the framework of Jewish studies. Contributions to the *Maimonides Review* place special thematic emphasis on scepticism within Jewish thought and its links to other religious traditions and secular worldviews. The *Maimonides Review* is interested in the tension at the heart of matters of reason and faith, rationalism and mysticism, theory and practice, narrativity and normativity, doubt and dogma; a highly charged tension that has given rise to a wide array of productive ideas throughout intellectual history. It is through these focal points that the *Maimonides Review* encourages the deepening of our scholarly understanding of Jewish religious thought in all its diverse historical manifestations while underlining the importance of interdisciplinary research and an understanding of the wider contexts. The eight contributions in the present volume cover a wide array of themes, thinkers, and traditions, spanning from the Middle Ages through the early modern period up to the present day. Each author applies critical research methods in order to shed light on understudied phenomena in their respective field, thus breaking fresh ground in scholarship and promoting a lively academic discourse.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank Yoav Meyrav, whose highly professional and endlessly creative tenure as managing editor of the yearbook helped to bring the *Maimonides Review* into being. His collegiality knows no bounds—he is always willing to help and to give advice on countless matters. We also wish to thank Katharine Handel for her outstanding copy and language editing of all the articles in this volume, her thorough work on the series' guidelines for authors, and her exceptional professionalism. Special thanks are also due to Sarah Wobick-Segev for her insightful comments and her valuable

assistance in numerous matters relating to the series. We would like to express our gratitude to the German Research Foundation (DFG), whose generous support has made MCAS and its various academic activities and endeavours possible. Finally, we would also like to thank Jennifer Pavelko, Fenja Schulz, and Helena Schöb from Brill Publishers for all their help in establishing the *Maimonides Review*.

Giuseppe Veltri (*General Editor*)
Ze'ev Strauss (*Volume Editor*)
Hamburg, May 2021

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A Maimonidean Life

Joseph ben Judah Ibn Shimʿon of Ceuta's Biography Reconstructed

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Abstract

This article is an attempt to integrate the available information about Joseph ben Judah Ibn Shimʿon, Maimonides's famous disciple and the recipient of the *Guide of the Perplexed*, into a synthetic view of his intellectual profile and to depict his biography in a strictly diachronic perspective. It reconstructs four distinct periods in his life, which—when taken together—are so deeply connected to the person of Maimonides both in their development and in their general outlook that they can perhaps best be described as a "Maimonidean life at the turn of the twelfth to the thirteenth century." Joseph Ibn Shimʿon is presented as a fascinating and complex personality who was active in a dramatic period of Jewish history in the Islamicate world. His life and work deserve more systematic investigation and attention than they have received thus far.

Keywords

Moses Maimonides – Joseph ben Judah ibn Shimʿon – Judah al-Ḥarizi – Samuel ben Eli – Daniel ben Saadia ha-Bavli – Ibn al-Qifṭī – Cairo – Aleppo – Maimonidean Controversy

1 Introduction

Joseph ben Judah ibn Shimʿon of Ceuta is Maimonides's famous disciple and the addressee of the *Guide of the Perplexed*. He is perhaps one of the less illustrious personalities in the cultural and intellectual history of the Jews in the Islamicate world of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, but he has been

repeatedly discussed by modern researchers and a considerable amount of biographical material has been brought to light. This material, however, has never been systematically assembled and synthesised. This is quite deplorable, because the scattered information about Joseph Ibn Shimʿon's life—even if it is not very extensive—is more than sufficient in quantity and quality to allow the reconstruction of a fairly comprehensive outline of the life of a person whose biography proves to form a significant chapter of a stormy period in Jewish history.[1]

It seems that Joseph Ibn Shimʿon was born in Ceuta around the middle of the twelfth century and that he died in Aleppo in 1226. Since David Hirsch (Zvi) Baneth published a much-quoted article on the subject, modern scholarship has unanimously accepted that Maimonides's disciple is not the same person as Joseph ben Judah Ibn ʿAqnin.[2] In Muslim Arabic sources, he is called Yūsuf Abū Ḥaǧāǧ ibn Yaḥyā ibn Isḥāq ibn Samʿūn al-Sabtī al-Maġribī. As Salomon Munk showed in a seminal study published in 1842,[3] the change from Joseph ben Judah to Yūsuf ibn Yaḥyā has other precedents among Jews in medieval Arab countries. In Jewish sources, he is often called Joseph ben Judah ha-Maʿaravi (i.e., the Maghrebi, or: *Ner ha-Maʿaravi*, "the Maghrebi candle") and occasionally also R. Joseph ben Judah *Roʾš ha-Seder*.[4] The latter name and title must not be confused with Joseph (ben Jacob) *Roʾš ha-Seder*, an Iraqi scholar who was active in Egypt during the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries.[5]

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1 Earlier drafts of this paper were read by Miriam Frenkel, Gad Freudenthal, Warren Zev Harvey, and Amir Mazor, who made many valuable comments on it. I also owe my deep gratitude to Sarah Stroumsa for her close reading and comments on the text. She sent me drafts of two of her own articles on Joseph Ibn Shimʿon's biography. One of them has meanwhile been published as "*Convivencia* in the Medieval Islamic East: Al-Raqqa, Mosul, Aleppo," in *Eine dreifältige Schnur: Über Judentum, Christentum und Islam in Geschichte und Wissenschaft/A Cord of Three Strands: On Judaism, Christianity and Islam in History and Scholarship*, ed. Sarah Stroumsa and Guy G. Stroumsa (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2020), 8–125. The second will be published as "*Temunah Qibbuṣit u-Temunat ha-Yaḥid be-Šikhvat ha-Manhigut ha-Yehudit ba-Meʾot ha-Yʾʾb we-Yʾʾg be-ʿOlam ha-Islam: Wariʾaṣiyot ʿal Yosef Ibn Šimʿon*" [Hebrew], in a forthcoming collection of articles in honour of Menahem Ben-Sasson.

2 See D.Z. Baneth, "El discípulo José Ben Shimon y José Ben Waknin" [Hebrew], *Tesoro de los judíos sefardíes* 7 (1964): 11–20.

3 Salomon Munk, "Notice sur Joseph be-Iehouda ou Aboul'Hadjadj Yousouf ben Ya'hya al-Sabti al-Maghrebi, disciple de Maïmonide," *Revue asiatique* 2 (1842): 5–72 (repr. Paris: Imprimerie Royale, 1842).

4 On the historical importance of this title, see also n. 100 below.

5 Arnold Franklin, "Joseph Rosh ha-Seder," in *Encyclopedia of Jews in the Islamic World*, ed. Norman A. Stillman (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 3:31; see also the comprehensive unfinished PhD

Most of the basic biographical data about Joseph Ibn Shimʿon assembled by Munk in his "Notice" were taken from the biography in Ibn al-Qifṭī's *Taʾrīḫ al-Ḥukamāʾ* and Barhebraeus's *Historia Dynastiarum* (*Taʾrīḫ muḫtaṣar al-duwal*), which largely depends on the former. This biographical skeleton was fleshed out with information taken from Judah al-Ḥarizi's *Sefer Taḥkemoni*, the correspondence between Maimonides and Joseph Ibn Shimʿon that was known to him at that date, Maimonides's *Guide of the Perplexed*, and Abraham Maimonides's polemical letter *Wars of the Lord* (*Milḥamot ha-Šem*). Munk also mentions and quotes from a manuscript of Joseph Ibn Shimʿon's theologico-philosophical treatise *On the Necessary Existent, the Quality of the Forthcoming of Things from Him and the Creations of the World* and briefly refers to the entry on Abū al-Ḥaǧāǧ Yūsuf al-Isrāʾīlī in Ibn Abī Uṣaibiʿah's *ʿUyūn al-Anbāʾ*. All these sources allowed Munk to create a coherent picture of Joseph Ibn Shimʿon's life.

Since Munk's days, however, important additional material has come to light. The most important primary sources stemming from Joseph Ibn Shimʿon's pen to which Munk did *not* have access are a *maqāmah* sent to Maimonides (*Sayeth Ṭuviyyah ben Ṣidqiyyah*), a polemical treatise about resurrection (the *Silencing Epistle*), and his only surviving medical work, the *Abbreviation of the Commentary of Galen on the Aphorism of Hippocrates*. Some of the other main sources—al-Ḥarizi's *Sefer Taḥkemoni* and other pieces of poetry—were either only available in uncritical editions or else not printed at all. A further source is ʿAbd al-Laṭīf al-Baġdādī's *Book of the Two Pieces of Advice* (*Kitāb al-Naṣīḥatayn*), an Arabic text which possibly also sheds more light on Joseph Ibn Shimʿon's biography but which came to light only in the course of the twentieth century. In addition to this, Joseph Ibn Shimʿon's tombstone was also identified in Aleppo in the course of the twentieth century.

In spite of all these discoveries, modern research on Joseph Ibn Shimʿon was hampered for decades by one unfavourable factor. About ten years after the publication of Munk's study, Moritz Steinschneider began to publish some of the results of his research, and—contrary to Munk—he was firmly convinced throughout his life that Joseph ben Judah Ibn Shimʿon, Maimonides's faithful student, was the same person as Joseph ben Judah Ibn ʿAqnin, the author of the philosophical work *Ṭibb al-Nufūs* and many other halakhic, exegetical, ethical, poetical, philosophical, and scientific works.[6] Accordingly, all his articles

thesis by Lipa Ginat, "Rabbi Joseph Rosh Hasseder and His Manuscripts of the TOSHBA and Halacha (from the Geniza)" [Hebrew] (PhD diss., Tel Aviv University, 2004).

6 Moritz Steinschneider's studies on Joseph ben Judah (Ibn ʿAqnin) from the years 1852 to 1888 were collected in Steinschneider, *Gesammelte Schriften von Moritz Steinschneider, Band I: Gelehrten-Geschichte*, ed. Heinrich Malter and Alexander Marx (Berlin: Poppelauer, 1925), 35–89 and 575–98; see also Steinschneider, *Die arabische Literatur der Juden. Ein Beitrag zur*

combine historical information about the two men and thus convey a hybrid picture of a historical figure that never existed. More recent scholarship—including the present study—generally rejects this assumption and accepts Baneth's arguments in favour of Munk's thesis that they were two separate figures. There is, however, a flipside to this. The fact that Steinschneider's studies evolved from a mistaken fundamental assumption has apparently led many scholars to believe that his studies are altogether irrelevant for the study of Joseph Ibn Shimʿon's life and works, and indeed, they have barely been used. This, however, is a serious mistake, because irrespective of Steinschneider's (probably incorrect) opinion regarding the identity (or identities) of the two Joseph ben Judahs, his studies contain a plethora of relevant sources and are full of important observations. These are still largely untapped sources of information, as long as one carefully divides them between the two historical figures.

To date, no study has attempted to integrate the available information into a synthetic view of Joseph Ibn Shimʿon's intellectual profile or to depict his development diachronically.[7] It is the purpose of this paper to do so by reconstructing four distinct periods in Joseph Ibn Shimʿon's life, which are the parts of what can perhaps best be described as a "Maimonidean life at the turn of the twelfth to the thirteenth century." It will unveil the image of a fascinating and complex personality whose life and work deserves more systematic investigation and attention than it has received thus far.

Literaturgeschichte der Araber großenteils aus handschriftlichen Quellen (Frankfurt am Main: Kaufmann, 1902), 228–33. His opinion was supported by Wilhelm Bacher in his edition of Joseph Ibn ʿAqnin, *Sepher Musar. Kommentar zum Mischnatraktat Aboth von R. Joseph ben Jehuda*, ed. Wilhelm Bacher (Berlin: Itzkowski, 1910), viii–xi, and it is tacitly assumed in many subsequent publications, such as Samuel Posnański, *Babylonische Geonim im nachgaonäischen Zeitalter nach handschriftlichen und gedruckten Quellen* (Berlin: Mayer und Müller, 1914), 16, 30–34, 56, 120. However, it was rejected by Adolf Neubauer, "Joseph ben Aqnin," *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums* 19 (1870): 348–55, 395–401, and 445–48, who expressed his scepticism about the *status questionis* in a review article published in *Revue des études juives* 11 (1885): 310–11; Simon Eppenstein, "Moses ben Maimon, ein Lebens- und Charakterbild," in *Moses ben Maimon. Sein Leben, seine Werke und sein Einfluss*, ed. Wilhelm Bacher, Marcus Brann, and David Simonsen (Leipzig: Gustav Fock, 1914), 2:1–103, at 58–60 n. 1, and many others.

7 The biographical sketch found in Judah al-Ḥarizi, *The Wanderings of Judah Alharizi: Five Accounts of His Travels* [Hebrew], ed. Joseph Yahalom and Joshua Blau (Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi Institute, 2002), 33–34, stresses the changing economic status and social prestige that Joseph Ibn Shimʿon enjoyed during his lifetime. An interesting collection of sources for Joseph Ibn Shimʿon's life that is often neglected is found in Joel L. Kraemer, *Maimonides: The Life and World of One of Civilization's Greatest Minds* (New York: Doubleday, 2008), 359–70.

2 Joseph Ibn Shimʿon's Early Years in the Maghreb

Joseph Ibn Shimʿon was born and spent the early years of his life in the Maghreb. It is not entirely clear whether the designation "al-Sabtī" which is sometimes added to his name refers to his birthplace or the place where he grew up or lived later on. Alternatively, the Arab biographer Ibn al-Qiftī (1172–1248), who was to become a personal friend of his and thus can be seen as one of the most important biographical sources for Joseph Ibn Shimʿon's life, says in the *Taʾrīḫ al-Ḥukamāʾ* that Joseph Ibn Shimʿon was from the people of Fez (*ahl al-Fās*), which again may refer either to his birthplace or to his hometown.[8] In any event, he was obviously born into a Jewish family that was forced to adopt Islam during the Almohad persecutions.[9] Ibn al-Qiftī reports that Joseph Ibn Shimʿon's father was active in one of the (or: various, *baʿḍ*) "market (i.e., vulgar?) professions (or: crafts)" (*ḥiraf sūqīyah*) and that the son had studied "this science" in his homeland.[10] It is not entirely clear exactly what kind of knowledge he acquired during these early years of study, but we are informed that he achieved quite some proficiency (*šadā*) in them.[11] Later, he also came to study some of the mathematical sciences, and these were "present in his mind"

8 Ibn al-Qiftī, *Ibn al-Qiftī's Taʾrīḫ al-Ḥukamāʾ. Auf Grund der Vorarbeiten Aug. Müller's herausgegeben*, ed. Julius Lippert (Leipzig: Dieterich'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1903), 392–94. The chapter was translated into French in Munk, "Notice," 14–18, and into English in Judah al-Ḥarizi, *Kitāb al-Durar: A Book in Praise of God and the Israelite Communities*, ed. Joshua Blau, Paul B. Fenton, and Joseph Yahalom (Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi Institute, 2009), 51*–53*, and Alan Verskin, "A Muslim-Jewish Friendship in the Medieval Mediterranean: ʿAlī al-Qifṭī's Biography of Rabbi Yūsuf Ibn Shamʿūn (Joseph ben Judah)," in *The Idea of the Mediterranean*, ed. Mario Mignone (Stony Brook, NY: Forum Italicum Publishing, 2017), 193–95. In the following pages, I will make no explicit references to Barhebraeus's *Taʾrīḫ muḫtaṣar al-duwal*, ed. Anton Ṣāliḥa, 2nd ed. (Beirut: Imprimerie catholique, 1958), 238 and 242–43, which only summarises passages from Ibn al-Qiftī.

9 On the profile of the forced converts (*anusim*), see Menahem Ben-Sasson, "On the Jewish Identity of Forced Converts: A Study of Forced Conversion in the Almohade Period" [Hebrew], *Peʿamim* 42 (1990): 16–37.

10 Ibn al-Qiftī, *Taʾrīḫ al-Ḥukamāʾ*, 392.

11 In Ibn al-Qiftī's terminology, the word *šadā* seems to designate the achievement of a certain level of proficiency in a certain subject or profession after one has "read" (*qaraʾa*) or "studied" (*ʿāna*) it, similar to *aǧāda*. He uses the same terminology in the description of Maimonides's early education, although there the verb *šadā* is replaced by *šadda* (literally, "became strong"); see Ibn al-Qiftī, *Taʾrīḫ al-Ḥukamāʾ*, 317. The meaning and translation of the latter passage is discussed in Sarah Stroumsa, *Maimonides in His World: Portrait of a Mediterranean Thinker* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009), 126; Herbert A. Davidson, "Ibn al-Qiftī's Statement Regarding Maimonides' Early Study of Science," *Aleph* 14 (2014): 245–58; and in Stroumsa's reply, "On Maimonides and on Logic," *Aleph* 14 (2014): 259–63.

(*ḥāḍirah fī ḍihnihi*) while he was lecturing (*ʿinda al-muḥāḍarah*). It is possible, but not certain, that this also refers to Joseph Ibn Shimʿon's predilection for astronomy, which is attested for later periods in his life.

We hear very little in the biographical sources about Joseph Ibn Shimʿon receiving any kind of philosophical or theological training while he was in the West. There is no evidence that he met any of the famous twelfth-century Muslim or Jewish philosophers of the Maghreb or al-Andalus in his youth.[12] In the famous dedicatory letter to the *Guide of the Perplexed*, Maimonides mentions that Joseph Ibn Shimʿon had been taught in in *kalām* before he came to study with him, but nothing more is known about this teacher, not even whether he indeed studied with him when he was still in the Maghreb. Scholarship has, however, brought this information into connection with the one literary document that possibly dates from Joseph Ibn Shimʿon's early life. This is the theologico-philosophical *Treatise on the Necessary Existent, the Quality of the Forthcoming of Things from Him and the Creation of the World* (*Maʾamar bi-Meḥuyyav ha-Meṣiʾut we-Ekhut Siddur ha-Devarim mimmeno we-Ḥidduš ha-ʿOlam*), which was originally written in Arabic (or Judaeo-Arabic) but survives only in a deficient Hebrew translation.[13] According to David H. Baneth's studies, it seems likely that it was written by Joseph Ibn Shimʿon as a student exercise for an Arab Muslim teacher (called *Siddur ha-Torah* and *Siddur ha-Din* in the Hebrew translation)[14] in the period of his life as a Muslim in the

12 Ibn Rushd is briefly mentioned in the so-called allegorical correspondence between Joseph Ibn Shimʿon and Maimonides (to be discussed in more detail below); see Moses Maimonides, *Epistulae*, ed. David Hirsch Baneth (Jerusalem: Mekize Nirdamim, 1946; repr. Jerusalem: Magnes, 1985), 23. Some scholars have read this passage as an allusion to the possibility that Joseph Ibn Shimʿon studied astronomy with Ibn Rushd in the West, but this interpretation is highly speculative. This is the case even if the Andalusian philosopher was known to Joseph Ibn Shimʿon and is also mentioned in a letter to him from Maimonides from the year 1191; see Moses Maimonides, *Iggerot ha-RaMBaM* [Hebrew], ed. Yiṣḥaq Shilat, 3rd ed. (Jerusalem: Hoṣaʾat Šilat, 1995), 1:299 and 313.

13 This treatise has been edited twice, once in a partial edition accompanied by a German translation as Joseph Ibn ʿAqnin, *Drei Abhandlungen von Josef b. Jehuda, dem Schüler Maimûni's*, ed. and trans. Moritz Löwy (Berlin, 1879), and in a complete Hebrew edition with an English translation as Ibn ʿAqnin, *A Treatise as to the Necessary Existence, the Procedure of Things from the Necessary Existence, the Creation of the World, by Joseph ibn Aqnin*, ed. and trans. Judah Leon Magnes (Berlin: Itzkowski, 1904). Short descriptions and studies can be found in the revised English translations of Julius Guttmann, *Philosophies of Judaism: The History of Jewish Philosophy from Biblical Times to Franz Rosenzweig*, trans. David W. Silverman (New York: Schocken, 1973), 215–18, and Colette Sirat, *A History of Jewish Philosophy in the Middle Ages*, trans. M. Reich (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 206.

14 See Ibn ʿAqnin, *A Treatise as to the Necessary Existence*, 3, ll. 10–11, and 6, l. 3.

West.[15] The apparently more *kalāmic* outlook in this work is also seen to be sufficient proof that it must have preceded his encounter with Maimonides's Aristotelian thought. This is possible, but it must be noted that this difficult text has not yet received the systematic and source-critical investigation that would allow us to draw far-reaching conclusions about its place in Joseph Ibn Shimʿon's intellectual development.

Although Ibn al-Qifṭī describes Joseph Ibn Shimʿon as a "physician from the people of Fez" (*ṭabīb min ahl al-Fās*) at the beginning of the chapter, this does not seem to refer to his education or profession during this early period of his life. In a text by Judah al-Ḥarizi to be discussed more in detail below, Joseph Ibn Shimʿon is counted among the poets of the Maghreb, but this probably also refers to his family origins and should not be taken as evidence that he had already gained fame in this field before he left for the East.[16]

It is unknown in which year and at which age he left the Maghreb. A tentative conjecture has been drawn from the information provided in the *Sefer Taḥkemoni* by al-Ḥarizi, who met Joseph Ibn Shimʿon in Aleppo around the year 1217 and mentions that he had come to this city some thirty years earlier (i.e., around 1187).[17] If this information is combined with a remark by Ibn al-Qifṭī which is often interpreted to the effect that he only lived in Egypt for a short time (*muddatan qarībatan*),[18] one can reach the conclusion that he must have left the Maghreb for Egypt sometime in the mid-1180s. It should be noted, however, that in using these words, the Arab historiographer does not actually say anything about the total period of time that Joseph Ibn Shimʿon spent in Egypt, but rather says that the period of his *discipleship* with Maimonides was a short one.[19] It is, of course, not impossible that the two more or less coincided, but Ibn al-Qifṭī provides no definite evidence for this. Joseph Ibn Shimʿon's departure from the Maghreb and his arrival in Egypt could therefore also have taken place at an earlier date.

The reason why Joseph Ibn Shimʿon left his homeland is also uncertain. Many scholars assume that he first and foremost wished to escape the

15 David Hirsch Baneth, "Philological Observations on Joseph ben Judah ibn Shimʿon's Metaphysical Treatise" [Hebrew], *Tarbiz* 27 (1958): 236–39.

16 See also Steinschneider, *Gesammelte Schriften*, 47 n.24.

17 See the critical editions of the *Sefer Taḥkemoni* in al-Ḥarizi, *Wanderings*, 67, version B, l. 221, and al-Ḥarizi, *Taḥkemoni or The Tales of Heman the Ezraḥite by Judah Alharizi* [Hebrew], ed. Joseph Yahalom and Naoya Katsumata (Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi Institute, 2010), 454, l. 151.

18 See Ibn al-Qifṭī, *Taʾrīḫ al-Ḥukamāʾ*, 393.

19 See Ibn al-Qifṭī, *Taʾrīḫ al-Ḥukamāʾ*, 393: *wa-aqāma ʿindahu muddatan qarībatan*.

religious persecutions under the Almohads,[20] which is also implied in Ibn al-Qifṭī's report. On the other hand, in the letter sent to Maimonides from Alexandria, which probably accompanied the *maqāmah* entitled *Sayeth Ṭuviyyah ben Ṣidqiyyah*, he presents his decision as being solely motived by his desire to study with his future master.[21] Ibn al-Qifṭī explicitly reports that he fled to Egypt, taking his possessions (*mālahu*) with him, so Joseph Ibn Shimʿon cannot have been a poor man when he arrived there.

3 Joseph Ibn Shimʿon's Sojourn in Egypt and His Encounter with Maimonides

The second period in Joseph Ibn Shimʿon's life brings us to Egypt. Next to nothing is known about the period of time he spent in Alexandria, where he arrived first, except that it was from there that he attempted to get into direct contact with Maimonides, sending him a *maqāmah* (probably the one opening with the words *Sayeth Ṭuviyyah ben Ṣidqiyyah*) and the accompanying letter mentioned above. This *maqāmah* seems to have become quite famous in the Middle Ages and can be largely reconstructed using fragments from the Cairo Genizah.[22]

20 Munk, "Notice," 47, raises the question of whether Joseph Ibn Shimʿon himself had to convert to Islam—as it appears from Ibn al-Qifṭī's description—or whether he was born into a family which had already converted to Islam after the beginning of the persecution. Given the fact that the beginning of the persecutions is dated to between 1146 and 1148, the first option would mean that he must have been born in the fourth decade of the twelfth century, which would make him roughly the same age as Maimonides. Munk considers this to be highly unlikely in view of the quality of the relationship between the two that developed in later years.

21 The letter is published in Joseph Yahalom, "'Sayeth Tuviyyah ben Ẓidkiyyah': The Maqama of Joseph ben Simeon in Honor of Maimonides," *Tarbiz* 66 (1997): 543–77, at 574–76. A fragment was previously published in Maimonides, *Epistulae*, 5–6.

22 See Yahalom, "'Sayeth Tuviyyah ben Ẓidkiyyah'"; Yahalom, "A Romance Maqāma: The Place of the 'Speech of Tuvia Ben Zedeqiah' in the History of the Hebrew Maqāma" [Hebrew], *Hispania Judaica Bulletin* 10 (2014): 113–28 (Hebrew section), with additional fragments on 122–24, and Maimonides, *Epistulae*, 5–6. The *maqāma* is also praised by Judah al-Ḥarizi in chapter 12 (on the poets) of the *Sefer Taḥkemoni*; see al-Ḥarizi, *Wanderings*, 179, l. 192, and al-Ḥarizi, *Taḥkemoni*, 222, l. 282. On the reception history of Joseph Ibn Shimʿon's poetry, see Steinschneider, *Gesammelte Schriften*, 47–48, Yahalom, "'Sayeth Ṭuviyyah ben Ẓidkiyyah,'" 553–55, and Jefim Schirmann, *The History of Hebrew Poetry in Christian Spain and Southern France* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Magnes Press and Ben Zvi Institute, 1997), 273–78 (on Abraham Ibn Ḥasdai).

The story of the encounter between the two men is described in Maimonides's Judaeo-Arabic dedicatory letter to the *Guide of the Perplexed*, which was written many years after the events took place.[23] It becomes clear from Maimonides's recollections that Joseph Ibn Shimʿon, arriving from the West and eager to study with Maimonides, was already able to compose letters and good poetry and that he had studied ("read," *qara'a*) a good deal of astronomy and the necessary mathematical sciences. This allowed them to deepen the study of mathematics—and later, of logic—to such a degree that Maimonides became confident that Joseph Ibn Shimʿon would soon be ready to understand the "secrets of the books of prophecy" (*asrār al-kutub al-nabawīyah*), first through hints and then—after Joseph Ibn Shimʿon's own request—through direct instruction in "metaphysics" (*umūr ilāhīyah*) and the discussion of *kalām* arguments, about which he had already heard from another teacher and which had caused him some perplexity. Maimonides, however, insisted on the proper order of the (Aristotelian) curriculum of study (which, as a matter of fact, implicitly stands behind the intellectual path described in the dedicatory letter as a whole).

Apart from the allusion to Joseph Ibn Shimʿon's interest in *kalām*, the intellectual profile documented here largely concurs with that drawn in Ibn al-Qifṭī's biography: nothing is found in these sources about the study of religious law or the study and/or practice of medicine. It appears that when Joseph Ibn Shimʿon arrived in Egypt, he was an educated man whose *forte* was the mathematical sciences, especially astronomy. This image is further corroborated by Maimonides himself in *Guide* 2.24, where the study of astronomy with his student is explicitly mentioned. Ibn al-Qifṭī also provides some important information to the effect that Maimonides and Joseph Ibn Shimʿon studied and edited a copy of Ibn Aflaḥ's book on astronomy together, which the latter had brought with him from Ceuta.

In spite of the same general outlook in Ibn al-Qifṭī's report and Maimonides's description of the past events, it must be noted that there are considerable differences between them regarding the details and the quality of the astronomical studies that the two carried out together. Whereas Ibn al-Qifṭī describes the two men as scholars who were working on an almost equal footing, Maimonides seems to stress that Joseph Ibn Shimʿon's knowledge of astronomy did not go beyond a basic level. As I will argue elsewhere, it further seems possible that a conflict between Maimonides and his student broke out

23 In addition to all the standard editions and translations of the *Guide*, the Judaeo-Arabic dedicatory letter is also found in Maimonides, *Epistulae*, 7–9, and Maimonides, *Iggerot*, 2:250–53.

regarding Ibn Aflaḥ's astronomical book that they had agreed to study together, which might have found some echoes in the so-called *Allegorical Correspondence*. However, the authenticity of these letters and the interpretation of the allegories are still a matter of scholarly controversy.[24]

Nothing is known about exactly how long Joseph Ibn Shim'on's sojourn in Egypt lasted or why he decided to end his stay with Maimonides as early as ca. 1187. A possible explanation could be the conflict mentioned above, but it is also possible that Joseph Ibn Shim'on needed to look for opportunities to increase the wealth he had brought with him from the Maghreb. There is no evidence that he made any attempts to become active as a trader (*tāǧir*) in Egypt, but it is possible that such considerations stood behind the decision to move away from there and to settle in Syria.

4 Between Syria, Iraq, and India: Joseph Ibn Shim'on's Intermediate Period

As mentioned above, nothing certain is known about the reasons that convinced Joseph Ibn Shim'on to leave Egypt in ca. 1187. However, if he had wished to (or had had to) leave Egypt, then there were probably good reasons to choose Syria and Aleppo as his first destination. At that time, large parts of Syria were ruled by the same dynasty as Egypt, and Aleppo had become the residence of the Ayyubid governor and (from 1193 onwards) independent ruler al-Malik al-Ẓāhir Ġāzī (1172–1216). The city was of growing political importance and apparently also economically prosperous, and it may have appeared to be a good outpost for trading activities between the East and the Mediterranean. Another important motive could have been that Aleppo had a Jewish community of considerable size.[25]

24 See the discussion below and my forthcoming article: Reimund Leicht, "Ibn Rushd and Ǧābir Ibn Aflaḥ among the Jews—New Interpretations for Joseph ben Judah Ibn Shim'on's *Allegorical Correspondence* with Maimonides" in *Averroes and Averroism in Medieval Jewish Thought*, ed. Racheli Haliva, Daniel Davies, and Yoav Meyrav (Leiden: Brill, forthcoming).

25 There is a description of Aleppo in this period in Anne-Marie Eddé, *La principauté Ayyoubide d'Alep (579/1183–658/1260)* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 1999); on the status of the *ḏimmī*s, see Eddé, *La principauté*, 466–72. On the history of the Jewish community in Aleppo, see Miriam Frenkel, "The Jewish Community of Aleppo: Preserving Unity and Uniqueness" [Hebrew], *Pe'amim* 61 (1994): 57–74; Frenkel, "The Leadership of the Jewish Community of Aleppo" [Hebrew], *Pe'amim* 66 (1996): 20–42; and the studies assembled in Yom Tov Assis, Miriam Frenkel, and Yaron Harel, eds., *Aleppo Studies. The Jews of Aleppo: Their History and Culture* [Hebrew], vol. 1 (Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi Institute, 2009).

To judge from Ibn al-Qifṭī's report, Joseph Ibn Shimʿon's life after he left Egypt should be divided into two different periods. During the earlier period, he seems to have lived a rather unstable life with extensive travels to Iraq and India, although it was also during this period that he married his first wife, who came from a distinguished Aleppan Jewish family.[26] It transpires from Ibn al-Qifṭī's words that during this period, he invested his money in trading activities until he had finally amassed a sufficient fortune to allow him to permanently install himself in an estate that he purchased near Aleppo. Extensive travelling in the earlier period is also attested in a couple of other sources. For example, in a chapter of the *Taʾrīḫ al-Ḥukamāʾ* dealing with the Muslim scholar ʿAbd al-Salām al-Baġdādī, Ibn al-Qifṭī reports an episode he had heard about from Joseph Ibn Shimʿon that probably took place in Baghdad in 1192: in an assembly (*maḥfil*) that came together in that city, he listened to an anti-philosophical and anti-scientific speech by a certain ʿUbayd Allāh al-Taymī al-Bakrī, also known as Ibn al- Māristānīyah, who sharply attacked and finally burnt Ibn al-Haiṭam's *Kitāb al-Hay'ah*.[27] This report is interesting not only because it provides us with information about the "travelling period" in Joseph Ibn Shimʿon's life, but also because it may indirectly corroborate his interest in astronomy.

A period of travelling is also indicated by a passing remark in Joseph Ibn Shimʿon's major polemical work, the *Silencing Epistle* (*Risālat al-Iskāt*),[28] which scholars have dated to around 1191/92.[29] Here, he reports on what can be seen as a chapter in the prehistory of the famous controversy about resurrection in which Maimonides became involved during the 1190s. In that text, Joseph Ibn Shimʿon tells us about a dispute that took place in Baghdad between him and the Gaon Samuel ben Eli (who is also often called in the Arabic form Samuel

26 Ibn al-Qiftī mentions that his father in law was Abū ʿAlāʾ, the scribe (*al-kātib*) *mārḍakāʾ* (or *dārḍakāʾ*, in Munk's version). The meaning of this title, which is sometimes translated as "supervisor of the butchery," remains uncertain; see the discussion in Munk, "Notice," 15–16 n. 1; Eddé, *La principauté*, 466–67. The article in front of *al-kātib* renders it grammatically unlikely that this is to be read as a genitive construction (i.e., "supervisor of …"). *Mār* could stand for the Aramaic honorary title "master."

27 Ibn al-Qiftī, *Taʾrīḫ al-Ḥukamāʾ*, 229. The episode is discussed and dated by Munk, "Notice," 18–20. See also Ferdinand Wüstenfeld, *Geschichte der Arabischen Aerzte und Naturforscher* (Göttingen, 1840), 103 (§§185–86).

28 Sarah Stroumsa, ed. and trans., *The Beginnings of the Maimonidean Controversy in the East. Yosef Ibn Shimʿon's Silencing Epistle Concerning the Resurrection of the Dead. Arabic and Hebrew Texts of* Risālat al-iskāt fī ḥašr al-amwāt*, with Introduction and Annotated Hebrew Translation* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi Institute, 1999).

29 For an analysis of the historical context of the composition of the *Silencing Epistle*, see Stroumsa, *Maimonides in His World*, 165–83.

ben ʿAlī in modern scholarship), who was to become one of Maimonides's greatest adversaries later on.[30] The topic of the dispute was the correct interpretation of the biblical story of the witch of Ein Dor. According to the *Silencing Epistle*, this event had taken place "years ago."[31] After that dispute, he left the city, first to go West (probably Syria), then returning (*sāfartu ʿan Baġdād maġriban wa-ʿudtu ilayhā*), and finally travelling from Baghdad to the East (probably India) before returning to Baghdad once again. There, he learnt that in the meantime, the Gaon had written a pamphlet about that very dispute (*wa-sāfartu ʿanhā mašriqan wa-ʿudtu wa-kānat al-ʿawdah baʿd muddah ṭawīlah munḏu iǧtamaʿtu bihi*).[32]

Nothing can help us to determine how long this period of Joseph Ibn Shimʿon's life endured, and we do not have clear evidence as to whether he was in permanent contact with Maimonides during these years. However, a piece of correspondence between the two men which may well fit into this period can be found in the final section of Maimonides's *Letter on the Dispute with the Head of the Yeshiva*. It probably forms an independent piece that should be viewed separately from the rest of the text.[33] In this section, Maimonides first gives Joseph Ibn Shimʿon his approval to go to Baghdad and to teach there.[34] He even agrees that he may open a *midrash*[35] where the *Mishneh Torah* (simply called *al-Ḥibbur*) would be taught, but then expresses some reservations, for two main reasons: first, Ibn Shimʿon might be drawn into constant conflicts with the local establishment because of the tense atmosphere in Baghdad, and second, opening a schoolhouse could harm his business affairs. Maimonides warns him that he might lose his economic and institutional independence,

30 See Marina Rustow, "Ibn al-Dastūr, Samuel ben ʿAlī," in *Encyclopedia of Jews in the Islamic World*, 2:450–51.

31 The relevant paragraph (71) is missing in the fragmentary Judaeo-Arabic original, but it is translated by Ibn Vivas using the words *lifnei šanim*; see Stroumsa, *The Beginnings of the Maimonidean Controversy*, 105.

32 Joseph Ibn Shimʿon, *Silencing Epistle*, paragraph 85, in Stroumsa, *The Beginnings of the Maimonidean Controversy*, 34.

33 Baneth, in Maimonides, *Epistulae*, 31–49, was convinced that the unity of the whole letter (edited on 49–71) can be established. Based on the evidence drawn from an anonymous letter written sometime after Abraham Maimonides's death in 1237, A.S. Halkin, "In Defense of Maimonides' Code" [Hebrew], *Tarbiz* 25 (1956): 422–28, and Shilat in Maimonides, *Iggerot*, 289–91, convincingly argue that the letter consists of—at least, one might say—two separate units.

34 Maimonides, *Epistulae*, 68–71; Maimonides, *Iggerot*, 1:288–89 and 311–14.

35 As Shelomo Dov Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society: The Jewish Communities of the Arab World as Portrayed in the Documents of the Cairo Geniza* (Berekely: University of California Press, 1971), 2:199, shows, the term *midrash* is more common in the Genizah than the term *bet midrash*.

meaning that he would have to teach for money—something Maimonides generally considered inappropriate and forbidden[36]—and that he would have to do so under the authority of the exilarch (*Roʾš ha-Galut*). Maimonides's opinion (*raʾy*) is therefore to make trade (*tiǧārah*) his work (for financial income) and then to study medicine (*qirāʾat al-ṭibb*), together with the true (economically independent) study of the Torah (*Talmud Torah ḥaqīqatan*). Only hesitantly does he give Joseph Ibn Shimʿon instructions on how to teach halakha on a rather basic level using the *Mishneh Torah* in conjunction and comparison with the *Hilekhot ha-Riʺf* (called *Hilekhot ha-Rav*).

It is interesting to see that after these instructions on how to teach halakha (if he is really to insist on doing so), Maimonides adds a passage in which he informs Joseph Ibn Shimʿon about how he himself had meanwhile gained considerable fame as a medical doctor among the leading circles in Egypt (*kubarāʾ*), especially that of the *qāḍī* al-Fāḍil. This seems to have been an enormous success in Maimonides's eyes, although he stresses that his profession leaves him almost no time for studying the Torah and other sciences. He states that he has even found no time to make a more in depth study of the writings of Ibn Rushd, which had recently reached him almost in their entirety. Maimonides does not explicitly state to which of Ibn Rushd's books and commentaries this refers, but it has been argued that they might have been the recently completed *Long Commentaries*.[37] The text concludes with a section in which Maimonides asks Joseph Ibn Shimʿon, whom he apparently believed to be residing in Aleppo at that time, to help him with some business with a trader (called Ibn al-Maššāṭ) returning from India, and finally with a long list of greetings.[38]

In many respects, this letter, which can perhaps be dated to 21 October 1191 according to its colophon, tallies quite well with the information that we have assembled so far about Joseph Ibn Shimʿon's activities immediately after he left Egypt: he was travelling between Syria and Iraq, he had contacts in India, and he attempted to increase his wealth through international trade. It contains, however, a couple of quite surprising new details that must not be overlooked.

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36 See Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah, Hilekhot Talmud Torah* 1:7 and 3:10.

37 This is the opinion of Warren Zev Harvey, "The Problem of Many Gods in al-Ghazālī, Averroes, Maimonides, Crescas, and Sforno," in *Sceptical Paths: Enquiry and Doubt from Antiquity to the Present*, ed. Giuseppe Veltri, Racheli Haliva, Stephan Schmid, and Emidio Spinelli (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019), 85–86 n. 6.

38 On this passage, see also Shelomo Dov Goitein and Mordechai Akiva Friedman, *India Traders of the Middle Ages: Documents from the Cairo Geniza. "India Book," Part One* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 90–91 (Hebrew version: Shelomo Dov Goitein and Mordechai Akiva Friedman, *India Book III. Abraham ben Yijū. India Trader and Manufacturer. Cairo Geniza Documents* [Hebrew] [Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi Institute, 2010], 35–36).

In this text, we find for the first time a recommendation to study (and perhaps practice) medicine. Even though it is not impossible that Joseph Ibn Shimʿon had gained some knowledge of this profession and science at an earlier date, we have not heard anything about it so far in the sources that are available to us. It furthermore seems not unlikely that Maimonides's advice to study medicine is connected to the description of his own professional success and the daily routine of a physician (even if the lifestyle that resulted from it might not have seemed very appealing). He seems to recommend to Joseph Ibn Shimʿon a professional career that he himself had successfully pursued and that was now allowing him to come into direct contact with the ruling élite of Egypt. Moreover, it seems worth noting that Maimonides appears to present his success as a medical doctor as a recent development. One thus gets the feeling that this must have been entirely unknown and perhaps even unforeseeable to his addressee. Accordingly, this letter gives the impression that the author and the recipient had not had contact for quite a while.[39] It is not unreasonable to surmise that a considerable period of time had elapsed between Joseph Ibn Shimʿon's departure from Egypt and the renewal of their correspondence—time during which Maimonides had gained the privileged status of a court physician, which he had not had before.[40]

However, a few other things had also changed: we have so far heard only about Joseph Ibn Shimʿon's interest in mathematics, astronomy, philosophy,

39 Modern scholarship normally assumes that the contact between Maimonides and Joseph Ibn Shimʿon was uninterrupted (see, e.g., Steinschneider, *Gesammelte Schriften*, 40), but there is no compelling evidence for this.

40 The story of Maimonides's career as a physician is difficult to reconstruct. Ibn al-Qifṭī, *Taʾrīḫ al-Ḥukamāʾ*, 317, reports that Maimonides had studied medicine in his youth, but that he had not practised it. Opinions differ as to when Maimonides started practising medicine. This might have occurred after the death of Maimonides's brother, which left him without solid financial support. This event, however, cannot be dated with precision, and the direct connection to the practice of medicine remains conjectural. See also Herbert A. Davidson, *Moses Maimonides: The Man and His Works* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 35–36 and 67–68 (on the correspondence with Joseph Ibn Shimʿon), and Stroumsa, *Maimonides*, 124–38, esp. 128–31. Stroumsa argues that Ibn al-Qifṭī's remark about Maimonides's medical knowledge probably refers to his early training in al-Andalus, because from Maimonides's medical writings, we learn that he did practice medicine (or at least followed other physicians in their rounds and consultations) in North Africa and that when he started practising medicine in Egypt, his career began at the court. This may indicate that Maimonides was already an accomplished physician when he arrived in Egypt. In any event, if the dating of the letter is correct, Maimonides's appointment as physician to the house of al-Fāḍil around the year 1191 must have been a relatively recent event; see also Bernard Lewis, "Maimonides, Lionheart, and Saladin," *Eretz Israel* 7 (1964): 75.

and theology, but now all of a sudden we encounter a person who seriously intends to open a religious school in Baghdad in which Jewish law would be taught using Maimonides's *Mishneh Torah*.[41] Within its concrete historical context, such a plan could have meant no less than the founding of a Maimonidean stronghold in the immediate vicinity of the honourable old institutions of Jewish learning in Babylonia and within the exilarch's sphere of influence. Nothing that we have heard about Joseph Ibn Shimʿon's inclinations and qualifications so far indicates that he would go in the direction of teaching Jewish law. Therefore, it seems not implausible that after a period of time during which he was travelling between Aleppo and India as a trader with regular stops in Iraq, he came up with the idea of establishing himself as a teacher in Baghdad, in direct competition with the traditional institutions located there. The disputes that he held with the representatives of the older schools in the city may have convinced him that it was high time for a change towards new methods of religious learning. If it is correct that some time had elapsed since Maimonides and Joseph Ibn Shimʿon had had their last contact (as I have tried to argue before), it seems not implausible that the renewal of the contact between the two men was motivated by such plans.

Thus, it is possible that not only the letter discussed above, but also much of the remaining correspondence about halakhic issues and the status of the *Mishneh Torah* for the teaching of the law[42] have their origin in this context and period of time.[43] It is quite noteworthy that upon reading these sources, the *Mishneh Torah* appears here to be a work with which Joseph Ibn Shimʿon was not closely familiar from his "Egyptian" period. It had obviously not been the object of any intensive study with Maimonides before, and the latter's reluctant approval of Joseph Ibn Shimʿon's initiative might indicate that he was not altogether convinced that he was the right man to carry out such a plan.

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41 On the correspondence between Maimonides and Joseph Ibn Shimʿon concerning the study of the *Mishneh Torah*, see also Menahem Ben-Sasson, "Maimonides' *Mishneh Torah*: Towards Canon-Formation in the Life of an Author" [Hebrew], in *Uncovering the Canon: Studies in Canonicity and Genizah*, ed. Robert Brody, Amia Lieblich, Donna Shalev, and Menahem Ben-Sasson (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2010), 150 and 157.

42 For an interpretation, see Isadore Twersky, *Introduction to the Code of Maimonides* (Mishneh Torah) (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1980), 41–43, 45–47, 62 n. 101, 73, 74, 76, 520.

43 Three pieces from the correspondence between Maimonides and Joseph Ibn Shimʿon on the teaching of the *Mishneh Torah* which probably belong this period were assembled in the later twelfth century by an anonymous student of Abraham Maimonides; see the text edited from the Genizah fragment New York, JTS, ENA 2379 (IMHM F 33643) in Halkin, "In Defense of Maimonides' Code"; see also Maimonides, *Epistulae*, 49–52 and 68, and Maimonides, *Iggerot*, 1:256–59, 300–304, and 311.

There is no evidence that the idea of installing a Maimonidean schoolhouse in Baghdad ever came to fruition, but it is not far-fetched to assume that some of the belligerent responses from the Babylonian side against Maimonides's *Mishneh Torah* may well be a kind of pre-emptive, defensive strike from the local élite against Joseph Ibn Shimʿon's barely disguised attempts to gain a foothold in Baghdad. Irrespective of the question of who took the first step in this controversy, we are probably witnessing here the fascinating dynamics of the conflict centred on the *Mishneh Torah* that developed in this period of time. Most, if not all of Maimonides's correspondence with Joseph Ibn Shimʿon concerning their conflicts with the Gaon Samuel ben Eli (who probably died between 1194 and 1197) and others will therefore probably also belong to this period of time.[44] As mentioned above, the controversy over Maimonides's teachings about resurrection (including the composition of Joseph Ibn Shimʿon's *Silencing Epistle*) also falls into this period.

If the scholarly consensus regarding the date of the completion and dedication of the *Guide of the Perplexed* to Joseph Ibn Shimʿon is accepted (around 1191), it is notable that all this also occurred during this third period of Joseph Ibn Shimʿon's life, and it may be indicative of an intensification of the relationship between the two men:[45] most of the letters exchanged between Maimonides and Joseph Ibn Shimʿon were written around the beginning of the last decade of the twelfth century, just at the time when the *Guide* was completed and dedicated to Joseph Ibn Shimʿon and when the controversy over resurrection broke out. Whether this concentration of so many "important events" within a very few years indeed reflects the historical facts remains to be investigated in detail.

It is noteworthy, however, that none of the letters exchanged between Maimonides and his student that are generally accepted to be genuine seems to depict Joseph Ibn Shimʿon as a person who had successfully established himself as an authority in Aleppo. As far as I can see, there is no conclusive evidence that forces us to predate Joseph Ibn Shimʿon's ultimate establishment in that city to the time before Maimonides's death in 1204, although it must be admitted that there is no counter-evidence that precludes the opposite either.

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44 See Maimonides, *Epistulae*, 49–79 and 88–90 (letters 6 and 7), and Maimonides, *Iggerot*, 1:256–60, 275–79, 282–88, 293–314, 377–94, 404–18, and 420–22 (letters 15, 18–20, 22, and 24–25).

45 See Z. Diesendruck, "On the Date of the Completion of the *Moreh Nebukim*," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 12/13 (1937/38): 461–97, and Davidson, *Maimonides*, 322. See also the announcement to Joseph Ibn Shimʿon to the effect that he would send him parts of the *Guide* in Maimonides, *Epistulae*, 67–68, and Maimonides, *Iggerot*, 1:298, 310 and 311.

Accordingly, we cannot define the date of the transition between the third and fourth periods in Joseph Ibn Shimʿon's life with any precision.

5 A Controversial Dignitary in Aleppo: The Last Period of Joseph Ibn Shimʿon's Life

Joseph Ibn Shimʿon's plan to establish himself as a religious teacher apparently failed in Baghdad, but he seems to have succeeded with a not altogether different project in Aleppo. Ibn al-Qifṭī makes it clear that Joseph Ibn Shimʿon used the wealth he had earned from his trading activities in order to permanently settle near that city. He further describes Joseph Ibn Shimʿon as a man who had become an honourable merchant (i.e., one who no longer had to travel himself). He now possessed the means to purchase an estate near Aleppo, where he assembled students around him from near and far. It is interesting to see that like Maimonides, Joseph Ibn Shimʿon did not settle down in the capital city itself. In addition to his status as a wealthy patron and teacher (who was economically self-sufficient), he is now described by his Muslim friend as a physician to the local rulers: Ibn al-Qifṭī explicitly says that he was among the "physicians who served the notables of the kingdom of [al-Malik] al-Ẓāhir [Ġāzī]" (*wa-ḫadama fī aṭibbāʾ al-ḥāṣṣ fī al-dawlah al-ẓāhirīyah*). In other words, in the last period of his life, he had become a widely recognised political, social, intellectual, and religious leader in the Aleppan Jewish community, and—if we are to believe Abraham Maimonides's testimony a few years later—even beyond.[46] He also served as a Jewish representative to the Aleppan court.

The richest source of knowledge regarding Joseph Ibn Shimʿon's biography in the last period of his life comes from al-Ḥarizi's poetical works. Unfortunately, the biographical and historical interpretation of these texts is burdened with numerous chronological and methodological problems which need to be tackled first. Based on these results, we will be able to reconstruct two major aspects of Joseph Ibn Shimʿon last years in greater detail: his controversy with Daniel ha-Bavli and his activities as a physician.

46 Abraham ben Maimon, *Milḥamot ha-Šem*, ed. Reuven M. Margaliot (Jerusalem: Mossad ha-Rav Kook, 1953), 54: באו אלי כתב ושליח מתלמיד נכבד חכם גדול היה, תלמיד אבא מרי ז״ל, ר׳ יוסף בר שמעון היה שמו, בצובא היתה ישיבה שלו אחר פרידתו מן הרב אבא מרי ז״ל, והוא שחבר אבא מרי ז״ל מורה הנבוכים על שמו, ורב נכבד היה בכל ארץ קדם בחכמת התורה ובשאר החכמות. It is interesting to see that Abraham Maimonides limits Ibn Shimʿon's influence to the "East" so as to avoid any competition with his own realm of authority.

5.1 *Critical Analysis of Judah al-Ḥarizi's Descriptions of Joseph Ibn Shimʿon in Aleppo*

The most eloquent testimonies of Joseph Ibn Shimʿon's success can be found in the works of Judah al-Ḥarizi, who arrived in Syria in 1217. He can thus be seen as an important eyewitness to Joseph Ibn Shimʿon's biography, and we possess no less than five different descriptions in poetic garb from al-Ḥarizi's pen. In view of his proximity to the persons and events he described, it is highly tempting to take al-Ḥarizi's descriptions as more than mere poetic products that vaguely describe the general traits of a historical figure and to employ them as hard evidence in the reconstruction of Joseph Ibn Shimʿon's status and social prestige. Accordingly, the minute differences between the five different descriptions can be—and have been—taken as important pieces of evidence of certain biographical developments or even specific historical events. It must be noted, however, that such an approach is not without problems and pitfalls.

To start with, al-Ḥarizi is writing as a poet, not as a historiographer. His language, expressions, and formulations are often hyperbolic and cannot be taken at face value. Moreover, differences between his works do not necessarily reflect changing historical and social realities in the Jewish communities he visited in the East, but often al-Ḥarizi's changing attitudes towards some of the prominent figures that he met there. In addition to this, it becomes clear that the texts are written from multiple authorial perspectives and with different intended audiences in mind (including changing constellations of patronage). Last but not least, the relative and absolute dating of the different descriptions is uncertain, largely speculative, and a matter of scholarly dispute. However, in spite of all these uncertainties, these texts are still of great value for any reconstruction of Joseph Ibn Shimʿon's biography in Aleppo, and a close—and sometimes quite laborious—reading and interpretation of them is unavoidable, but ultimately also rewarding.

The originally independent *maqāmah* called *Maḥberet ha-Nedivim* (*Gate of the Patrons*)[47] by modern editors has been described in recent scholarship as "Alḥarīzī's initial attempt to cope with patrons of the East."[48] In this text,

47 The text is edited in al-Ḥarizi, *Wanderings*, 85–87, ll. 159–95, and al-Ḥarizi, *Taḥkemoni*, 595–96, ll. 32–62. In the early printed editions—Constantinople, 1578, fols. 75b–76a, and Amsterdam, 1729, fols. 74a–75a—the text was appended to chapter 50 of the *Sefer Taḥkemoni*.

48 See al-Ḥarizi, *Wanderings*, vii (Hebrew introduction, 10). The text was first published by Samuel M. Stern, "An Unpublished Maqama by al-Harizi," *Papers of the Institute of Jewish Studies London* 1 (1964): 186–210, who did not want to decide upon the relative chronology of the different Hebrew travel descriptions, but predated them to the Arabic version

Joseph Ibn Shimʿon is depicted as the first among the honourable leaders of the community of Aleppo. His Western origin is repeatedly mentioned, and he is lavishly praised as a leader and wealthy patron of the community who is the head of a school (*roʾš ha-seder*), a benefactor of the poor (*hirwah ṣemeʾim*), and a practising medical doctor (*rippeʾ nekhaʾim*), but he is not explicitly called a court physician. Al-Ḥarizi even goes so far as to designate him as a person whom "God anointed as prophet in the East."[49] Some scholars have detected allusions to Joseph Ibn Shimʿon's return to Judaism in a few lines, although this interpretation is uncertain.[50] The last section, in which Joseph Ibn Shimʿon's education is exalted, is of particular interest. It apparently included ethics (*middot*), religion (*sodot ha-teʿudot*), medicine (*refuʾot*), geometry (*ḥokhmat ha-middot*), arithmetic (*šeʾelot ha-minyan*), astronomy (*netivot ha-galgal*), logic (*teʿudot ha-higgayon*), exegesis (*raze ha-Torah*), grammar (*diqduq*), Talmud, and Mishnah.[51] He seems to have taught all of these in his school (*ohel moʿed*).[52]

The second and third descriptions are to be found in a chapter of the *Sefer Taḥkemoni* entitled *Mozne ha-Dor*, which underwent heavy reworking in the two main revisions of the book.[53] In one version of this chapter (version A, according to the editors), Joseph Ibn Shimʿon is found in third place on a list of the honourable personalities of the Jewish community of Aleppo, and the description is considerably shorter than the one found in version B.[54] He is praised for his teaching activities, even if one of his students is said to have revolted against him, though the identity of this student is not mentioned. Moreover, it is noteworthy that slightly later in the text of version A, al-Ḥarizi included a passage describing a fierce dispute that broke out between Joseph

(198–99). In Joshua Blau and Joseph Yahalom, "'Kitab Aldurar': An Unpublished Work by Judah Alharizi" [Hebrew], *Peʿamim* 108 (2006): 38, the authors express the assumption that this text was dedicated to "Joseph ha-Maʿaravi" (i.e., Joseph Ibn Shimʿon) upon their first encounter in Aleppo.

49 Al-Ḥarizi, *Wanderings*, 86, l. 173: *u-va-mizraḥ mašaḥakha el le-naviʾ*.

50 Al-Ḥarizi, *Wanderings*, 86, l. 175–78; see Munk, "Notice," 35–37.

51 Steinschneider, *Gesammelte Schriften*, 44, surmises that this description of Joseph Ibn Shimʿon's comprehensive education might in fact allude to his works. However, this statement—as attractive as it might be—requires reconsideration in view of the fact that Steinschneider's identification of Joseph ben Judah Ibn Shimʿon with the prolific writer Joseph ben Judah Ibn ʿAqnin is no longer generally accepted.

52 See note on l. 195 in al-Ḥarizi, *Wanderings*, 87.

53 This is chapter 46 in the earlier printed editions (Constantinople, fols. 62b–66b, and Amsterdam, fols. 62b–66b). In the new critical edition, the *Maḥberet Mozne ha-Dor* is chapter 39; see the relevant passage in al-Ḥarizi, *Taḥkemoni*, 445, ll. 283–93, and al-Ḥarizi, *Wanderings*, 67, ll. 189–96.

54 Al-Ḥarizi, *Wanderings*, 67, ll. 190–96; al-Ḥarizi, *Taḥkemoni*, 445, ll. 282–91.

Ibn Shimʿon and a certain Eleʿazar the Physician (*ha-rofe' Eleʿazar*).[55] The latter is said to have desecrated the Sabbath while working in the king's service. Joseph Ibn Shimʿon reportedly criticised him severely for this haughtiness, and his ignorance was publicly revealed (*we-hodiaʿ le-khol ha-ʿolam petayuto*). It is not impossible that this criticism was indeed religiously motivated, but as we will see later, this information can be interpreted as traces of a much deeper public rivalry between a physician who is explicitly said to have reached the status of court physician and another medical doctor who has not. At any rate, even if al-Ḥarizi calls Joseph Ibn Shimʿon "a great physician" (*rofe' gadol*), there is nothing that says that he had access to the royal court in Aleppo when these lines were written. It must be mentioned, however, that from a literary point of view, the reappearance of "R. Joseph, the Maghrebi," who was already introduced to the reader a few lines earlier, looks slightly unorganic and might well be a secondary addition.

In version B of this chapter of the *Sefer Taḥkemoni*, al-Ḥarizi places Joseph Ibn Shimʿon at the top of the list of the Aleppan élite.[56] Similarly to version A, he is praised for his teaching not only of the sciences (*ḥokhmot*), but also of *musar*.[57] Al-Ḥarizi does not repeat his statement about Joseph Ibn Shimʿon as a prophet, but says in a more moderate tone that "if this generation was a generation of prophecy, God would have anointed him as a prophet." The slightly less enthusiastic point of view adopted in this version is further corroborated by the observation that Eleʿazar is also named as a court physician (*rofe' ha-melekh*) here, but we are not told that he was defeated by Joseph Ibn Shimʿon in any kind of polemic.[58] In addition to this, version B does not contain any explicit references to Joseph Ibn Shimʿon being active as a physician.

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55 Al-Ḥarizi, *Wanderings*, 69, ll. 204–10; al-Ḥarizi, *Taḥkemoni*, 446, ll. 303–12.

56 Al-Ḥarizi, *Wanderings*, 67, ll. 219–32; al-Ḥarizi, *Taḥkemoni*, 454, ll. 150–61.

57 The meaning of the Hebrew term *musar* in this context can be interpreted in different ways. It could stand for "ethics" or "moral education," but it is more likely that it represents the Arabic concept of *adab*; for the latter usage of the term *musar* by al-Ḥarizi, who translated the Arabic *Adāb al-Falāsifah* into Hebrew under the title *Musare ha-Filosofim*, see Jonathan P. Decter, "Concerning the Terminology of Al-Ḥarizi's Virtues Debate," in *Giving a Diamond: Essays in Honor of Joseph Yahalom on the Occasion of His Seventieth Birthday*, ed. Wout van Bekkum and Naoya Katsumata (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 171, where the term is rendered as "refined culture" and *adab* respectively.

58 Al-Ḥarizi, *Wanderings*, 69, ll. 255–58, and al-Ḥarizi, *Taḥkemoni*, 455, ll. 176–79. Based on the text as given in the Amsterdam edition from 1729, which intermingles the two versions of chapter 46, Steinschneider, *Gesammelte Schriften*, 44 n. 21, believed that this Eleʿazar must have been a different person. The reconstruction of the two distinct recensions renders this assumption unnecessary (see al-Ḥarizi, *Wanderings*, 43, on Eleʿazar in the mixed recensions).

From reading these texts, one gets the impression that version B represents a more distanced perspective on Joseph Ibn Shimʿon and that it lacks a few references to specific historical events that are alluded to in version A. These differences lead to an interpretation that sees version A as the better-informed iteration of the text, which might also reflect later developments. This is the approach privileged in the present study, although such local observations alone are probably not sufficient to decide upon the relative chronology of the versions as a whole, which is nevertheless crucial for a proper interpretation of the differences between the two.

Any decision about the chronological relationship between the two versions is further complicated by another difference, which is also indirectly connected to Joseph Ibn Shimʿon. This difference has traditionally been taken as proof that version A has an earlier date of composition than version B, albeit—I believe—for insufficient reasons. It has been pointed out in modern research (already since Carmoly and Steinschneider) that Daniel ben Saadia ha-Bavli,[59] who was a student of Samuel ben Eli and an opponent of Maimonides (and of Joseph Ibn Shimʿon, for that matter), is praised in a few lines in version A of the *Maḥberet Mozne ha-Dor* as an honourable resident of Damascus,[60] while he remains entirely unmentioned in version B.[61] It therefore seems plausible that this was a *damnatio memoriae* which was provoked by the controversies that broke out between the Maimonideans (Abraham Maimonides, Joseph Ibn Shimʿon) and the anti-Maimonideans (Daniel ha-Bavli) of that time. In that case, version B would reflect a later development of the *Sefer Taḥkemoni*.

This interpretation rests, however, on a few problematic assumptions, which can only be elucidated through a broader look at the historical events. The controversy between Daniel ha-Bavli and the Maimonideans seems to have started in 1213, when the former sent his critique of Maimonides's *Sefer ha-Miṣwot* and *Mishneh Torah* to Abraham Maimonides, who sent his detailed reply a few months later.[62] This event obviously cannot have been the reason for the

59 See Roni Shweka, "Daniel ben Saʿadya ha-Bavli," in *Encyclopedia of Jews in the Islamic World*, 2:20.

60 Al-Ḥarizi, *Wanderings*, 59, ll. 81–83; al-Ḥarizi, *Taḥkemoni*, 438, ll. 123–25.

61 See, for example, Eliakim Carmoly, trans., *Itinéraires de la Terre Sainte des XIII^e, XIV^e et XVII^e siècle, traduits de l'hébreu, et accompagnés de tables, de cartes et d'éclaircissements* (Brussels, 1847), 141; Steinschneider, *Gesammelte Schriften*, 45 n. 22, and al-Ḥarizi, *Wanderings*, xiv; al-Ḥarizi, *Taḥkemoni*, xlviii–xlix.

62 The critique and reply are preserved in manuscripts and were published in Abraham ben Maimon, *Birkat Avraham*, ed. Baer Goldberg (Lyck, 1859 and 1860), and Abraham ben Maimon, *Maʿaśeh Nissim*, ed. Baer Goldberg (Paris, 1867). The historical details of the correspondence between Daniel ha-Bavli and Abraham Maimonides are found in the latter's accompanying Judaeo-Arabic letter printed in *Maʿaśeh Nissim*, 107 (Hebrew

elimination of Daniel ha-Bavli's name from the *Sefer Taḥkemoni*, because it predates al-Ḥarizi's arrival in the East. The sequel to this initial controversy with Daniel ha-Bavli is documented through Abraham Maimonides's report, which is found in the apologetic *Letter to the Sages of Southern France* (*Wars of the Lord—Milḥamot ha-Šem*) composed in the year 1235.[63] In that text, he tells his addressees that a few years after his first contact with Daniel (i.e., after 1213), he received a letter from Joseph Ibn Shimʿon and some unnamed others in which he was informed that Daniel ha-Bavli had written a commentary on *Ecclesiastes* in which he criticised Maimonides (though without mentioning his name). Consequently, Joseph Ibn Shimʿon asked him to put a ban on Daniel ha-Bavli. Abraham Maimonides, however, refused to do so, declaring that he considered himself to be a party (and not a judge) in this affair. Interestingly, however, he did not find much to be blamed either in Daniel ha-Bavli's activities as a religious preacher or in his philosophical opinions, apart from a minor disagreement concerning demons. It further becomes clear from Abraham Maimonides's letter that after Joseph Ibn Shimʿon had failed in his initiative to secure a ban on Daniel ha-Bavli, he is said to have approached the exilarch (*naśi'*) David ben Zakkay in Mossul, who in fact excommunicated Daniel ha-Bavli until he repented, fell ill, and finally died in Damascus. The predominant tendency in Abraham Maimonides's letter is to deny any direct responsibility for the ban put on Daniel ha-Bavli.

Nothing is known about the exact date that this second part of the controversy took place except that it must have been a few years *after* 1213 and *before* the death of Joseph Ibn Shimʿon in 1226. If one accepts the assumption that the *naśi'* David ben Zakkay II died around 1216,[64] then the whole affair must have happened at least one year before al-Ḥarizi reached Damascus and Aleppo for the first time (1217) and consequently before he composed both versions of the *Sefer Taḥkemoni*, which are to be dated to shortly before 1220.[65] If so, it is again difficult to imagine that the elimination of Daniel ha-Bavli from version B was

translation, iii). For a summary of the controversy, see Steinschneider, *Gesammelte Schriften*, 44–45; Jacob Mann, "The Rabbanite Exilarchs in Egypt," in Jacob Mann, *Texts and Studies in Jewish History and Literature*, 2nd ed. (New York: Ktav, 1972), 1:401–3; Daniel Jeremy Silver, *Maimonidean Criticism and the Maimonidean Controversy 1180–1240* (Leiden: Brill, 1965), 66–68; al-Ḥarizi, *Taḥkemoni*, xlviii–xlix (English) and 51 (Hebrew). Daniel ha-Bavli's critique and Abraham Maimonides's reply have received little attention in modern scholarship; see, however, for a discussion of some of the arguments, Ben-Sasson, "Maimonides' *Mishneh Torah*," 151–52.

63 Abraham ben Maimon, *Milḥamot ha-Šem*, 54–55.

64 See Arnold Franklin, "David ben Zakkay II," in *Encyclopedia of Jews in the Islamic World*, 2:41.

65 Al-Ḥarizi, *Wanderings*, xvi (Hebrew introduction, 24).

motivated by the ban. Moreover, it is also surprising to see that the omission of Daniel ha-Bavli occurs in version B, which is generally—as we have seen—also less enthusiastic about Joseph Ibn Shimʿon than version A.

The whole picture of both Joseph Ibn Shimʿon's changing representation in al-Ḥarizi's poetry and the Daniel ha-Bavli affair becomes even more complicated if one takes into consideration al-Ḥarizi's fourth description, which is found in the Judaeo-Arabic *maqāmah* entitled *Kitāb al-Durar*.[66] This text was probably written towards the end of al-Ḥarizi's life, apparently for a predominantly Arabic-speaking audience.[67] It places Joseph Ibn Shimʿon in the penultimate position in the chapter on Aleppo and almost exclusively deals with his proficiency in medicine, which is praised not only with respect to the accusations of his contemporaries (*lawm abnāʾ haḏā al-aʿṣār*), but also in comparison to Galen. Nothing is said about any official status, but with this poetic text al-Ḥarizi apparently wished to support Joseph Ibn Shimʿon against enemies who were critical of his professional qualifications as a physician. However, the *Kitāb al-Durar* is also relevant for the question of the dispute with Daniel ha-Bavli, because this person reappears in the later Judaeo-Arabic work (probably written around 1221/22)[68] without further comment among the notables of Damascus.[69] In view of this evidence, the whole argument of the *damnatio memoriae* of the anti-Maimonidean adversary in version B of the *Sefer Taḥkemoni* collapses unless one wishes to press all the events of the controversy (i.e., Joseph Ibn Shimʿon's appeals to Abraham Maimonides and David ben Zakkay, the excommunication, and Daniel's repentance, about which we hear nothing from al-Ḥarizi) into a very few years. Accordingly, we will have to look for a different explanation for Daniel ha-Bavli's absence from version B of the *Maḥberet Mozne ha-Dor* than that hitherto suggested (see below).

An entirely different perspective is taken in the fifth description found in the *Maḥberet ha- Mešorerim*,[70] which al-Ḥarizi also included in his *Sefer Taḥkemoni*. Here, Joseph Ibn Shimʿon is exclusively praised for the quality of his poetry, most notably for his *maqāmah* entitled *Neʾum Ṭuviyyah ben Ṣidqiyyah*, which is said to be superior to everything else written by poets from the Maghreb. Al-Ḥarizi's description creates the impression that Joseph Ibn

66 The text was published under the title *Al-rawḍah al-anīqah* in al-Ḥarizi, *Wanderings*, 91–167 (for Joseph Ibn Shimʿon, see 134–35, ll. 760–73). After the discovery of additional fragments, the text was republished in al-Ḥarizi, *Kitāb al-Durar*, with the relevant passage on 167–68, ll. 236–49. See also Blau and Yahalom, "'Kitab Aldurar.'"

67 See al-Ḥarizi, *Wanderings*, vii (Hebrew introduction, 10).

68 See al-Ḥarizi, *Kitāb al-Durar*, 32 (41*, English).

69 *Kitāb al-Durar*, 210–11 and 91*.

70 This is chapter 18, or chapter 12 (in the new edition).

Shimʿon had composed the *maqāmah* when he was still in the West, but this does not seem to reflect precise historical information.[71]

As mentioned above, the chronological order of these five different descriptions has always posed problems to modern scholars. In a pioneering study, Samuel M. Stern had stated—here referring to the mixed version of the *Sefer Taḥkemoni,* the newly discovered *Maḥberet ha-Nedivim*, and the Judaeo-Arabic text—that "both Hebrew *maqāmas* can be dated before the Arabic *maqāma*, although the relative dates of the two Hebrew parallel texts cannot be established." He further surmised that "the two parallel Hebrew versions were probably composed in order to be presented to different patrons."[72] Ezra Fleischer, on the other hand, found reasons to sharply criticise the chronology of version A and version B proposed by Joseph Yahalom, Joshua Blau, and Naoya Katsumata by arguing—referring to the two versions of the *Sefer Taḥkemoni* that had meanwhile been separated and reconstructed—that the order of the "first" and "second" versions actually needs to be inverted.[73] Similarly, Michael Rand has put forward for consideration some observations about the different dedications of the books, which likewise would ultimately lead to an early dating of version B.[74]

The discussion of the different descriptions of a single figure obviously cannot supply any definite answers to the question of the chronological relationship between different versions of an extensive literary work. On the other hand, for our purposes, the question of chronology cannot be completely avoided, because it is of considerable interest to ask whether the differences between the descriptions may reflect specific events and real developments in Joseph Ibn Shimʿon's professional, social, and political status, whether they are nothing but expressions of al-Ḥarizi's changing attitude towards him, or both. Therefore, it might be worthwhile to summarise a few crucial aspects.

To start with, it is noteworthy that all the different descriptions of Joseph Ibn Shimʿon found in al-Ḥarizi's works are positive. He appears to be a highly educated and wealthy man who had students and who taught in different fields of knowledge. But even though Joseph Ibn Shimʿon consistently appears to be an important figure in the Aleppan Jewish community, his position relative to other Aleppan dignitaries changes. One feature that varies across the different descriptions is Joseph Ibn Shimʿon's involvement in public disputes

71 Al-Ḥarizi, *Wanderings*, 179, ll. 189–93; al-Ḥarizi, *Taḥkemoni*, 222, ll. 278–86.

72 Stern, "An Unpublished Maqama," 199.

73 Ezra Fleischer, "Hašlamot le-Qoveṣ Šire ha-Ṣimmudim šel Yehudah Alḥarizi li-Khevod Nikhbedei Qehal ha-Qara'im be-Dameśeq," *Qoveṣ ʿal Yad* 18 (2005): 197–222; see also the detailed response in Blau and Yahalom, "'Kitab Aldurar,'" 38–43.

74 Michael Rand, *The Evolution of al-Ḥarizi's* Taḥkemoni (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 24–41.

and scandals. These are practically absent from the *Maḥberet ha-Nedivim* and from version B of the *Maḥberet Mozne ha-Dor* in the *Sefer Taḥkemoni*, yet they are clearly present in version A of the *Maḥberet Mozne ha-Dor* (the anonymous rebellious student and Eleʿazar ha-Rofeʾ) and in the Judaeo-Arabic *Kitāb al-Durar* (the dispute about his medical knowledge). Now, if one considers this evidence from a biographical perspective, one is easily tempted to believe that version A of the *Maḥberet Mozne ha-Dor* and the *Kitāb al-Durar* reflect events that happened during al-Ḥarizi's stay in Aleppo. Both descriptions thus represent *later* stages than the *Maḥberet ha-Nedivim* and version B of *Maḥberet Mozne ha-Dor*. This assumption is hypothetical, but in the following paragraphs, it will be shown that this interpretation can perhaps shed new light on two important aspects of the biography of Joseph Ibn Shimʿon's later years: his dispute with Daniel ha-Bavli and his activities as a court physician in Aleppo.

5.2 *Joseph Ibn Shimʿon's Dispute with Daniel ha-Bavli*

As we saw earlier, it seems rather unlikely that Daniel ha-Bavli's absence from version B of the *Maḥberet Mozne ha-Dor* can be explained as a result of his dispute with Joseph Ibn Shimʿon, and therefore a different explanation for his appearance and disappearance needs to be found. A way to solve this problem could be that one actually does not have to look for reasons for Daniel ha-Bavli's *disappearance* from certain versions of al-Ḥarizi's works, but rather for the reasons for his gradual *appearance* in other descriptions. In that respect, I would like to suggest the hypothesis that al-Ḥarizi started mentioning Daniel ha-Bavli at a later stage (i.e., in version A) because of his growing influence after he settled in Damascus and that this growing influence was the historical background for the outbreak of his dispute with Joseph Ibn Shimʿon.

Unfortunately, we do not possess reliable evidence to determine when Daniel ha-Bavli moved from Baghdad, where he had studied with Samuel ben Eli, to Damascus. We also have very little evidence about when and how he succeeded in becoming a dominant figure in the Damascene community. As noted above, the only historical document providing a coherent narrative about this dispute is a letter by Abraham Maimonides written much later, during the so-called "first Maimonidean controversy." This text retrospectively recalls the pre-history that led to the outbreak of the controversy in 1232, mainly with the intention of defending its author against various accusations made by the anti-Maimonideans. This slight bias notwithstanding, there seems to be no reason to doubt the reliability of the general picture that arises from Abraham Maimonides's report. It therefore seems worthwhile to cast an eye on the dynamics behind the events connected with the (ultimately successful) attempt to excommunicate Daniel ha-Bavli. Our information is, of course, fragmentary,

but if is it attentively read, it transpires from Abraham Maimonides's report that Joseph Ibn Shimʿon's attempt to have Daniel ha-Bavli excommunicated was founded upon a relatively weak factual basis. Maimonides's name was not mentioned in the commentary, nor were the teachings that were expounded in this book so revolting that they justified any further actions. Accordingly, it seems not unlikely that Abraham Maimonides's refusal to react was actually motivated by the consideration that the whole affair was built on exceedingly flimsy grounds and that he was not convinced that it was worthwhile to give Joseph Ibn Shimʿon unreserved support.[75] The argument that he was an involved party and therefore not a suitable judge could then be interpreted as a polite excuse that he formulated in order to avoid becoming involved in this affair.

If this was the case, one might still ask why Joseph Ibn Shimʿon was so eager to take action against Daniel ha-Bavli at that moment in the first place. In this respect, I would like to put forward for consideration the possibility that Daniel ha-Bavli's arrival in Damascus only a few years earlier could have played a crucial role here. Since Daniel ha-Bavli was known to be a direct student of Joseph Ibn Shimʿon's old adversary Samuel ben Eli, it does not seem unlikely that he may have considered Daniel ha-Bavli's move to Damascus to be an act of overt aggression in his own sphere of influence (similar to his own plans to move to Baghdad many years earlier), which he had little reason to appreciate.[76] This must have been even more the case if Abraham Maimonides is correct in his remark that Daniel ha-Bavli was a successful preacher who might have appealed to a large audience. In order to meet this challenge, Joseph Ibn Shimʿon may have considered it a promising strategy to employ Abraham Maimonides, whom he must have hoped to have been holding a grudge against Daniel ha-Bavli from the earlier dispute, to defeat an unpleasant competitor. After Abraham ben Maimon's refusal to serve as a handy tool in Joseph Ibn Shimʿon's strategy, the latter tried his luck with the exilarch (*naśiʾ*) David ben Zakkai, and this time, he met with more success. Therefore, if Abraham Maimonides's report is essentially reliable, it seems that the so-called Maimonidean camp has to be blamed for the outbreak of this chapter of the Maimonidean controversy. Abraham Maimonides, who might have been well aware of this and have later intended to prove his innocence in these controversies, tried his best to

75 It should be recalled that Maimonides's support for some of Joseph Ibn Shimʿon's plans was also not overwhelmingly strong.

76 Mann, "The Rabbanite Exilarchs in Egypt," 403, says that the "causes that led to his moving from Bagdād to Damascus are unknown." The competition with Joseph Ibn Shimʿon could have been a good reason.

politely distance himself from the instigator(s). In that respect, it must also be noted that there is no sound evidence to decide how far-reaching Daniel ha-Bavli's anti-Maimonideanism actually was or whether he became the target of Joseph Ibn Shimʿon's attacks for mainly theological and philosophical reasons or rather out of political concerns.[77] On the other hand, to return to al-Ḥarizi's descriptions of both Ibn Shimʿon and Daniel ha-Bavli, he seems to have remained largely unaffected by this specific dispute.

5.3 *Joseph Ibn Shimʿon as a Physician*

A second new feature that gradually emerges in al-Ḥarizi's descriptions is that of Joseph Ibn Shimʿon as a practising physician. This activity remains unmentioned in version B of the *Maḥberet Mozne ha-Dor*, but it becomes quite dominant in version A and the *Maḥberet ha-Nedivim*, and it is the only relevant aspect in the *Kitāb al-Durar*. This tallies nicely with the information in Ibn al-Qifṭī's biography mentioned above, where we are explicitly told that in that period, he became one of the "physicians who served the notables of the kingdom of [al-Malik] al-Ẓāhir [Ġāzī]."

Following—and under the long-lasting influence of—Ibn al-Qifṭī's biographical sketch, Joseph Ibn Shimʿon subsequently also gained considerable fame as a Jewish physician in biographical works by other Arabic writers.[78] A development of this kind is found in Ibn Abī Uṣaibiʿah's (1203–1270) short biography in the *ʿUyūn al-Anbāʾ*, where we can read that he served (*ḫadama*) not only al-Malik al-Ẓāhir, but also the *amīr* Fāris al-Dīn Maimūn al-Qaṣrī.[79] The latter resided in Aleppo and was in the service of al-Malik al-Ẓāhir during the last years of his life, dying in 1219, three years after the ruler's death.[80]

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77 This statement rests, of course, on the assumption that Daniel ha-Bavli is *not* identical with Daniel Ibn al-Amšaṭa (Ibn al-Māšiṭah), the author of the *Taqwīm al-Adyān*; see Paul B. Fenton, "Le *Taqwīm al-Adyān* de Daniel Ibn al-Māšita, nouvelle pièce de la controverse maïmonidienne en Orient," *Revue des études juives* 145 (1986): 279–94, and Fenton, "Daniel Ibn al-Māshiṭa's Taqwīm al-Adyān," in *Genizah Research after Ninety Years*, ed. Joshua Blau and Stefan C. Reif (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 74–81. On Daniel Ibn al-Amšaṭa, see also Goitein and Friedman, *India Traders of the Middle Ages* (Hebrew version: Goitein and Friedman, *India Book III*, 58–59).

78 For modern summaries, see Wüstenfeld, *Geschichte der Arabischen Aerzte*, 120–21 (§212), and Max Mayerhof, "Mediaeval Jewish Physicians in the Near East, from Arabic Sources," *Isis* 28 (1938): 451–52 (which does not differentiate between Joseph Ibn Shimʿon and Ibn ʿAqnin). See also Eddé, *La principauté*, 476–77.

79 Ibn Abi Useibia, *ʿUyūn al-Anbāʾ*, ed. August Müller (Königberg, 1884), 2:213.

80 For biographical references for Fāris al-Dīn Maimūn al-Qaṣrī, see Kraemer, *Maimonides*, 569 n. 36. The *amīr* was friendly with Ibn al-Qifṭī's family, so the contact with Joseph Ibn Shimʿon was probably mediated through him. Munk, "Notice," 11 n. 1, inverts the

Ibn Abī ʿUṣaibiʿah's words therefore perhaps imply that he served the *amīr* in the years 1216 to 1219 (i.e., after al-Malik's death), but this remains uncertain. Probably based on his own conjectures, Ibn Abī ʿUṣaibiʿah's was also convinced that Joseph Ibn Shimʿon must have studied and practised (*ištaġala*) medicine under the guidance of the *raʾīs* Maimonides during his sojourn in Egypt, something for which no other evidence has yet been found. Finally, it is only much later in the biographical information provided by Ḥāǧī Ḫalīfa (1609–1657) that Joseph Ibn Shimʿon becomes nothing less than the "head of the physicians of al-Malik al-Ẓāhir" (*raʾīs min aṭibbāʾ al-Malik al-Ẓāhir*).[81] This formidable evolution of information about Joseph Ibn Shimʿon's status and career from one court physician among others to the leading authority must thus not be taken at face value.

The image of Joseph Ibn Shimʿon as one of the physicians active at al-Malik al-Ẓāhir's court in Ibn al-Qifṭī's biography and Judah al-Ḥarizi's descriptions is perhaps reconfirmed by an additional contemporary source, which can be found in ʿAbd al-Laṭīf ibn Yūsuf al-Baġdādī's (1162–1231)[82] *Book of the Two Pieces of Advice* (*Kitāb al-Naṣīḥatayn*).[83] However, this description entails a couple of additional problems that need to be discussed in some detail.

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chronological order and believes that Joseph Ibn Shimʿon had met Ibn al-Qifṭī in Fāris al-Dīn's residence. Eddé, *La principauté*, 271, provides 1213–1214 as his date of death.

81 Ḥāǧī Ḫalīfa, *Lexicon bibliographicum et encyclopaedicum a Mustafa ben Abdallah Katib Jelebi dicto et nomine Haji Khalfa celebrato compositum. 4: Literas shín—cáf complectens*, ed. Gustav Flügel (London: Oriental Translation Fund, 1845), 438.

82 There is a constantly growing literature on ʿAbd al-Laṭīf ibn Yūsuf al-Baġdādī; see, e.g., Claude Cahen, "ʿAbdallaṭīf al-Baghdādī, portraitiste et historien de son temps: Extraits inédits de ses *Mémoires*," *Bulletin d'études orientales* 23 (1970): 101–28; Angelika Neuwirth, *ʿAbd al-Laṭīf al-Baġdādīs Bearbeitung von Buch Lambda der aristotelischen Metaphysik* (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1976); ʿAbd al-Laṭīf ibn Yūsuf al-Baġdādī, "The Autobiography of ʿAbd al-Laṭīf al-Baghdādī (1162–1231)," trans. Shawkat M. Tootawa, in *Interpreting the Self: Autobiography in the Arabic Literary Tradition*, ed. Dwight F. Reynolds (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 156–64; Cecilia Martini Bonadeo, *ʿAbd al-Laṭīf al-Baġdādīʾs Philosophical Journey. From Aristotle's* Metaphysics *to the* "Metaphysical Science" (Leiden: Brill, 2013); Avinoam Shalem, "*Experientia* and *Auctoritas*: ʿAbd al-Latif al-Baghdadi's *Kitāb al-Ifāda waʾl-Iʿtibār* and the Birth of the Critical Gaze," *Muqarnas Online* 32 (2015): 197–212.

83 The text was discovered and first described in Samuel M. Stern, "A Collection of Treatises by ʿAbd al-Laṭīf al-Baghdādī," *Islamic Studies* 1 (1962): 59–66. It was edited, translated, and studied by N. Peter Joosse in ʿAbd al-Laṭīf ibn Yūsuf al-Baghdādī, *The Physician as a Rebellious Intellectual. The Book of the Two Pieces of Advice or* Kitāb al-Naṣīḥatayn *by ʿAbd al-Laṭīf ibn Yūsuf al-Baghdādī (1162–1231). Introduction, Edition and Translation of the Medical Section*, ed. and trans. N. Peter Joosse (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2014). The Arabic text is found on 102–4 and the English translation on 74–77. See also his

In a long section of the medical part of his work, al-Baġdādī sharply criticises the physicians of Aleppo in general, and more specifically recounts the scandalous events surrounding the untimely death of the Ayyubid ruler in 1216. In an early paragraph, he compares the physicians of Aleppo unfavourably with those of Damascus, saying that they are greedy and that they apply inappropriate therapies. He informs his readers that he thinks (*aẓunnu*) that this is due to a "Maghrebi sheikh" who converted to Islam and later pretended to have re-converted to Judaism, although all his coreligionists distrusted his religious fidelity. This unnamed Jewish physician had been a poor man, but had entered into the service of merchants and become rich. Only in his old age did he develop an interest in medicine. All in all, al-Baġdādī believes, this man was mainly pursuing financial gains.

This short description of the life of the anonymous "Maghrebi sheikh" sounds in more than one respect like a negative image of Ibn al-Qifṭī's account of Joseph Ibn Shim'on's economic and social success and brilliant professional career. For al-Baġdādī, this serves as a kind of introduction to a detailed report of the circumstances of al-Malik al-Ẓāhir's death.[84] If we are to believe the "medical" report from al-Baġdādī, who seems to have been present in the city at that time, Aleppo was plagued by an epidemic in the years 613 and 614 H (around 1216 CE), which affected many of its inhabitants. Among those who fell ill was the governor of the city, who was attended by a team of doctors. Al-Baġdādī was apparently not a member of this team, and so much of his report must have relied on hearsay and speculation. In any event, a dispute broke out between a "converted" physician, who suggested bleeding, and another "cursed" (*mal'ūn*) physician who convinced the team that a therapy based on a purgative was preferable—not so much out of professional considerations, but rather because of his pride, his struggle for status, and his jealousy of the other physician's success. The development of al-Malik al-Ẓāhir's illness, which is described in great professional detail by al-Baġdādī, does not interest us here, but it seems important to note that towards the end of the ruler's life, only two doctors were appointed to treat him: the "evil" doctor and another good and famous one "of mature age" (*šayḫ*). The second physician was, however, subordinated (*maġlūb*) to the first, so he was unable to carry out the correct treatment, and the ruler eventually died.

Samuel M. Stern, who was the first to recognise the similarity of many of the biographical details reported by al-Baġdādī to what is known about Joseph

detailed study with references to earlier research on 17–28 and the remarks in Verskin, "A Muslim-Jewish Friendship," 187–89.

84 For a detailed historical account of the ruler's death, see Eddé, *La principauté*, 84–88.

Ibn Shimʿon from other sources, was not prepared to believe that there "should be anything true in ʿAbd al-Laṭīf's allegations."[85] In a new study of the material, however, N. Peter Joosse is less convinced that Joseph Ibn Shimʿon was a personality without blemish, believing that "there is no smoke without fire."[86] From Joseph Ibn Shimʿon's correspondence with Maimonides, Joosse derives many unfavourable details about his somewhat problematic personality, and he then conjectures that al-Baġdādī might in fact be identical with the "rebellious student" in al-Ḥarizi's *Maḥberet Mozne ha-Dor* discussed above.[87] After al-Baġdādī had studied with Joseph Ibn Shimʿon, Joosse believes, he distanced himself from his former teacher, perhaps following the scandal of the ruler's death, which might still have been a matter of enquiry when al-Ḥarizi visited Aleppo in 1217. On the other hand, al-Baġdādī avoids mentioning Joseph Ibn Shimʿon by name, perhaps because he might still have been the protégé of powerful people.[88]

Joosse's reconstruction of the events is thought-provoking, but it is not the only possible interpretation of the sources, even if one accepts the assumption that the two biographies are interconnected and that they are describing the same people.[89] First of all, nothing in al-Baġdādī's report conclusively indicates that he was the student of either of the two physicians he describes. Even though such a possibility cannot be ruled out, it should be kept in mind that al-Baġdādī was probably about the same age as Joseph Ibn Shimʿon. When he

85 Stern, "A Collection," 61: "The account itself […] shows that the monstrous accusation was trumped up by him on the basis of professional gossip concerning disagreement between the doctors attending the prince as to how he should be treated. (To mention one feature: it is hardly credible that some of the doctors should circulate the story that they agreed to apply a treatment they knew was wrong, simply to prevent a colleague scoring a success; this would make them accomplices to 'murder')! This passage shows the reverse side of 'Abd al-Laṭīf's flamboyant personality."

86 Al-Baġdādī, *The Physician*, 19.

87 See *The Physician*, 20–28. Joosse seems to have worked with the English translation of the *Sefer Taḥkemoni*: Judah al-Ḥarizi, *The Book of Taḥkemoni*, trans. David Simha Segal (Oxford: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2001), which relies upon the earlier edition: Judah al-Ḥarizi, *Sefer Taḥkemoni*, ed. Yisrael Toporovsky (Tel Aviv: Maḥbarot le-Sifrut, 1952) and does not differentiate between the versions of the book.

88 Al-Baġdādī, *The Physician*, 28.

89 It should be noted that Stroumsa, "Temunah Qibbuṣit u-Temunat ha-Yaḥid be-Šikhvat ha-Manhigut ha-Yehudit ba-Me'ot ha-Y"B we-Y"G be-'Olam ha-Islam: Wari'aṣiyot 'al Yosef ibn Shim'on" (forthcoming), and "*Convivencia*," 84–91, is convinced that the biographical sketch in 'Abd al-Laṭīf's work is too unspecific in its content to identify it with Joseph Ibn Shimʿon, especially given the fact that no name is mentioned in it and that there were two Jewish physicians from the Maghreb with a similar biography who were active in Aleppo at the same time.

visited Aleppo in 1216, he was already working as a physician, even if he was not a member of the team of local doctors in charge of the ruler's health.

Contrary to Joosse's interpretation, it seems more likely that al-Baġdādī's report echoes events surrounding the public scandal about Eleʿazar to which al-Ḥarizi alludes in version A of the *Maḥberet Mozne ha-Dor*.[90] Al-Ḥarizi accused this court physician of having transgressed the Jewish law in the service of the ruler and described him as proud man who was subsequently publicly degraded by Joseph Ibn Shimʿon. Al-Ḥarizi harshly denounces Eleʿazar in this version and says that "his name shall be excised" (*yehi šemo nigzar*), whereas in version B of the *Maḥberet*, he and his family are praised for their wisdom and political influence.[91]

If al-Ḥarizi and al-Baġdādī are in fact speaking about the same event, the question arises: Who is who? In my opinion, it seems not unlikely that al-Baġdādī's report combines elements which are attributed to two different persons by al-Ḥarizi and Ibn al-Qifṭī into a single figure. Much of what we learn about the earlier biography of the "evil" physician (conversion and re-conversion, travelling and trading activities, working as a physician only later in his life) tallies perfectly with what is known about Joseph Ibn Shimʿon, and even if such a biography was perhaps not unique, it seems unlikely that two persons with the same biographical background met in Aleppo at exactly the same time. On the other hand, the accusation of religious unbelief is more resonant of al-Ḥarizi's characterisation of Eleʿazar, even if it cannot be ruled out that Joseph Ibn Shimʿon's enemies also eventually accused him of having only seemingly converted back to Judaism.[92] Al-Baġdādī thus cannot be read without enormous interpretative caution.

However, be this as it may, the death of al-Malik al-Ẓāhir in 1216 and the possibility that Jewish or converted Jewish physicians were involved in it seems to have been a major scandal in Aleppo, which probably did not remain merely professional, and it may well have affected the Jewish community as a whole. If this is the case, there seem to be two main directions for interpreting the contradictory evidence. It is conceivable that Joseph Ibn Shimʿon was indeed al-Baġdādī's "evil" physician. In that case, he must have lost quite a bit of his professional prestige among both Jews and non-Jews after al-Malik al-Ẓāhir's death. On the other hand, we hear nothing about an explicit accusation of

90 Al-Ḥarizi, *Wanderings*, 69, ll. 204–10; al-Ḥarizi, *Taḥkemoni*, 446, ll. 303–12.

91 *Wanderings*, 69, ll. 225–28; *Taḥkemoni*, 455, ll. 177–78.

92 It is uncertain whether both court physicians in al-Baġdādī's report had a Jewish background. The "good" one is said to have embraced Islam (*ṭabīb muslim*). Joosse in Al-Baġdādī, *The Physician*, 75, translates this as "who had embraced Islam (or: had become a Muslim)," although the Arabic text on 103 also allows the translation of "Muslim physician."

murder against him, and if he became the physician of the *amīr* Fāris al-Dīn Maymūn al-Qaṣrī only after al-Malik al-Ẓāhir's death in the year 1216–1219, these events cannot have destroyed his career altogether. This fact notwithstanding, al-Ḥarizi's apologetic praise of his professional qualities as a physician in the Arabic *Kitāb al-Durar* may still be seen as an attempt to restore his seriously endangered reputation. In addition to this, if Eleʿazar is indeed al-Baġdādī's "good" physician, then the information that this doctor had converted to Islam may be echoed in al-Ḥarizi's harsh words about him desecrating the Sabbath and his hope that his "name should be excised." In any event, Joseph Ibn Shimʿon seems to have preserved his status within the Jewish community as described by al-Ḥarizi in version A of the *Maḥberet Mozne ha-Dor*, but echoes of the dispute were still palpable when he composed the poem for the *Kitāb al-Durar*.

This, however, is not the only possible interpretation. It seems equally possible that al-Baġdādī's report in fact confuses the identity of the two figures and mixes up biographical details from both of them. This is not inconceivable in view of the fact that al-Baġdādī composed his report many years later and did not even claim to have been a direct eyewitness to all the information he provided. The identification of the evil doctor with the "Maghrebi sheikh" is explicitly said to be what he "believes" (*aẓunnu*) to have happened. In that case, he could have transposed some information about Joseph Ibn Shimʿon, who was not a completely unknown personality at that time even among Muslims, to the "evil" physician involved in al-Malik al-Ẓāhir's death, who was in fact al-Ḥarizi's controversial court physician Eleʿazar. The confusion could quite easily have occurred, since both were Jews and it is possible that Eleʿazar, like Joseph Ibn Shimʿon, was originally from the Maghreb and may therefore also have had to convert to Islam at some stage. But even if this was not the case, it is possible that Eleʿazar, who could also have been a successful local physician from an Aleppan family, came into conflict with the learned and self-assured Maghrebi immigrant Joseph Ibn Shimʿon and that this struggle for recognition and success culminated in the dramatic events around the ruler's death. If we are to believe al-Ḥarizi, Joseph Ibn Shimʿon (and in that case al-Baġdādī's honourable elderly physician) prevailed in this conflict. On the other hand, after this scandal, the Jewish community tried to distance itself from Eleʿazar, who was publicly suspected of having applied a treatment that ultimately led to the ruler's death. The fact that no other Muslim author apart from al-Baġdādī reports any setback in Joseph Ibn Shimʿon's professional career and the possibility that he entered into the service of the *amīr* Fāris al-Dīn Maimūn al-Qaṣrī in the years right after al-Malik al-Ẓāhir's death (1216–1219) renders this interpretation quite likely.

There is hard evidence that in the last period of his life, Joseph Ibn Shimʿon was not only active as a practicing physician, but also in the composition of medical treatises. Ibn Abī Uṣaibiʿah mentions the titles of two such texts in the *ʿUyūn al-Anbāʾ*: an *Epistle on the Measurement of Soft and Hard Nutrition* (*Risālah fī tartīb al-aġḏīyah al-laṭīfah wa-l-kaṯīfah*) and a *Commentary on the Aphorisms of Hippocrates* (*Šarḥ al-fuṣūl li-Abuqrāṭ*). Of these two, Ḥāǧī Ḫalīfa mentions only the second, and this is the only one which is preserved to this day.[93]

When Moritz Steinschneider composed his *Catalogus librarum hebraeorum in bibliotheca Bodleiana* in the years 1852 to 1860, he was still convinced that the attribution of such a tractate to Joseph ben Judah (Ibn ʿAqnin) must have been a confusion with Maimonides,[94] but in 1871/72, he was able to correct his mistake when he described a fifteenth-century Sephardic manuscript containing the Judaeo-Arabic text of an *Abbreviation of the Commentary of Galen on the Aphorism of Hippocrates* (*Iḫtiṣār Šarḥ Ǧālīnūs li-Fuṣūl Abuqrāṭ*) attributed to Abū Ḥaǧāǧ Yosef (or rather Yūsuf) ben Yaḥyā al-Isrāʾīlī al-Maġribī (whom Steinschneider naturally identified with Ibn ʿAqnin).[95] In 1964, David H. Baneth claimed the *Abbreviation of the Commentary* for Joseph Ibn Shimʿon,[96] but upon the "second discovery" of this manuscript, which had meanwhile reached the Guenzburg Collection in Moscow, Tzvi Langermann attributed the treatise to Joseph Ibn ʿAqnin once more, without further discussion.[97] The same attribution was adopted by Hadar Perry in a doctoral thesis submitted in 2007, in which she edited the entire Judaeo-Arabic text from this unique manuscript.[98] In the introduction to her edition, she briefly mentions and rejects Baneth's attribution of it to Joseph Ibn Shimʿon and attempts to identify connections between the *Abbreviation of the Commentary* and other works by Joseph Ibn ʿAqnin. These parallels, however, mainly refer to rather general aspects of medieval medicine and therefore seem to remain

93 See also Manfred Ullmann, *Die Medizin im Islam* (Leiden: Brill, 1970), 29.

94 Moritz Steinschneider, *Catalogus librorum hebraeorum in bibliotheca Bodleiana* (Berlin, 1852–1860), col. 1441.

95 Moritz Steinschneider, *Verzeichniss karaitischer und anderer hebräischer Handschriften* (*im Besitze des Herrn J. Fischl*) (Berlin, 1872), 21 (also published in *Hebräsiche Bibliographie* 11 [1871]: 119).

96 Baneth, "El discípulo," 17.

97 Moscow, Russian State Library, Guenzburg 1024, fols. 3a–58a [IMHM F 48112]. Tzvi Langermann, "Some New Medical Manuscripts from Moscow," *Korot* 10 (1993/94): 54–73.

98 Hadar Perry, "A Medical Writing of Yosef Ben Yehudah Ibn ʿAqnin*: ʿIkhtisar Sharh Jalinus li-Fusul Abuqrat.* Its Place in Thought of Ibn ʿAqnin and in the Tradition of Interpretation of Hippocrates' Aphorisms" [Hebrew] (PhD diss., Bar Ilan University, 2007); see also Hadar Perry, "Demuto ha-Refuʾit šel Yosef ben Yehuda Ibn ʿAqnin" [Hebrew], *Korot* 19 (2008/9): 21–42.

inconclusive as far as authorship is concerned.[99] Consequently, her arguments stand against the strong positive evidence provided by the Arab biographers and bibliographers who clearly attribute the work to Abū Ḥaǧāǧ Yosef ben Yaḥyā al-Isrāʾīlī al-Maġribī (i.e., Joseph Ibn Shimʿon), even more so since this is the same name that appears in the manuscript. In addition to this, this attribution may also find some indirect reconfirmation in al-Ḥarizi's poem about Joseph Ibn Shimʿon in the *Kitāb al-Durar*, where he praises his wisdom in which "even Galen would drown." Galen's verbosity was almost proverbial, so the poem is possibly alluding to the efficient method of *abbreviation* that Joseph Ibn Shimʿon applied. If al-Ḥarizi's poem is indeed to be dated to after his return to Aleppo (i.e., after 1220), it might be of some value for dating Joseph Ibn Shimʿon's medical writing(s) to the very last years of his life, when—perhaps following Maimonides—he became a physician with direct access to the court of the local ruler.

5.4 *Other Activities in Aleppo and Joseph Ibn Shimʿon's Death*

Medicine, however, was only one part of Joseph Ibn Shimʿon's activities, and possibly not even the most important one. As indicated by Ibn al-Qifṭī, Joseph Ibn Shimʿon's self-staging as a Maimonidean scholar in *musar*, religious studies, science, and philosophy in his private court was important to him, and he had achieved quite a lot in that respect during the last period of his life. It is reasonable to assume that it was from this time onwards that Joseph Ibn Shimʿon received the title *Roʾš ha-Seder* by which he is designated in some documents from at least 1217, when al-Ḥarizi met him in Aleppo.[100]

As far as I can see, nothing more is known about Joseph Ibn Shimʿon's other activities during the last years of his life, which ended, according to Ibn al-Qifṭī's report, in the "first ten days" (*al-ʿušr al-awwal*) of the month of Ḏū al-Ḥiǧǧa in

99 Perry, "Medical Writing," 139–55.

100 See al-Ḥarizi, *Wanderings*, 85, l. 62; al-Ḥarizi, *Taḥkemoni*, 596, l. 35: *manhig ha-ʿeder we-roʾš ha-seder*; see also the headings of the letter to Joseph Ibn Shimʿon on the dispute with Samuel ben ʿAlī according to MS Vatican, Neofiti 11 (Maimonides, *Epistulae*, 76; Maimonides, *Iggerot,* 1:300) and on Ibn Ǧābir (*Epistulae*, 88; *Iggerot*, 420). On the title, see Jacob Mann, *The Jews in Egypt and Palestine under the Fātimid Rule* (London: Oxford University Press, 1920), 1:279–80; see also *Iggerot*, 1:285 n. 3. I owe my gratitude to Miriam Frenkel, who drew my attention to the fact that the title *Roʾš ha-Seder* was apparently given by the Babylonian exilarch; see Moseh Gil, *Palestine During the First Muslim Period* (*634–1099*) [Hebrew] (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University Press, 1983), 2:472–73, and also Goitein, *Mediterranean Society*, 2:198–99. It seems not unlikely that the title *Roʾš ha-Seder* given to Joseph Ibn Shimʿon at a certain stage in his life reflects his good relations with the exilarch and their common opposition against the influence of the Gaonate in Baghdad (see the dispute with Samuel ben Eli and his student David ha-Bavli).

the year 623. This date, which equals 23 November–2 December 1226, nicely tallies with the fragmentary date provided on a Jewish tombstone for a certain "Yosef ha-Maʿaravi, ha-Rav ha-me[hullal ben Yehuda]h" preserved in the walls of the citadel of Aleppo, if Alexander Dotan's reading according to which this tombstone provides the date of the second day of the month of Kislew is accepted.[101] The year of death is illegible on this tombstone, but if one converts the second day of Kislew to the respective date in the year 1226, the indicated day falls squarely into the period of time given by Ibn al-Qifṭī. It could therefore be concluded that Ibn Shimʿon died on 30 November 1226 and that he was buried in Aleppo.[102]

6 Conclusion and Outlook

This survey of all the available evidence regarding Joseph ibn Shimʿon's life has uncovered a historical figure who perhaps does not belong to the very first rank of Jewish thinkers in the medieval Islamicate world, but who undoubtedly played a major role in Jewish life in the transitional period between the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. He was a younger contemporary of Maimonides and was much less influential than him from a historical perspective, but he lived what can be called a "Maimonidean life." Born into an élite Jewish family during the Almohad persecution, he is a representative of that generation of Jews from the Maghreb and al-Andalus who emigrated from their homeland in order to find new homes in new places in the Islamic or Christian world. Wherever these refugees arrived, they brought with them a cultural and intellectual heritage (and possibly also the financial means) that allowed them to aspire to (and often to successfully achieve) statuses of considerable cultural, social, political, and religious influence and prestige. In many cases, this was the case only after they had fought violent conflicts against traditional local élites, which they were often more than willing to carry out with a considerable degree of self-confidence. The self-imposition of Jews from the Western Islamic world upon other Jewish communities both in the East and in Europe

101 See Alexander Dotan, "Hebrew Inscription [sic!] in the Citadel of Aleppo" [Hebrew], *Sefunot* 8 (1964): 163.

102 Nathanja Hüttenmeister, "Mittelalterliche jüdische Grabsteine aus Aleppo—ein Nachtrag," in *Memoria—Wege jüdischen Erinnerns. Festschrift für Michael Brocke zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Birgit E. Klein and Christiane E. Müller (Berlin: Metropol, 2005), 232–33, proposes a reconstruction of the partly damaged inscription, which gives the 23rd day of an illegible month.

was a complicated process of cultural transition that was to change their profiles dramatically.

In Joseph Ibn Shimʿon's case, the connection to Maimonides's biography goes beyond these external parallels and similarities. His life and career were at least deeply influenced and tied to his early encounter with Maimonides, if not totally determined by it. Even if the period of direct discipleship was perhaps relatively short, Maimonides seems to have served as a model to him, and one whom he followed in more than one respect: after his first studies in the fields of *musar,* science, theology, and philosophy in the Maghreb, which seem to have yielded their first literary products before his encounter with Maimonides (the *maqāmah Sayeth Ṭuviyyah ben Ṣidqiyyah* and probably the treatise *On the Necessary Existent*), he received a solid higher education from him after they met in Egypt. The reasons why he left for Aleppo are difficult to determine, but if we can trust the information provided by the correspondence between the two, the student followed the master's advice to take care of his economic success above all. This would also guarantee him a high degree of independence as a scholar, something Maimonides held in extremely high esteem: true sages must be independent and must not teach for money! Once he had achieved this status and had the financial means to purchase an estate near Aleppo and install himself there, he, like Maimonides, devoted himself to the study and practice of medicine in the later period of his life. The occupation of physician was apparently much less important as a source of income than as a way to present oneself as a benefactor to the community and to concomitantly gain access to non-Jewish political and cultural leaders. This elevated political and social status exposed him to considerable dangers, but it can be seen as the crowning pinnacle of a long and laborious career. Part and parcel of being a professional physician must have been the ability to teach, so Joseph Ibn Shimʿon also followed Maimonides in the composition of medical treatises in the last period of his life.

A major difference between Maimonides and Joseph Ibn Shimʿon—apart from his activities as a poet—lies in the role of halakhic studies and writing in their respective careers. Maimonides, born into a family of Andalusian rabbis, wrote his first halakhic works while still in the West (the *Commentary on the Mishnah*), whereas the available sources do not tell us anything about any specific interest in such topics from Joseph Ibn Shimʿon's side. His *forte* was the sciences, especially the mathematical sciences, *musar*, and perhaps also theology. Only as part of a larger project to establish himself as a teacher did he come up with the idea to teach Jewish law in a new school in Baghdad. On Maimonides's advice, he probably planned to base the teaching on the *Mishneh Torah*, which he surprisingly does not seem to have intensively studied with his

master during his Egyptian sojourn. This project must have been an obvious provocation for the traditional Jewish élites in Baghdad. It apparently never materialised, but the controversies in which Joseph Ibn Shimʿon was involved in Baghdad (of which the literary controversy about resurrection with Samuel ben Eli was only the most prominent)[103] reveal a person who did not shun conflicts where he deemed them to be useful or necessary. It cannot be ruled out that the sudden interest in teaching halakhah was partly motivated by aspirations to become a communal authority. In the end, however, Aleppo proved to be a better place to achieve these goals. Here, he seems to have succeeded in building a strong citadel for halakhic and philosophical Maimonideanism in Syria under the shadow of Ayyubid protection, although even this stronghold occasionally had to be defended against real or imaginary intruders.

In his lifetime, Joseph Ibn Shimʿon was an influential, but also highly controversial figure. There can be no doubt that various details about his life—a mixture of true facts, benevolent hearsay, and also malevolent gossip—were created and circulated during his life and perhaps even after his death. His early life under the Almohad persecution in the Maghreb, his close relationship with Maimonides (which was probably one of the major sources of his prestige), including his status as the dedicatee of the *Guide of the Perplexed*, his financial success, and his service to the rulers of Aleppo were probably all fertile ground for the evolution of various narratives among his co-religionists and even among non-Jews. The contradicting biographies found in Ibn al-Qifṭī on the one hand and ʿAbd al-Laṭīf al-Baġdādī on the other are perhaps telling examples of this, and the popularity of al-Ḥarizi's poetical accounts may well have added to the spreading of rumours about him.

All this taken together leads to a situation in which historians cannot take every piece of evidence about Joseph Ibn Shimʿon at face value, and one has to reckon with misinformation and even forgeries. Important examples of this are certain pieces of his correspondence with Maimonides that have come down to us. For many of the letters, there is no reason to doubt their authenticity, even if their transmission poses serious philological and historical problems. On the other hand, there are pieces that arouse a considerable deal of suspicion, and more research will be required to reach certainty.

For instance, it is surprising that in addition to Maimonides's famous Judaeo-Arabic dedicatory letter in which he describes his first encounter with

103 Ben-Sasson, "Maimonides' *Mishneh Torah*," 163–65, convincingly argues that the dispute about resurrection was an influential factor in the process of diffusion of the *Mishneh Torah*.

Joseph Ibn Shimʿon in a rather prosaic form,[104] there is yet another dedicatory letter written in Hebrew and fashioned in a more poetic style. The authenticity of this second letter, which was first published in the Constantinople edition of Maimonides's letters (1517) and which is transmitted in only two manuscripts, has occasionally been questioned in modern scholarship.[105] It seems quite remarkable that the letter lavishly praises Joseph Ibn Shimʿon, who is presented at more or less the peak of his success in Aleppo. According to the biographical reconstruction presented here, this does not fit the historical realities in 1191 (the generally accepted date of the completion of the *Guide*), and it is not even certain that this was the case before 1204, the date of Maimonides's death. On the other hand, given the fact that the dedication of the *Guide* was a major source of social prestige for Joseph Ibn Shimʿon and his supporters, there is—to say the least—a convincing scenario for the creation of a literary forgery.

A second problematic piece of the correspondence between Maimonides and Joseph Ibn Shimʿon is the so-called allegorical letters presumably exchanged between the two.[106] The *leitmotiv* of Joseph Ibn Shimʿon's letter to Maimonides is that a certain young lady (called *Kimah*, the Hebrew name for the Pleiades) had become his legal wife, but that she had gone astray and was being unjustly kept from him by her father Maimonides. Joseph Ibn Shimʿon asks the master to return his wife to her legal husband. However, in his reply, Maimonides vigorously denies Joseph Ibn Shimʿon's claims, blames him for his stupidity, but ultimately returns his wife to him, not without rebuking him for his behaviour. According to Salomon Munk, the first interpreter of a fragmentary version of this document, *Kimah* allegorically stands for Maimonides's philosophy, which had somehow disappointed Joseph Ibn Shimʿon at a certain point in his life, which led him to complain about her and to ask his teacher for help.[107] A few

104 In addition to all the standard editions and translations of the *Guide*, the Judaeo-Arabic dedicatory letter is also found in Maimonides, *Epistulae*, 7–9; Maimonides, *Iggerot*, 250–53.

105 See Baneth in Maimonides, *Epistulae*, 12–16, who does not doubt its authenticity, and Shilat in Maimonides, *Iggerot*, 2:646–47, who reproduces this text under the heading of "doubtful letters."

106 The first (incomplete) modern edition and French translation of the texts is found in an appendix to Munk's "Notice." A German translation and brief interpretation of this text was published by Salomon Cohn, "Zwei Briefe aus Maimonides Correspondenz," *Zeitschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums* 14 (1865): 25–30 and 69–74. In the first critical edition of Maimonides's correspondence with Joseph Ibn Shimʿon (Maimonides, *Epistulae*), the two allegorical letters were re-edited with direct or indirect usage of four manuscripts. The letters are not reproduced by Shilat in Maimonides, *Iggerot*, 2:694–95, who explains that he believes them to be a Provençal or Spanish forgery.

107 Munk, "Notice," 61, n. 1.

years later, this interpretation was given slightly more nuance by Abraham Geiger, who was not convinced that *Kimah* stands for philosophy in general. Rather, he thought that the text was speaking about the study of astronomy.[108] This interpretation was rejected by Moritz Steinschneider, although he did not suggest an alternative.[109] Salomon Cohn, on the other hand, interprets *Kimah* as the "philosophical understanding of Judaism" and argues that Joseph Ibn Shimʿon intended no less than to criticise Maimonides for inserting elements of Ibn Rushd's philosophy into his own thought.[110] In a similar vein, Joseph Heller believes that Joseph Ibn Shimʿon's letter deals with the (seemingly) unresolvable contradiction between philosophical and prophetic truth.[111] All these interpretations, however, were rejected by David H. Baneth, who favoured the assumption that the allegorical correspondence concerns events connected to the dissemination of the *Guide of the Perplexed*, which Maimonides initially promised to send to his faithful student, but which then—to Joseph Ibn Shimʿon's great disdain—seems to have reached other readers before him.[112]

In a separate study, I will present the arguments for and against yet another interpretation of these letters,[113] which is based on the assumption that the allegorical correspondence between Joseph Ibn Shimʿon and Maimonides mirrors a dispute that is neither about philosophy as such nor about the philosophical interpretation of Judaism or the study of astronomy, but rather about one specific book—namely, Ǧābir Ibn Aflaḥ's (ca. 1000–ca. 1060) astronomical *Kitāb al-Hay'ah*—which according to Ibn al-Qifṭī, Joseph Ibn Shimʿon possessed from his time in the Maghreb and had studied and revised together with Maimonides. If read from this background, it transpires from the allegorical correspondence that Joseph Ibn Shimʿon had first studied the book with Ibn Rushd in the Maghreb before arriving in Egypt and that a dispute broke out between him and Maimonides about the material and perhaps also intellectual ownership of this book.

As will be shown in that study, it is far from certain that the allegorical correspondence is authentic, but *if* authentic, the letters could serve as key sources

108 Abraham Geiger, in a review of Munk's study published under the title "Haleb und die Provence in der ersten Hälfte des dreizehnten Jahrhunderts," *Literatur-Blatt zum Israeliten des 19. Jahrhunderts* 1/31 and 1/32 (August 1846): 135 n. 3.

109 Steinschneider, *Gesammelte Schriften*, 39–40 n. 10.

110 Cohn, "Zwei Briefe," 70–71.

111 Joseph Heller, "Aknin, Josef ben Jehuda, Ibn," in *Encyclopaedia Judaica: Das Judentum in Geschichte und Gegenwart. Bd. 2: Akademien—Apostasie*, ed. Jakab Klatzkin and Ismar Elbogen (Berlin: Eschkol, 1928), cols. 33–38.

112 Maimonides, *Epistulae*, 18–21.

113 See Leicht, "Ibn Rushd and Ǧābir Ibn Aflaḥ among the Jews."

for biographies of Joseph Ibn Shimʿon and Maimonides and their relationship. The conflict between the two could provide an explanation for Joseph Ibn Shimʿon's departure from Egypt, and the letters would be of tremendous importance for the reception histories of the astronomer Ǧābir Ibn Aflaḥ and the philosopher Ibn Rushd (1126–1198) among Andalusian Jews in the twelfth century.

From reading these letters, however, it soon becomes clear that it is Joseph Ibn Shimʿon who suffers the heaviest damage to his prestige, though Maimonides does not gain much from the dispute either. Moreover, there are certain literary features which arouse suspicion as to whether either of the two protagonists could have had any interest in writing the letters in their present form. The allegorical letters can easily be read as more of a polemic against Joseph Ibn Shimʿon. Therefore, *if* future research shows that the correspondence is a literary forgery directed primarily against Joseph Ibn Shimʿon (and secondarily against his teacher Maimonides), it becomes a fascinating testimony of an early period of the so-called Maimonidean Controversy in the East, in which Joseph Ibn Shimʿon played a pivotal role.

The afterlife of Joseph Ibn Shimʿon still needs to be written. He was a well-known person in his time, and the fame of the *Roʾš ha-Seder* probably spread at least in Syria, Egypt, and Iraq. Fragments of his works and letters are found in the Cairo Genizah, and as we have seen above, echoes of his reputation as a poet were also heard in thirteenth-century Spain.[114] In the fourteenth century, Moses Narboni says that "the honourable student" (*ha-talmid he-ḥašuv*) was the recipient of a pseudepigraphical *Iggeret ha-Sodot*,[115] and in manuscripts he is also the addressee of the treatise *Megillat Setarim*, which is attributed to Maimonides.[116] In the fifteenth century, Abraham Bibago quotes Yaḥya ha-Maʿaravi in his commentary on Aristotle's *Metaphysics* 9, but apparently without identifying him with Maimonides's student.[117] Moreover, Moses Rieti

114 See n. 22 above.

115 Moses Narboni, *Der Kommentar des Rabbi Moses Narbonensis, Philosophen aus dem XIV. Jahrhundert, zu dem Werke "More Nebuchim" des Maimonides* [Hebrew], ed. Jacob Goldenthal (Vienna, 1852), fol. 4a (*Guide* 1:21).

116 The text was edited in Moses Maimonides, *Ḥemdah Genuzah. Maḥberet Riʾšonah*, ed. Ẓevi Hirsch Edelmann (Königsberg, 1856), fols. 42a–45a, which mentions the quotation of this text by Moses ben Isaac Alashqar in its critical notes on Shem Tov ben Shem Tov's *Sefer ha-Emunot*; see also xvi–xvii and xxix.

117 Moritz Steinschneider, "Abraham Bibago's Schriften," *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums* 32 (1883): 133.

mentions the "loving student from *Minno Ammon*" (i.e., Alexandria) in his *Miqdaš Meʿaṭ*.[118]

Joseph Ibn Shimʿon was well known close to his lifetime, but he was not sufficiently famous to avoid being confounded with his contemporary Joseph ben Judah Ibn ʿAqnin after his death. This mishap has not only befallen modern scholars, as medieval authors also committed this mistake. As early as the fifteenth century, Don Isaac Abarbanel's commentary on the dedicatory letter identifies Maimonides's student Joseph Ibn Shimʿon with the author of a commentary on the Canticles, a work which was actually written by Ibn ʿAqnin.[119] This confusion in medieval and early modern sources means that the division of the literary heritage between the two Joseph ben Judahs poses some problems. There are a few texts in the list of "Joseph-ben-Judah's works"[120] which were clearly written by Ibn ʿAqnin (the commentary on *Avot* called *Sefer ha-Musar, Sefer Ḥuqqim u-Mišpaṭim,* the commentary on the Canticles entitled *Inkišāf al-Asrār we Ẓuhūr al-Anwār*, and the most famous *Ṭibb al-nufūs al-Salīma wa-Muʿālağat al-Nufūs al-Alīma*). Others were clearly the work of Joseph Ibn Shimʿon (the medical treatises and the *Silencing Epistle*), but the attribution of many of the other minor halakhic, theological, and poetical works remains a matter for further research in view of the fact that copyists may well also have confounded the two authors.[121]

Once the outline of Joseph Ibn Shimʿon's biography and the bibliography of his works is established, there will also be a great deal of room for more penetrating and contextualising research. To mention just a few examples, the historical and philosophical context in which the—presumably early—theologico-philosophical treatise *Maʾamar bi-Meḥuyyav ha-Meṣiʾut we-Ekhut Siddur ha-Devarim mimmeno we-Ḥidduš ha-ʿOlam* was written has never been firmly established. It would be illuminating to compare it to the opinions and

118 Moses Rieti, *Il Dante ebreo ossia Il picciol santuario, poema diddatico in terza rima, contenente la filosofia antica e tutta la storia letteraria giudaica sino all'età sua dal Rabbi Mosè, medico di Rieti*, ed. Jacob Goldenthal (Vienna, 1851), fol. 101a. This geographical designation of *Minno Ammon* is also found in a fragment from the opening passage of the *maqāma Sayeth Ṭuyviyyah ben Ṣidqiyyah* edited in Yahalom, "A Romance *Maqāma*," 122.

119 Isaac Abarbanel, *Peruš Abrabanel ʿal Sefer Moreh Nevukhim*, ed. Moshe Landau (Prague, 1831), vol. 1, fol. 1a.

120 See the lists of works in Steinschneider, *Gesammelte Schriften*, 46–73, with numerous additions on 74–89, and Steinschneider, *Die arabische Literatur*, 230–32.

121 An important collection of sources from manuscripts is found in Steinschneider, *Gesammelte Schriften*, 82–89 (with sources collected by Adolf Neubauer). An additional poem attributed to Joseph ben Judah not mentioned by Steinschneider is found at the beginning of a manuscript of the *Guide of the Perplexed* in Hamburg, Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek, Cod. Hebr. 264 [IMHM F 1063].

argumentative methods applied in the polemical *Silencing Epistle*. The surviving medical *Abbreviation of Galen's Commentary on the Aphorisms of Hippocrates* should not only be compared to Maimonides's medical writings,[122] but perhaps also to ʿAbd al-Laṭīf al-Baġdādī's commentary on the same text.[123] This could help us to decide upon the question as to whether there is any reason to believe that the two may have met or even been student and teacher in Aleppo. Finally, Joseph Ibn Shimʿon's role as Maimonides's student is not only a fascinating part of the early Maimonidean Controversy in the East; it is also an interesting aspect of the dynamics that stood behind the diffusion of the *Mishneh Torah* and the controversies that broke out around it. Whereas Isidore Twersky simply states that "completed in 1180, or probably 1178, it became known with amazing rapidity, first in the Oriental countries (Palestine, Syria, Babylon, Yemen), then in the Mediterranean area (including Spain and Provence), and finally in the Franco-German orbit," and that by "1191 Maimonides spoke of its renown in all corners of the earth,"[124] the study of Joseph Ibn Shimʿon's life reveals interesting details of ways in which Maimonides's legal code gradually gained a foothold in different places in the East. He was in that sense a "distributor" of the *Mishneh Torah* and played an interesting role in the canonisation process of this work described by Menahem Ben-Sasson.[125] All these aspects show that more research on Maimonides's honourable student will indeed yield important insights into the intellectual and cultural life of the Jews in the Islamicate world in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries and help to uncover a fascinating key figure against the background of the dramatic developments in that period of time.

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122 This was done by Perry, "Medical Writing," 156–75.

123 See Ullmann, *Die Medizin im Islam*, 29.

124 Isadore Twersky, "The Beginning of *Mishneh Torah* Criticism," in *Biblical and Other Studies*, ed. Alexander Altmann (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1963), 167–68.

125 Ben-Sasson, "Maimonides' *Mishneh Torah*."

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Persecution and the Art of Commentary

Rabbi Moses Narboni's Analysis of al-Ġazālī's Maqāṣid al Falāsifah (Aims of the Philosophers)

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Abstract

Al-Ġazālī's *Aims of the Philosophers* is a philosophical treatise summarising major concepts in the philosophy of al-Fārābī and Avicenna. Al-Ġazālī stated that it was written as an introductory treatise to be followed by a tractate that would prove the philosophers' errors. Al-Ġazālī did indeed compose his *Incoherence of the Philosophers*, which scrutinises Muslim Neoplatonism. However, *Aims of the Philosophers* did not serve as an attack on philosophy. Instead, it was read as a comprehensible summary of Neoplatonic philosophy. Moses Narboni wrote a commentary on the Hebrew version of the *Aims of the Philosophers*. He believed that the process of writing one book explaining the philosophers' ideas and another book contradicting them was a ruse that al-Ġazālī had conceived that would enable him to engage in philosophy despite its prohibition. The current study discusses Narboni's analysis of *Aims of the Philosophers* and explains the manner in which Narboni drew on al-Ġazālī's ideas in order to interpret biblical themes.

Keywords

Al-Ġazālī – Moses Narboni – Maimonides – *Aims of the Philosophers* – medieval philosophy – commentary

1 Introduction

Abū Ḥāmid al-Ġazālī (1058–1111) was a prolific Muslim scholar who wrote extensively about Muslim law, logic, physics, metaphysics, and mysticism and

had a far-reaching influence on Muslim religion and culture. His numerous books were widely disseminated in their original Arabic versions, as well as in translations into various languages, including Hebrew. Al-Ġazālī's original ideas had a major impact on prominent Jewish scholars such as Judah ha-Levi, Abraham ibn Daud, Maimonides, Isaac Albalag, and Ḥasdai Crescas. The current study will delve into some of the Hebrew versions of al-Ġazālī's *Maqāṣid al Falāsifah* (*Aims of the Philosophers*) and will elucidate its unique acceptance in the Jewish world, focusing on Moses Narboni's conception of the essence and role of this treatise. Unfortunately, *Maqāṣid al Falāsifah* has never been fully translated into English.[1] The current study will rely on Sliman Dunya's Arabic edition,[2] as well as on an anonymous Hebrew translation.[3]

2 *Maqāṣid al-Falāsifah*

Maqāṣid al-Falāsifah was a highly popular treatise. The book consists of three sections, respectively dedicated to logic, physics, and metaphysics. Al-Ġazālī did not aspire to present original ideas on these issues. On the contrary, in the introduction to the book as well as in its concluding paragraph, he explained that he had summarised the ideas of earlier philosophers in order to allow him to explain their mistakes and refute their principles, indicating that he would devote a specific essay to this refutation. In his introductory remarks, al-Ġazālī referred to a real or imagined pupil who had allegedly asked him to elaborate on the ways in which one could contradict ideas held by philosophers.[4] He explained that it would be impossible to discuss the philosophers' errors before fully understanding their concepts and that he had therefore had to compose an introductory book that would explain basic logic, physics, and metaphysics, notwithstanding his own disapproval of these theories.[5] The concluding

1 Gershon B. Chertoff published an English translation of the Hebrew version of the first section of the book: see Chertoff, ed. and trans., "The Logical Part of al-Ghazali's *Maqasid al-falasifa* in an Anonymous Hebrew Translation with the Hebrew Commentary of Moses of Narbonne" (PhD diss., Columbia University, 1952).

2 Abū Ḥāmid al-Ġazālī,, *Aims of the Philosophers*, ed. Slīman Dunīa, 2nd ed. (Cairo: Dār al-maʿārif, 1965).

3 Both the anonymous Hebrew translation and Narboni's commentary remain unpublished. This study relies on Moscow, Russian State Library, Ms. Guenzburg 92 and Vatican City, Vatican Library, Ms. ebr. 260.

4 Abū Ḥāmid al-Ġazālī, *Aims of the Philosophers*, 13.

5 Al-Ġazālī's statements have been discussed by several scholars. See Steven Harvey, "Why Did Fourteenth-Century Jews Turn to al-Ghazālī's Account of Natural Science?" *Jewish Quarterly Review* 91 (2001): 359–76; Wilferd Madelung, "Al-Ghazālī's Changing Attitude to Philosophy," in *Islam and Rationality: The Impact of al-Ghazālī. Papers Collected on His 900th Anniversary*,

paragraph of the book echoes that strategy. Al-Ġazālī affirmed that *Maqāṣid al-Falāsifah* was intended to prepare the ground for a sequel treatise which would offer a comprehensive critique of philosophy.[6] He did indeed compose that book, known as *The Incoherence of the Philosophers* (*Tahāfut al-Falāsifah*), which denounces the main concepts of Muslim Neoplatonism. However, *Aims of the Philosophers* did not fulfil its proclaimed objective. Al-Ġazālī's readers did not consider the book to be an introductory treatise or as a handbook aimed at disclosing the philosophers' mistakes. Rather, they read it as a concise and brilliant summary of Muslim Neoplatonism.[7] Thus, *Aims of the Philosophers* promoted the very same ideas it aspired to disprove, as it was widely distributed and read throughout the Muslim world[8] as well as by Christian[9] and Jewish scholars.[10]

3 An Academic Analysis of *Maqāṣid al-Falāsifah*

Al-Ġazālī's treatises have been extensively studied by scholars, who have provided various theories explaining the above-mentioned paradox. As far as *Aims of the Philosophers* and *The Incoherence of the Philosophers* are concerned, scholars have typically relied on the author's statements regarding the goal of his treatises, as well as on the order in which the works were composed. W. Montgomery Watt's entry on al-Ġazālī in the *Encyclopedia of Islam* explains that al-Ġazālī had written *Aims of the Philosophers* in order to explicate the theories of al-Fārābī and Avicenna that he later contradicted in

ed. Georges Tamer (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 1:23–34; Ayman Shihadeh, "New Light on the Reception of al-Ghazālī's Doctrines of the Philosophers (*Maqāsid al-Falāsifa*)," in *In the Age of Averroes: Arabic Philosophy in the Sixth/Twelfth Century*, ed. Peter Adamson (London: Warburg Institute, 2011), 77–92.

6 Al-Ġazālī, *Aims of the Philosophers*, 385.

7 Lawrence V. Berman, "Ghazālī, Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Tūsī al-," in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, ed. Cecil Roth and Geoffrey Wigoder (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House, 1972), 7:538.

8 Abū Ḥāmid al-Ġazālī, *The Incoherence of the Philosophers. A Parallel English—Arabic Text*, ed. and trans. Michael E. Marmura (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 1997), xv–xvi.

9 Anthony H. Minnema, "Algazel Latinus: The Audience of the *Summa theoricae philosophiae*, 1150–1600," *Traditio* 69 (2014): 153–215.

10 Moritz Steinschneider, *Die Hebräischen Übersetzer des Mittelalters und die Juden als Dolmetscher* (Berlin, 1893), 1:296–348; Amira Eran, "Ghazâlî, Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Tûsî, al-," in *Encyclopaedia Judaica, Second Edition*, ed. Fred Skolnik and Michael Berenbaum (Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2007), 7:571–73; Harvey, "Fourteenth-Century Jews," 359–76.

his *The Incoherence of the Philosophers*.[11] Watt speculated that al-Ġazālī had composed *Aims of the Philosophers* under the presumption that it was best for philosophers' theories to be summarised by an antagonist, enabling pupils to learn basic logic, physics, and metaphysics from a non-philosopher.[12] Henry Corbin suggested that one of the reasons for reading *Aims of the Philosophers* as a textbook of philosophy was that the Latin translation of the text lacks the introduction and ending in which al-Ġazālī explained that his purpose was to refute the philosophers' views. Therefore, Christian scholars may have assumed that this treatise demonstrated that al-Ġazālī was actually a disciple of both al-Fārābī and Avicenna.[13]

Massimo Campanini stated that although al-Ġazālī did not characterise himself as a philosopher and did not want to be considered as such, Christian scholars familiar with his philosophical work considered him to be associated with the same school as Avicenna and Averroes. Campanini did not argue that this phenomenon was related to the fact that these Christian scholars were unfamiliar with the book's preface. Rather, he suggested that al-Ġazālī's oeuvre demonstrated his comprehensive knowledge and deep understanding of philosophical issues. Hence, al-Ġazālī's analysis does not seem to reflect an outsider's consideration of philosophical tradition, nor a critique of this knowledge. Campanini further maintained that al-Ġazālī's religious and mystical body of work was heavily influenced by his philosophical education, and thus that it was unlikely that he would have completely dismissed the validity of this significant legacy.[14]

Additional studies have argued that it is essential to challenge the conventional assumption—namely, that al-Ġazālī considered the ideas presented in *Aims of the Philosophers* to be false—and that *The Incoherence of the Philosophers* was supposed to refute these ideas. Michael Marmura observed that *Aims of the Philosophers* is not mentioned anywhere in *The Incoherence of the Philosophers*.[15] Jules Janssens also noted that *The Incoherence of the*

11 W. Montgomery Watt, "Al-Ghazālī," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam: New Edition*, ed. Peri Bearman, Thierry Bianquis, Clifford Edmund Bosworth, Emeri van Donzel, and Wolfhart P. Heinrichs (Brill Online, 2012): http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_COM_0233.

12 W. Montgomery Watt, *Muslim Intellectual: A Study of al-Ghazālī* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1963), 68.

13 Henry Corbin, *History of Islamic Philosophy*, trans. Liadain Sherrard and Phillip Sherrard (London: Kegan Paul International, 1993), 180.

14 Massimo Campanini, "Al-Ghazzali," in *History of Islamic Philosophy*, ed. Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Oliver Leaman (London: Routledge, 1996), 258–74.

15 Marmura in al-Ġazālī, *Incoherence of the Philosophers*, xvii.

Philosophers does not allude to *Aims of the Philosophers*,[16] pointing out that these two books do not use the same terminology and that the doctrines presented in *Aims of the Philosophers* are not at all contradicted in *The Incoherence of the Philosophers*.[17] In his opinion, *Aims of the Philosophers* was not written as an introductory treatise to *The Incoherence of the Philosophers*, and he maintained that these two treatises dealt with various unrelated issues.[18] Janssens hypothesised that the artificial link between the books was largely due to their titles, giving the impression that they were indeed two parts of one composition. However, in his opinion, the titles of these treatises were not given to them by al-Ġazālī, and therefore they were not their original titles. He believed that *Aims of the Philosophers* was an Arabic adaptation of Avicenna's Persian work *Dânishnamah-yi Alâ'î*, pointing out that the title given to the medieval Latin translation of *Aims of the Philosophers* was *Summa theoricae philosophiae*. The fact that these two titles have similar meanings led Janssens to affirm that this indicated that al-Ġazālī himself had not titled his book *Aims of the Philosophers*.[19] Frank Griffel also discussed the connection between the two treatises, arguing that *Aims of the Philosophers* may have been composed after *The Incoherence of the Philosophers* once al-Ġazālī had realised that his students did not have a proper understanding of philosophy.[20] According to his analysis, *Aims of the Philosophers*' introduction did not necessarily reflect al-Ġazālī's authentic stance, but was rather composed in order to counteract claims that he was overly influenced by philosophy.[21] Janssens argued that both *Aims of the Philosophers*' introduction and its concluding paragraph were annexed to the book some time after its composition in order to connect it to *The Incoherence of the Philosophers*.[22] However, Griffel argued that this was not necessarily so, suggesting that the introduction and concluding remarks may refer to the order in which the books should have been studied and not

16 Jules Janssens, "Al-Ghazzali's *Tahāfut*: Is It Really a Rejection of Ibn Sina's Philosophy?" *Journal of Islamic Studies* 12 (2001): 1–17.

17 Jules Janssens, "Al-Ghazzâlî and His Use of Avicennian Texts," in *Problems in Arabic Philosophy*, ed. Miklós Maróth (Piliscsaba: Avicenna Institute of Middle Eastern Studies, 2003), 37–49.

18 Janssens, "*Tahāfut*," 13.

19 Janssens, "*Tahāfut*," 13.

20 Frank Griffel, "Ms. London, British Library Or. 3126: An Unknown Work by al-Ghazâlî on Metaphysics and Philosophical Theology," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 17 (2006), 1–42; Griffel, "Al-Ghazālī's *Incoherence of the Philosophers*," in *The Oxford Handbook of Islamic Philosophy*, ed. Khaled El-Rouayheb and Sabine Schmidtke (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 191–209.

21 Griffel, "*Incoherence*," 194.

22 Janssens, "Avicennian Texts," 45; Griffel, "Unknown Work by al-Ghazâlî," 9–10.

necessarily to the order in which they were composed.[23] Alexander Treiger argued that it is wrong to depict al-Ġazālī as "renouncing philosophy and endorsing Sūfism."[24] He suggested that al-Ġazālī had composed *Aims of the Philosophers* in his youth, long before he considered refuting it, at which time the introduction was not part of the treatise at all. Treiger claimed that al-Ġazālī had added the introduction later on, thus "camouflaging the true nature of the work."[25]

4 Al-Ġazālī's Survey of Philosophy

Al-Ġazālī's introduction to *The Incoherence of the Philosophers*[26] offers a unique discourse about four prominent Greek philosophers: Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and Hippocrates. He argues that there was no contradiction between their ideas and religious principles and notes that philosophers had been unfairly accused of religious heresy and scepticism by a group of people who did not understand them. Al-Ġazālī called this group "a mad cult," explaining that its members clung to misinterpretations of the philosophers' words in order to dismiss religious faith. This introduction proves that al-Ġazālī had the utmost respect for the grand Greek philosophers and their successors. He also maintained that they had faith in both God and judgement day. Al-Ġazālī argued that some heretics who had been born and raised as Muslims had admired the philosophers' wisdom and knowledge. These heretics had deduced that the philosophers' intellectual virtue necessarily involved the abolition of religious belief, as well as the necessity of regarding religious commandments as worthless and vulgar concepts. Al-Ġazālī argued that by making a connection between celebrated philosophers and religious heresy, Muslim heretics were able to defend their own heresy, and he further explained that because the philosophers had made certain mistakes which had confused their disciples, he has thus written his own book which was aimed at correcting these errors. In any case, it is obvious that al-Ġazālī did not altogether dismiss the philosophy

23 Griffel, "Unknown Work by al-Ghazâlî," 8–9. Steven Harvey claimed Griffel and Janssens's conclusions could be challenged: see Harvey, "The Changing Image of al-Ghazālī in Medieval Jewish Thought," in *Islam and Rationality*, 1:288–302.

24 Alexander Treiger, *Inspired Knowledge in Islamic Thought: Al-Ghazali's Theory of Mystical Cognition and Its Avicennian Foundation* (London: Routledge, 2012), 2.

25 Treiger, *Inspired Knowledge*, 4.

26 The Arabic text and the English translation were published in al-Ġazālī, *Incoherence of the Philosophers,* 1–3. This text is discussed in Janssens, "*Tahāfut*," 2–4, and Griffel, "*Incoherence*," 196.

of Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and their disciples and commentators when composing his text. This paragraph allowed his readers to assume that he was not necessarily critical of the ideas presented in his *Aims of the Philosophers*.

5 Aims of the Philosophers in the Jewish Tradition

The Hebrew version of *Aims of the Philosophers* was one of the most popular philosophical treatises among European Jews.[27] The book was translated into Hebrew more than once and several different editions of it were distributed among Jewish communities.

5.1 *Isaac Albalag*

Isaac Albalag, a thirteenth-century Spanish Jewish scholar, was the first to translate *Aims of the Philosophers* into Hebrew. Albalag used the book as a starting point for establishing his own philosophy, which was interpolated throughout his commentary on the book. Albalag's book, which was entitled *Sefer Tiqqun ha-De'ot*, was edited and published by Georges Vajda.[28] Moritz Steinschneider noted that Albalag translated the first two sections of *Aims of the Philosophers*, which are dedicated to logic and metaphysics. The third part, which is devoted to physics, was translated by Isaac ben Joseph ibn Polqar, a fourteenth-century Spanish Jewish scholar.[29] Isaac Albalag explicitly discussed his motives for translating *Aims of the Philosophers* and for composing his commentary,[30] claiming that the Torah contained hidden philosophical theories.[31] He was therefore determined to interpret the Torah using Aristotelian philosophy.[32] Albalag explained that Aristotle's treatises were extremely complicated and that he had thus decided to commence his own enterprise

27 The impact of *Aims of the Philosophers* on Jewish philosophy is discussed in Gad Freudenthal and Mauro Zonta, "Avicenna among Medieval Jews: The Reception of Avicenna's Philosophical and Scientific Writings in Jewish Cultures, East and West," *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 22 (2012): 243–48; Harvey, "Fourteenth-Century Jews," 363–64; Harvey, "Changing Image," 288–89.

28 Isaac Albalag, *Sefer Tiqqun ha-De'ot*, ed. Georges Vajda (Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1973).

29 Steinschneider, *Hebräischen Übersetzer*, 1:299–300.

30 Steven Harvey, "Author's' Introductions as a Gauge for Monitoring Philosophic Influence: The Case of Alghazālī," in *Studies in Jewish and Muslim Thought Presented to Professor Michael Schwarz*, ed. Sara Klein-Braslavy, Binyamin Abrahamov, and Joseph Sadan (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University Press, 2009), 53–66.

31 Albalag, *Tiqqun*, 4.

32 Albalag, *Tiqqun*, 4.

by translating and interpreting *Aims of the Philosophers.* According to Albalag, al-Ġazālī's book was lacking in quality and precision in comparison to Aristotle's books, but it was precisely for this reason that he decided to translate it and to compose his commentary on it. In his opinion, *Aims of the Philosophers* could be understood by those who were not equipped to study philosophy. He explained that the book's accessible character qualified it to serve as an infrastructure for understanding Aristotelian philosophy.

5.2 *Judah ben Solomon Nathan*

Aims of the Philosophers was translated into Hebrew once more by Judah ben Solomon Nathan, a fourteenth-century Spanish Jewish physician.[33] Moritz Steinschneider maintained that the book was also translated for a third time between 1300 and 1345 by an unknown translator,[34] although when this allegedly anonymous translation was studied by Nabil Nassar, he concluded that it was not actually a different translation and asserted that it was in fact a slightly edited version of Judah ben Solomon Nathan's translation.[35] Judah ben Solomon Nathan's translation was also accompanied by an introductory passage discussing the circumstances that had motivated him to translate the book and explaining his interpretation of it.[36] An edition of Nathan's introduction, based on Ms. Munich 121, was published by Steinschneider in 1878.[37] We shall now introduce Nathan's main points.

5.2.1 Solomon Nathan's Reasons for Translating *Aims of the Philosophers*: A Requirement of the Elite in Distress

Nathan depicted his society as being in a state of a spiritual, cultural, religious, and moral decline. He characterised his fellow community members as a greedy and hypocritical group of people who were all estranged from one another. He claimed that they had typically appointed ignorant and corrupt people as rabbis and judges, whose sole virtue was their considerable wealth, and emphasised that the appointed individuals had insufficient knowledge of the Torah and did not observe the commandments. However, Nathan also indicated that he was indeed acquainted with a few individuals of excellent

33 Steinschneider, *Hebräischen Übersetzer*, 1:306–9.

34 Steinschneider, *Hebräischen Übersetzer*, 1:309.

35 Nabil Nassar, "A Critical Edition of a 14th-Century Hebrew Translation of al-Ghazâli's *Maqâsid al-Falâsifah*, part III" [Hebrew] (PhD diss., Bar-Ilan University, 2008), 48.

36 Harvey, "Fourteenth-Century Jews," 372–73; Harvey, "Authors' Introductions," 60–62; Freudenthal and Zonta, "Avicenna among Medieval Jews," 245–46.

37 Moritz Steinschneider, *Die Handschriften-Verzeichnisse der Königlichen Bibliothek zu Berlin*, vol. 1 (Berlin, 1878), 130–32.

education and morality, referring to a certain family whom he described as the "offspring of saints" and elaborating that these people had acquired a comprehensive knowledge of Jewish scriptures and aspired to expand their understanding of science and philosophy. Nathan explained that these unique individuals could not fulfil their aspirations because there were no Hebrew philosophy textbooks. However, he pointed out that the desired knowledge was available in Arabic books and mentioned he was fluent in Arabic and had read some Arabic philosophical treatises, including *Aims of the Philosophers*.

Nathan praised the book, saying that it encapsulated logic, physics, and metaphysics in the most accurate manner. He also mentioned his uncle Nathan Bar Solomon and his relatives, and thus it may be the case that they were the esteemed individuals to whom he had referred. Nathan added that his uncle and his colleagues had started to study *Aims of the Philosophers*, but that their Arabic was not good enough and so they had approached Nathan and encouraged him to translate it. Nathan further revealed that his uncle had previously sought the services of another translator who had actually started translating *Aims of the Philosophers* for avid Jewish readers; however, that translator had emigrated elsewhere, leaving Nathan's uncle rather frustrated. Nathan did not provide any information regarding the identity of that anonymous translator. In this connection, Steinschneider mentioned Kalonymus ben David Ṭodros's preface to his translation of Averroes's *The Incoherence of the Incoherence*, which refers to a sage named Isaac Denḥanah who had also worked on Averroes's treatise before moving elsewhere.[38] Steinschneider speculated that this was the very same person who had begun translating *Aims of the Philosophers* for Nathan's family[39] and referred to E. Carmoly's discussion of Kalonymus's statement, indicating that according to his version of Kalonymus's words, that person was named Don Boniac de Nechana.[40] Nathan attested that the anonymous translator had left with his books, and Kalonymus indicated that de Nechana had wandered to "a place of Torah, to dwell among sages." These fragmentary remarks fail to provide any definite information about Isaac Denḥanah's body of work, nor do they indicate whether he did indeed produce his own Hebrew version of *Aims of the Philosophers.* Nonetheless, they do offer yet more evidence of the passionate interest in al-Ġazālī's oeuvres among Jewish sages in fourteenth-century Spain, which was but a fraction of their deep intellectual interest in Muslim philosophy.

38 Steinschneider, *Bibliothek zu Berlin*, 134.

39 Steinschneider, *Bibliothek zu Berlin*, 134 n. 3.

40 E. Carmoly, *La France Israélite: Mémoires pour servir a l'histoire de notre littérature* (Frankfurt am Main, 1858), 93.

5.2.2 The Virtues of *Aims of the Philosophers*: Providing a Succinct Summary of Major Philosophical Concepts

Nathan noted that it was extremely important to be able to study philosophy in a nutshell as in his view, Jewish students preferred to devote most of their time to Talmud study. For them, acquiring scientific knowledge was not an end, but rather a means of serving religious goals. Therefore, it was desirable to reduce the time spent on philosophy as that would allow one to dedicate a larger portion of one's life to the contemplation of the holy scriptures.

5.2.3 Assisting Religious Jews to Cope with the Criticism of Philosophers

Nathan mentioned that some disciples of philosophy scorned Jewish scriptures. He argued that understanding *Aims of the Philosophers* could assist Jews as it would enable them to respond to criticism using philosophical arguments, claiming that the text had been composed for this exact purpose since it served al-Ġazālī as a way to refute the philosophers' opinions. He emphasised that if Islamic scholars had protected their religion in this manner, then Jewish scholars should do so all the more in order to defend the Jewish tradition.

5.3 *Comparison between Albalag and Nathan*

A comparative analysis of Albalag's and Nathan's comments demonstrates that they had different views regarding *Aims of the Philosophers*. Both were well aware of the fact that the book did not present authentic Aristotelian philosophy. However, they had different opinions regarding this issue. Albalag asserted that *Aims of the Philosophers* was inferior to Aristotle's treatises as it did not provide solid proof for the theories presented in the book. In his view, *Aims of the Philosophers* was halfway between philosophy and common, proletariat concepts. In contrast, Nathan suggested that *Aims of the Philosophers* presented Avicenna's ideas and assumed that this was the reason why it had been criticised by Averroes. However, he did not consider this to be a fundamental flaw and stated that the book depicted major philosophical concepts in the best possible manner. Both Albalag and Nathan appreciated the pedagogical and didactic advantages of *Aims of the Philosophers*, praising the succinct and lucid way in which it explained philosophy. However, Albalag concluded that it was an introductory book to be read prior to reading Aristotle and therefore ruled it to be philosophy for beginners, being an inaccurate and somewhat deficient treatise, while Nathan surmised that it was a book summarising essential philosophical knowledge that was necessary for the study of the Talmud and therefore determined that it was complete and worthy in its genre.

5.4 *Shift Happens: Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries*

The reception of *Aims of the Philosophers* in Jewish circles has been studied by Steven Harvey.[41] He observed that fourteenth-century Jewish readers held various opinions regarding al-Ġazālī's motivation: some argued that *Aims of the Philosophers* was indeed designed to serve as a preparation for refuting philosophy, while others claimed that it revealed al-Ġazālī's own views. Jewish intellectuals also expressed different notions as to the accuracy of al-Ġazālī's portrayal of philosophy.[42] Nonetheless, all the fourteenth-century Jewish scholars who studied *Aims of the Philosophers* were avid adherents of Averroes's philosophy. These were Isaac Albalag, Moses Narboni, Moses Ben Judah, and Abraham Avigdor,[43] who acknowledged the book's comprehensible mode of expression, yet firmly criticised the fact that it echoed Avicenna's theories. Harvey explained that these scholars had read *Aims of the Philosophers* in order to improve their apprehension of Averroes's teachings and to grasp the precise differences between Ibn Averroes and Avicenna.[44] Concurrently, Jewish intellectuals studied *Aims of the Philosophers* in order to learn natural sciences, since they considered it to be an elementary introduction to this subject, though not completely accurate. As the aforementioned analysis demonstrates, the translator Judah ben Solomon Nathan and his colleagues also fall into this category. However, the fifteenth century witnessed a shift in the perceptions of *Aims of the Philosophers* among Jewish scholars, and thus the book came to be conceived a significant philosophical treatise. Harvey suggested that this development was affected by the dominant status of Ḥasdai Crescas at the turn of the fifteenth century. Jewish intellectuals acknowledged the affinity between Crescas and al-Ġazālī, as they both applied a profound comprehension of Aristotelian philosophy in order to shield their religious belief from heresy relying on this philosophy.[45] Crescas realised that *Aims of the Philosophers* provided a coherent survey of philosophy which functioned as an astute alternative to Averroes's method of interpretation.[46] Crescas's appreciation of *Aims of the Philosophers* influenced his disciples, who considered the book to be a reliable philosophical text supplying valuable information. This orientation contravened the prevailing fourteenth-century approach, which

41 Harvey, "Fourteenth-Century Jews," 359–76.
42 Harvey, "Changing Image," 299.
43 Harvey, "Changing Image," 299.
44 Harvey, "Fourteenth-Century Jews," 369–70; Harvey, "Changing Image," 299.
45 Warren Zev Harvey and Steven Harvey, "Rabbi Hasdai Crescas's Attitude toward al-Ghazâlî" [Hebrew], in *The Intertwined Worlds of Islam: Essays in Memory of Hava Lazarus-Yafeh*, ed. Nahem Ilan (Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi Institute, 2002), 191–210.
46 Harvey, "Changing Image," 302.

regarded the book either as a simplistic summary of philosophy or as a critique of philosophy.

Seventy-five different Hebrew manuscripts of *Aims of the Philosophers* have survived,[47] about fifty of which include Rabbi Moses Narboni's commentary.[48] Abraham Avigdor, a fourteenth-century French Jewish scholar, composed a poetic Hebrew version of *Aims of the Philosophers* entitled *Segullat Melakhim*; that is, "The Virtue of Kings."[49] The very facts that *Aims of the Philosophers* was translated into Hebrew more than once and that about seventy-five different manuscripts of these translations have endured attest to the book's broad dissemination among Jewish scholars and to the copious interest it aroused.

6 Rabbi Moses Narboni's Commentary on *Aims of the Philosophers*

Moses ben Joshua of Narbonne (d. 1362), known as Moses Narboni, was a Spanish Jewish scholar who wrote some fifteen different treatises concerning philosophy, Kabbalah, biblical exegesis, and medicine. The philosophical issues he addressed were logic, psychology, physics, and metaphysics.[50] Narboni authored a detailed Hebrew commentary on *Aims of the Philosophers* between 1342 and 1349.[51] This commentary contains a few hundred pages, most of which have never been published in print. The present study will examine the commentaries on the book's introduction[52] and on the third section of the book, which is dedicated to physics.

6.1 *Narboni's Introductory Comments*

Narboni composed some introductory comments expressing sheer admiration for al-Ġazālī, describing him as admirable and dignified and claiming that he had experienced genuine visions of the spiritual world. In claiming this, Narboni quoted Ibn Bāğğah's treatise *Risālat al-wadāʿ* ("Letter of Bidding Farewell").[53]

47 Harvey, "Changing Image," 289.

48 Gitit Holzman, "The Theory of the Intellect and Soul in the Thought of Rabbi Moshe Narboni. Based on His Commentaries on the Writings of Ibn Rushd, Ibn Tufayl, Ibn Bajja and al-Ghazali" [Hebrew] (PhD diss., Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1996), 20–21.

49 Steinschneider, *Hebräischen Übersetzer*, 1:325–26; Steven Harvey and Charles Manekin, "The Curious *Segullat Melakhim* by Abraham Avigdor," in *Ecriture et réécriture des textes philosophiques médiévaux. Volume d'hommage offert à Colette Sirat*, ed. Jacqueline Hamesse and Olga Weijers (Turnhout: Brepols, 2006), 215–52.

50 Holzman, "Narboni," 1–2.

51 Holzman, "Narboni," 287.

52 The analysis of Narboni's introduction relies on Vatican Library, Ms. ebr. 260, 1–2.

53 Miguel Asín Palacios, ed., "La *Carta de adiós* de Avempace," *Al-Andalus* 8 (1943): 1–87.

Ibn Bāğğah himself had obtained this information from a paragraph from al-Ġazālī's treatise *Al-munqiḏ min al-ḍalāl* (*Deliverance from Error*),[54] in which the author reported that he had received unique spiritual visions.

Narboni stated that *Aims of the Philosophers* was endowed by divine providence and that al-Ġazālī had been sent by God in order to assist those of his followers who were yearning for wisdom. According to Narboni, *Aims of the Philosophers* enabled these people to learn concealed knowledge despite various obstructions and interruptions. Narboni was well aware of the fact that the theories discussed in the book were not in keeping with Averroes's philosophy, but this did not prevent him from stating that the book revealed the secrets of wisdom.

Narboni claimed that *Aims of the Philosopher*'s *raison d'être* was to disclose an extremely brief summary of concealed knowledge to an elected few who were worthy of being exposed to these teachings. This assertion reveals Narboni's own view of the book; that is, he maintained that al-Ġazālī did not disagree with the ideas he had summarised, but rather considered them to be esoteric knowledge. Narboni enumerated several factors that might prevent potential disciples from acquiring knowledge, among them taking care of one's family and the necessity of earning money. In his opinion, al-Ġazālī's treatise was a product of divine providence as it allowed people to obtain reliable knowledge that would otherwise not have been accessible to them.

Narboni referred to al-Ġazālī's personal circumstances, maintaining that the study of philosophy was forbidden in his time.[55] However, he argued that al-Ġazālī had felt compelled to share the wisdom he had acquired with others and that he had therefore had to conceive a ruse that would allow him to disseminate philosophy in these conditions. In Narboni's view, al-Ġazālī came up with a sophisticated deception: composing a philosophy textbook that was disguised as a critique of philosophy. Narboni emphasised that he would never have written a commentary on a treatise that was considered unfounded by its own author. This statement proves that he did not believe that al-Ġazālī had composed *Aims of the Philosophers* only in order to refute it later on.

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54 Abū Ḥāmid al-Ġazālī, *Deliverance from Error and Mystical Union with the Almighty: Al-Munqidh min al-Dalal*, trans. Muhammad Abulaylah, critical Arabic text established by Nurshif Abdul-Rahim Rif'at, introduction and notes by George F. McLean (Washington, DC: Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 2001).

55 Narboni might have been referring to the "Nishapur controversy"; that is, al-Ġazālī's struggle with allegations that he was heavily influenced by philosophical ideas. See Treiger, *Inspired Knowledge*, 96–97.

7 Why Did Moses Narboni Consider *Aims of the Philosophers* to Be a Genuine Presentation of al-Ġazālī's Philosophy?

There are several ways to address the questions of why Narboni considered *Aims of the Philosophers* to be a genuine presentation of al-Ġazālī's philosophy. These will be explored in detail below.

7.1 *The Influence of Averroes*

Narboni's introductory passage includes a reference to a remark made by Averroes in his *The Incoherence of the Incoherence* (*Tahāfut al-Tahāfut*). Narboni stated that Averroes had asserted that al-Ġazālī had concealed his true philosophical convictions in order to align himself with the prevailing religious beliefs in eleventh-century Baghdad. *The Incoherence of the Incoherence* does indeed contain two paragraphs expressing this notion.[56]

One of the areas of al-Ġazālī's philosophy that Averroes discussed was the connection between God and the Active intellect. In relation to al-Ġazālī's view regarding the function of free will in God's actions, he wrote: "This is an answer of the wicked who heap fallacy on fallacy. Ġazālī is above this, but perhaps the people of his time obliged him to write this book to safeguard himself against the suspicion of sharing the philosophers' view."[57]

Averroes also contemplated different theories regarding the human psyche and addressed al-Ġazālī's theory of the soul which drew on Avicenna's doctrine. According to this theory, each human soul was conceived at a particular point in time, but could still become eternal. Averroes stated that this theory was inadmissible and unsuitable for such an admirable figure as al-Ġazālī and suggested that al-Ġazālī may have been presenting an opinion that he did not endorse due to circumstantial constraints:

> I do not know any philosopher who said that the soul has a beginning in the true sense of the word and is thereafter everlasting except—as al-Ghazālī relates—Ibn Sīnā. That al-Ghazālī should touch on such questions in this way is not worthy of such a man […]. He stands too high in our eyes […]. Perhaps he was forced to do so by the conditions of his time and his situation.[58]

56 Harvey, "Fourteenth-Century Jews," 367.

57 Averroes, *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut*, ed. Maurice Bouyges (Beirut: Imprimerie catholique, 1930), 159–60; Averroes, *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut* (*The Incoherence of the Incoherence*), trans. Simon Van Den Bergh, repr. ed. (London: Luzac, 1969), 1:95.

58 Averroes, *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut*, 108; *Incoherence of the Incoherence*, 1:63.

Hence, two different paragraphs of Averroes's *The Incoherence of the Incoherence* maintain that the ideas that al-Ġazālī articulated in *Aims of the Philosophers* were so absurd that it was inconceivable that he indeed agreed with his own statements. Narboni referred to these paragraphs in his introduction to *Aims of the Philosophers* and applied Averroes's analysis to al-Ġazālī's entire oeuvre. He concluded that *Aims of the Philosophers* disclosed al-Ġazālī's authentic philosophy, while *The Incoherence of the Philosophers* was written to satisfy his readership.

7.2 *A Text Ascribed to al-Ġazālī*

Narboni explained that it was not necessary to rely on Averroes's hints regarding al-Ġazālī's true concepts, for al-Ġazālī had in fact revealed his secret by composing a short treatise after writing *The Incoherence of the Philosophers*. He pointed to an essay entitled "An Essay Composed by Abu-Hammad al-Ghazālī as an Answer to Questions He Was Asked,"[59] which is by and large analogous to *Aims of the Philosophers*. Its closing paragraph contains a daunting warning against conducting a public discussion of its content, begging the reader to reveal its themes only to people who would gauge them favourably. Narboni discusses this very same essay in his commentary on Ibn Ṭufayl's treatise *Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān*. In that commentary, Narboni claims that the aforementioned closing paragraph is a clue that al-Ġazālī had addressed to his disciples, indicating that his true philosophy was presented in *Aims of the Philosophers* and that he had been compelled to compose *The Incoherence of the Philosophers* as this was the only way he could gain prestige and respect.[60] Al-Ġazālī's authorship of the treatise in question has not yet been proven.[61] However, Narboni never questioned its authenticity, thus considering it to be evidence that *Aims of the Philosophers* did indeed contain al-Ġazālī's philosophy.[62]

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59 The Hebrew version of this text was published in Abū Ḥāmid al-Ġazālī, *Die Abhandlung des Abû Hâmid al-Gazzâlî, Antworten auf Fragen, die an ihn gerichtet wurden*, ed. Heinrich (Henry) Malter (Frankfurt am Main, 1896). This treatise was studied by Tzvi Langermann, "The 'Hebrew *Ajwiba*' Ascribed to al-Ghazālī: Corpus, Conspectus, and Context," *The Muslim World* 101 (2011): 680–97.

60 Al-Ghazālī, *Die Abhandlung des Abû Hâmid al-Gazzâlî*, xi.

61 Hava Lazarus-Yafeh, *Studies in al-Ghazzālī* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press and Hebrew University, 1975), 251–52; Langermann, "The 'Hebrew *Ajwiba*,'" 682.

62 Narboni's remarks on this text were studied by Salomon Munk, *Mélanges de philosophie juive et arabe*, repr. ed. (Paris: Vrin, 1988), 379, and Langermann, "The 'Hebrew *Ajwiba*,'" 683.

7.3 *The Influence of Ibn Ṭufayl*

Ibn Ṭufayl's famous treatise *Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān* contains a preface that summarises the history of Muslim philosophy and also discusses al-Ġazālī's oeuvre, among other things.[63] There is no doubt that Narboni had read this preface and indeed the entire treatise, as he composed a lengthy commentary on *Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān*. Ibn Ṭufayl's discussion of al-Ġazālī might have had an impact on Narboni's understanding of *Aims of the Philosophers*.[64] He indicated that some of al-Ġazālī's treatises contradicted each other and argued that al-Ġazālī had consciously composed different books for different audiences, knowingly adjusting the themes discussed in each book to its intended readership. Ibn Ṭufayl claimed that some of al-Ġazālī's treatises were designed for the common people, accordingly proclaiming theories that al-Ġazālī himself did not consider to be accurate and that he had overtly refuted elsewhere. Ibn Tufail referred to a book by al-Ġazālī entitled *Al-maqṣad al-asnā*, claiming that this was one of his esoteric treatises. The full title of this book is *Al-maqṣad al-asnā fī šarḥ asmā' Allah al-ḥusnā*, which means "The Best Means in Explaining Allah's Beautiful Names."[65] Narboni read this passage, but as he was unfamiliar with al-Ġazālī's treatise *Al-maqṣad al-asnā*, he erroneously concluded that Ibn Ṭufayl was referring to *Aims of the Philosophers* (*Maqāṣid al-Falāsifah*) because the word *maqṣad* appears in the titles of both treatises. There can be no doubt that this misunderstanding influenced his reading of *Aims of the Philosophers* as an esoteric treatise whose author was compelled to conceal his real positions.

Throughout his commentary on *Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān*, Narboni discussed a paragraph from al-Ġazālī's *Mīzān al-ʿamal*, which was quoted by Ibn Ṭufayl. Narboni argued that *Mīzān al-ʿamal* portrayed a certain philosopher who pretended to share common opinions because he lived among the multitude and could not bear the idea of his true beliefs being exposed. It seems that Narboni reckoned that this destiny was characteristic of philosophers and concluded that al-Ġazālī had conducted his own life under the same circumstances.

7.4 *The Influence of Maimonides's* Guide of the Perplexed

Maimonides's *Guide of the Perplexed* had a major influence over Narboni's life and work. His father Joshua started teaching the *Guide* to him when he

63 Sami S. Hawi, *Islamic Naturalism and Mysticism, A Philosophic Study of Ibn Ṭufayl's* Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān (Leiden: Brill, 1974), 48–84.

64 Holzman, "Narboni," 113–233.

65 Abū Ḥāmid al-Ġazālī, *Al-Maqṣad al-asnā fī šarḥ asmā' Allahu al-ḥusnā* [*The Best Means in Explaining Allah's Beautiful Names*], ed. Fadlou Shehadh (Beirut: Dār al-Mašriq, 1982).

was thirteen years old, sometime in the early fourteenth century. Some fifty years later, between 1355 and 1362, Narboni composed his concluding treatise, a comprehensive commentary on the *Guide*.[66] There is no doubt the *Guide* was constantly on his mind, as its themes, ideas, and concepts were repeatedly addressed in the numerous treatises he authored. It seems that the *Guide's* esoteric characteristics made an intense impression on Narboni, convincing him that this method of writing was typical of predominant philosophical treatises.

7.5 *Historical Inquiry into the Lives and Deeds of Prophets and Philosophers*

Narboni often referred to events in the lives of distinguished leaders, politicians, prophets, and philosophers, both Jews and non-Jews. He argued that these unique individuals aspired to thrive and excel intellectually, spiritually, and religiously, aspirations which marked them as anomalous in their communities and which therefore led them to be repeatedly persecuted by their contemporaries. These exceptional people typically had to resort to various schemes in order to cope with community life on the one hand and to maintain their intellectual integrity on the other.[67] Narboni concluded that this dilemma was essential to the lives of Jacob the patriarch, King David, and the prophet Jeremiah, as well as to those of Socrates and Aristotle. He claimed that Ibn Ṭufayl's fictional story about Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān was a metaphor for this matter, and he also asserted that this issue was addressed by Plato, Ibn Bāğğah, Averroes, and Maimonides.

Scrutiny of the aforementioned figures' biographies partly supports Narboni's analysis. Nonetheless, his interpretation of historical testimonies is often tendentious, as it relies on a subjective point of view rather than on solid facts. For instance, the prophet Jeremiah was noted as an antagonistic and combative personality. He described himself as "a man of strife and contention to the whole land" (Jer 15:10), confronting kings, priests, and members of his own family and community. Narboni analysed Jeremiah's personality in his commentary on *Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān*, quoting his plea: "Oh that I had in the desert a travellers' lodging place, that I might leave my people and go away from them! For they are all adulterers, a company of treacherous men" (Jer 9:1). Narboni explained that Jeremiah longed to leave human society as he aspired

66 Gitit Holzman, "R. Moshe Narboni's Commentary to Maimonides *Guide of the Perplexed*" [Hebrew], *Daat: A Journal of Jewish Philosophy & Kabbalah* 74–75 (2013): 197–203.

67 See Gitit Holzman, "Moses Narboni on Religion, State and Spirituality" [Hebrew], in *Al Da'at Ha-Qahal, Religion and Politics in Jewish Thought*, ed. Benjamin Brown, Menachem Lorberbaum, Avinoam Roznak, and Yedidia Z. Stern (Jerusalem: Israel Democracy Institute, 2012), 191–211.

to achieve a higher spiritual state, culminating in cleavage to God. He asserted that life within the human community by its very nature presented continuous obstacles that prevented intellectuals from fulfilling their spiritual ambitions and argued that common people were ignorant, disdained wisdom, and hated intellectuals. Jeremiah's persona as portrayed in the Bible barely accorded with Narboni's thesis. However, Narboni overlooked the political setting, social circumstances, and moral context that caused repeated confrontations between Jeremiah and his surroundings. Moreover, he disregarded the fact that these confrontations stemmed from Jeremiah's substantial engagement in his society and from his passion for reforming the community that he was a part of rather than from a desire to isolate himself from human society.

Narboni also interpreted texts relating to Aristotle in a manner consistent with his thesis. In his commentary on *Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān*, he discussed the term "Peripatetic school" which designated Aristotle's school of philosophy. These philosophers were so named because Aristotle would meet his students in the *Peripatos*, which was the courtyard surrounding his school, the Lyceum. Unsubstantiated legends claimed that the Greek term *peripatetic* originated from Aristotle's alleged practice of walking while lecturing. Nevertheless, *peripatetic* implies "of walking" and was thus translated into Hebrew (through Arabic as "those who walk"). Narboni had evidently used texts explaining that Aristotle would walk while teaching, elaborating that he and his students wished to exercise at the same time. However, he appended that he assumed that these ancient Greek philosophers had chosen to study while walking in order to dissociate themselves from the ignorant multitude, which was unaware of metaphysical knowledge. It is possible that Narboni studied Aristotle's biography and knew that towards the end of his life, following the death of Alexander the Great, Aristotle had left Athens and settled in the city of Chalcis on the island of Euboea because he feared that the Athenians would "sin twice against philosophy"; that is, that they would hurt him as they had Socrates.[68] However, the fact that Narboni believed that Aristotle's school was called the Peripatetic school because they were walking away from a hostile environment proves that he believed that Aristotle was a seclusive philosopher throughout his entire life. This attests to his peculiar perspective according to which philosophers are by definition extraordinary and therefore persecuted.

Narboni believed that he had traced indications of this predicament in the treatises of Averroes, Ibn Ṭufayl, and al-Ġazālī himself. Therefore, it is plausible

68 Carlo Natali, *Aristotle: His Life and School*, ed. D.S. Hutchinson (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013).

that he would assume that al-Ġazālī was indeed a persecuted intellectual and that *Aims of the Philosophers* was an esoteric text, calling for a radical interpretation. Narboni can thus be acknowledged as a precursor to Leo Strauss's thesis introduced in his classic essay "Persecution and the Art of Writing":

> Persecution, then, gives rise to a peculiar technique of writing, and therewith to a peculiar type of literature, in which the truth about all crucial things is presented exclusively between the lines. That literature is addressed, not to all readers, but to trustworthy and intelligent readers only. It has all the advantages of private communication without having its greatest disadvantage—that it reaches only the writer's acquaintances. It has all the advantages of public communication without having its greatest disadvantage—capital punishment for the author.[69]

7.6 *The Benefit of Brevity*

Narboni applauded *Aims of the Philosophers* for providing a succinct summary of major philosophical doctrines. He did not consider its brevity to be an indication of the author's ignorance, shallowness, or incompetence; on the contrary, he held that this concise volume was composed in order to reach out to uncommon intellectuals who were seeking wisdom, despite life within human society presenting numerous obstacles which precluded them from fulfilling their life goals. These obstacles were mundane chores that were integral to social life. In other words, Narboni judged that the philosophers' antagonism towards society was not necessarily an outcome of political persecution. He argued that ordinary family life and workday labour encumbered philosophers, presenting what they conceived as insurmountable obstacles on their spiritual path. Narboni's commentary on *Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān* echoed the same concept by recommending that intellectuals should conduct an elitist, autonomous lifestyle. He maintained that earning one's living and conducting family life were inescapable until one reached a certain age. Only then could intellectuals practise complete abstinence from the social burden and be committed to their spiritual aspirations. Narboni accentuated that throughout most of their lifetime, intellectuals could not isolate themselves from the multitude. That being so, they had to endeavour to internally detach themselves from the encircling society. This perspective explains why Narboni praised al-Ġazālī and regarded his book as a precious gift to these individuals he depicted as "God's

69 Leo Strauss, *Persecution and the Art of Writing*, new ed. (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 25.

slaves, yearning for wisdom while struggling with oppressive harassments."[70] Hence, he did not consider *Aims of the Philosophers* to be a recapitulation of ideas that should be contradicted, but rather defined it as an admirably succinct disclosure of the secrets of wisdom to those who were worthy.

7.7 *Al-Ġazālī's Biography*

Narboni claimed that al-Ġazālī had lived in a time and place where the study of philosophy was forbidden by the king. What were the grounds for this assertion? During al-Ġazālī's lifetime (1056–1111), the Abbasid Caliphate was dominated by Seljuq sultans, who allowed Sunni Islam to flourish spiritually, culturally, and religiously. Al-Ġazālī lived in Baghdad during the reign of Sultan Malik-Shah I and the Saljuki vizier Nizam al-Mulk.[71] Nizam al-Mulk was al-Ġazālī's patron, and he supported his studies and appointed him as head of the great Madrasa, Nizamiyyah, which he founded in Baghdad. Wilferd Madelung claimed that al-Ġazālī felt that this patronage had obliged him to be devoted to Nizam al-Mulk and had prevented him from thriving as he wished.[72] In any case, the Seljuk regime was frequently attacked by the various factions of Shi'ite Islam, and Nizam al-Mulk was assassinated by one of the Ismaili Shi'ite emissaries shortly after al-Ġazālī's arrival in Baghdad. It was reported that the assassin was a member of the Assassins, sent by their leader Hassan-i-Sabbah. Al-Ġazālī himself was afraid of the Assassins and their leader because he scorned their religious beliefs and opposed their violent conduct. For these reasons and others, al-Ġazālī left Baghdad in 1095 and embarked on a long journey. In 1106, he obtained a teaching position at Nishapur. In the years 1006 and 1007, he was involved in a lengthy controversy in which he was accused of being under the influence of philosophy.[73]

It is uncertain whether Narboni was at all familiar with al-Ġazālī's biography or whether he was aware of the complex circumstances that had caused his nomadic life. The fact that Narboni maintained that studying philosophy was prohibited by the authorities in al-Ġazālī's time may indicate that he was somewhat aware of the difficulties and challenges he had faced. In addition, Narboni may have been thinking of al-Ġazālī's statements in his book *The Revival of the Religious Sciences* (*Iḥyā' ʿUlūm al-Dīn*). Al-Ġazālī claimed that most or all of the rulers of his time were corrupt and concluded that it was best

70 Vatican Library, Ms. ebr. 260, 1 (my translation).

71 Frank Griffel, *Al-Ghazālī's Philosophical Theology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 31–39.

72 Madelung, "Al-Ghazālī's Changing Attitude to Philosophy," 26.

73 Treiger, *Inspired Knowledge*, 96–97.

to avoid any contact with the authorities.[74] There is no evidence that Narboni read this treatise, but he may have been somewhat aware of al-Ġazālī's view as expressed in that chapter.

8 Physics and Metaphysics in Narboni's Commentary on *Maqāṣid al-Falāsifah*

8.1 *Al-Ġazālī's Theory of Miracles*

Hitherto, I have discussed Narboni's overall understanding of *Maqāṣid al Falāsifa*. I shall now examine his reading of this treatise by analysing a portion of the commentary that concerns al-Ġazālī's discussion of nature, miracles, and prophecy.[75] This portion is part of the third section of the book dedicated to natural sciences, in which al-Ġazālī discusses the human psyche, the human intellect, and its contact with the Active Intellect. He focuses on phenomena that were perceived as "wonders and signs" (*muʿǧizāt wa-karāmāt*), aiming to provide rational explanations for these phenomena. He contemplates the capacity of certain people to generate miracles; that is, to affect the corporeal world in a manner that seems to be inconsistent with the laws of physics. He tackles this issue by pointing out the resemblance between human souls and the souls of the celestial spheres—spiritual entities which were allegedly generating all corporeal processes in the sublunar world.[76] Al-Ġazālī argues that the difference between celestial souls and human souls is not intrinsic, but rather a difference of volume, and he compares the ratio between human souls and celestial souls to the ratio between candlelight and sunlight. Thus, the energy of the human soul is substantially weaker than that of celestial souls. Consequently, the human soul will typically only affect its own body. Al-Ġazālī demonstrates the link between the human body and the human soul by indicating that ruminations of different sorts arouse diverse corporal reactions, such as sweating, blushing, and genital arousal. He hence establishes his thesis that corporal changes can be initiated by spiritual factors and further argues that human souls are capable of actuating large-scale corporal changes

74 Abū Ḥāmid al-Ġazālī, *Iḥyāʾ ʿUlūm al-Dīn*, ed. ʿAbd al-Muʿṭī Amīn Qalʿaǧī (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 2004), 2:186 (Arabic).

75 The Arabic text is taken from al-Ġazālī, *Aims of the Philosophers*, 380–82; the Hebrew text is taken from Ms. Guenzburg 92, pages 103–4.

76 Herbert A. Davidson, *Alfarabi, Avicenna, and Averroes on Intellect: Their Cosmologies, Theories of the Active Intellect, and Theories of Human Intellect* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 74–83.

which expand beyond the bodies in which they reside, claiming that this is a rather obvious hypothesis as the psyche is not a material entity and hence is not inseparably attached to the body with which it is associated. Al-Ġazālī concludes that some human souls do indeed function beyond their own bodies, having an impact on the temperature and motion of remote physical objects. He stresses that mutations in temperature and motion determine every material transformation and claims that these sorts of transformations, initiated by immaterial factors, are in fact what is known as miracles.

8.2 *Narboni's Commentary*

Narboni reflected on the link between human souls and the souls of the celestial spheres. In his opinion, al-Ġazālī suggested that human souls do not merely function in a similar fashion to celestial souls, but that they are rather part of the same entity. Narboni interprets al-Ġazālī as saying that human souls are in fact celestial souls functioning within human bodies and states that this conception was also shared by Averroes and Abraham ibn Ezra. It is not clear why Narboni ascribed this idea to Averroes. He might have been following an Arabic treatise that was translated into Hebrew with the name *Mo'znei ha-'Iyyunim*, which was sometimes mistakenly imputed to Averroes and presented similar concepts.[77] As for Abraham ibn Ezra, this thesis was indeed introduced in some of his Bible commentaries. Aviezer Ravitzky discussed this theory, clarifying its Neoplatonic origin. He explained:[78]

> Ibn Ezra's philosophy is usually characterized as Neoplatonism with a pantheistic bent. For ibn Ezra, the miracle-working ability of the prophet is the result of his spiritual elevation from individuality to universality, from particularity to communion with the whole and the perfect. [...] In union with the universal soul, the Active Intellect and the divine, the human soul acts in accordance with the supreme order of creation, both spiritual and material, an order which encompasses also the possibility of miracles.[79]

Ravitzky explained that Avicenna had authored this concept, but while Avicenna believed that individual souls could induce universal modifications

77 Binyamin Abrahamov, "The Sources of *Mozene Ha-'Iyyunim*" [Hebrew], *Daat: A Journal of Jewish Philosophy & Kabbalah* 34 (1995): 83–84.

78 Aviezer Ravitzky, "The Anthropological Theory of Miracles in Medieval Jewish Philosophy," in *Studies in Medieval Jewish History and Literature, Volume 2*, ed. Isadore Twersky (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985), 231–72.

79 Ravitzky, "Anthropological Theory," 238.

and still preserve their particular identity, Ibn Ezra opined that the human soul's ability to generate corporeal change was conditioned on its complete cleavage with "the supreme casualty of the spiritual realm."[80] Narboni's commentary reflects his comprehension of Ibn Ezra's theory and focuses on the distinction between what he considered to be Ibn Ezra's and Averroes's theories versus his interpretation of al-Ġazālī's ideas. According to Narboni, both theories maintain that miracles can occur once an individual human soul cleaves to the supreme celestial entity. Nonetheless, they differ regarding the platform on which these miracles are conducted. According to Narboni, al-Ġazālī portrays a method in which celestial souls operate in the sublunar world through individual souls, thus generating deeds that are perceived as miracles. In contrast, the theory that he attributes to both Ibn Ezra and Averroes depicts the individual soul's reversion to its supreme origin, thus performing miracles in the heavenly sphere.

Narboni demonstrated the differences between these two categories of miracles by examining two memorable biblical stories depicting exceptional activities involving celestial bodies. He first analyses a miracle conducted by the prophet Isaiah, who was asked by King Hezekiah to give him a sign proving that his prophecy would come true. Isaiah offered to change the time indicated by the shadow falling on a sundial, but Hezekiah commented: "It is an easy thing for the shadow to lengthen ten steps" (2 Kgs 20:10). Narboni understood this phrase as hinting that it was relatively easy to perform a miracle in the sublunar world and compared Isaiah's conduct to that of Joshua at Gibeon, claiming that the miracle performed at Gibeon was greater and indeed of a different category altogether. Joshua said: "Sun, stand still at Gibeon, and moon, in the Valley of Aijalon" (Josh 10:12), after which "the sun stood still, and the moon stopped" (Josh 10:13). Narboni stressed that this was a unique miracle conducted in the supreme spheres, thus surpassing all other miracles depicted in the Bible, referring to the verse "Neither before nor since has there ever been such a day, when the LORD acted on words spoken by a man" (Josh 10:14). He commented that this was proof that Joshua's deeds exceeded even those performed by Moses, which never transcended the sublunar sphere. This statement is derived from Narboni's in-depth Bible study combined with his brilliant philosophical analysis. However, the conclusion that Joshua's psyche and practice were superior to those of Moses surely reflects a severe polemic against prominent Maimonidean doctrine. Maimonides had repeatedly professed the singularity and supremacy of Moses's prophecy, elaborating on this

80 Ravitzky, "Anthropological Theory," 239.

issue in both his halakhic and philosophical treatises.[81] Narboni pursued this polemic in his commentary on the *Guide of the Perplexed*, although exploring this issue is beyond the scope of the current article. At this point, we shall merely note that Narboni's father, who was his first and most influential teacher, was named Joshua[82] and that Narboni also named his son Joshua.[83] Thus, it seems that despite the fact that his own name was Moshe, he might have had a profound incentive to prove that in a sense, Joshua's status was higher than that of Moshe.

8.3 *Al-Ġazālī on Prophecy*

Aims of the Philosophers' concluding section deals with prophetic vocation. Al-Ġazālī stated that the universe was designed with an intrinsic systematic order which enabled its existence. However, nature *per se* could not guarantee universal well-being. Divine providence could not be accomplished by merely imprinting the laws of physics in the corporeal world; thus, God had sent prophets whose vocation was to instruct humanity and teach it the right way of life. Al-Ġazālī delineated the route in which the divine message reached the masses, speculating that the angels had conveyed the divine message to the prophets, the prophets had passed it on to the sages, and the sages had distributed it among the general public. Al-Ġazālī specified that each of these groups—angels, prophets, and sages—was divided into innumerable intermediate ranks.

8.4 *Narboni's Commentary*

The commentary focuses on analysing the diverse prophetic ranks. Narboni suggests there are four main categories of prophets:

1. Prophets who receive divine messages and keep them to themselves.
2. Prophets who compose books introducing their prophetic message.
3. Prophets who function within human society, thus conveying their message to the masses.
4. Prophets who perform miracles, seemingly bending the laws of physics.

These categories were partly inspired by Abraham Abulafia's *Or ha-Śekhel* ("Light of the Intellect"),[84] as well as by the *Guide of the Perplexed*. Chapter 37 of the second part of the *Guide* introduced different categories of sages and

81 Alvin J. Reines, "Maimonides' Concept of Mosaic Prophecy," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 40/41 (1969/70): 325–61.

82 Holzman, "Narboni's Commentary," 198.

83 Holzman, "Narboni's Commentary," 203.

84 Moshe Idel, "On the Influence of *Or ha-Sekhel* over Moses Narboni and Avraham Shalom" [Hebrew], *AJS Review* 4 (1979): H1–H6.

prophets. Maimonides maintained that some sages and prophets would gain intellectual and spiritual perfection, but that they would not share their unique mental assets with their fellow men. Another category of sages and prophets was that of those who gained superfluous divine abundance and thus had to share this sublime gift with their surroundings. Maimonides believed that sages belonging to this second category tended to compose books summing up their thoughts, while prophets shared their wisdom by talking to people, gathering crowds, and preaching their tidings. Narboni's four categories of prophets evidently relied on Maimonides's ideas. However, Narboni's novelty is *inter alia* manifested in his second category, which claims that some prophets expressed their sublime knowledge in the books that they composed. In the introductory comments, Narboni stated that it was al-Ġazālī's superfluous divine abundance that compelled him to compose *Aims of the Philosophers* despite hazardous circumstances.[85] If we integrate this comment with his comment about the books composed by prophets, this suggests that Narboni considered al-Ġazālī to be not merely an ingenious philosopher, but a true prophet.

9 Esoteric Teaching

Narboni opened his commentary on *Aims of the Philosophers* by explaining he was preoccupied with that treatise since he was convinced that it shared its author's authentic philosophy. He argued that al-Ġazālī had *prima facie* disowned philosophy since he was compelled to protect himself from potential assaults from his opponents. Scrutiny of Narboni's stance among *Aims of the Philosophers*' Jewish readers reveals that he was one of the book's most avid supporters, as he praised its virtue in conveying principles of philosophy in a concise and eloquent manner. Narboni was a devoted adherent of Averroes and a diligent commentator on his oeuvres. However, throughout his commentary on *Aims of the Philosophers*, Narboni praised al-Ġazālī for following Avicenna's theories, going so far as to state that al-Ġazālī's religious belief—which in Narboni's view was shared by Avicenna—was one of the factors that motivated him to compose his commentary.[86] This statement is consistent with a few more assertions intertwined throughout the commentary implying that Narboni did not consider al-Ġazālī to be a rationalist philosopher in

85 Note section 6.1 above.

86 Ms. Guenzburg 92, page 101.

disguise, but rather a prophetic figure for whom philosophy constituted an infrastructure for spiritual transcendence. Here are some of these comments:

1. In his introductory statements, Narboni depicted al-Ġazālī as a person who "had envisioned the spiritual world." He stated that *Aims of the Philosophers* was endowed by "divine providence" and that al-Ġazālī was sent by God to assist God's slaves who were yearning for wisdom" by unveiling the "secrets of wisdom."[87]
2. Narboni tackled al-Ġazālī's intellectual explanation of miracles by addressing his claim that human souls resemble celestial souls and that they can affect substance via an analogous mechanism. Nevertheless, Narboni argued that al-Ġazālī actually believed that human souls were in fact part of the essence of celestial souls. This is an esoteric interpretation that probably referred to his opinion that al-Ġazālī had concealed his true insights, believing that celestial souls functioned within human bodies.
3. Narboni discussed the classes of people enumerated by al-Ġazālī: prophets, sages, and the multitude. His commentary implies that he considered al-Ġazālī to be the sort of prophet whose books reveal his spiritual wisdom. He thus promoted al-Ġazālī from a learned philosopher to a supreme spiritual figure.

10 Conclusion

Narboni was well aware of the fact that *Aims of the Philosophers* reflected Avicenna's philosophy, and he even applauded the author for taking that path. However, he openly interpreted the book using his knowledge of Averroistic philosophy. Narboni's commentary was intertwined with biblical themes, which he decoded using philosophical principles. In addition, it makes great use of Maimonides's *Guide of the Perplexed*.

Moses Narboni, a commentator on al-Ġazālī, Ibn Bāğğah, Ibn Ṭufayl, Averroes, and Maimonides, was nobody's exclusive disciple. He conceived original ideas while studying tracts by both Jewish and Muslim scholars. As for al-Ġazālī, it seems that in Narboni's view, the secrets of wisdom revealed in *Aims of the Philosophers* were not solely principles of rationalistic philosophy, but rather spiritual teachings that one should aspire to unravel. Needless to say, proper Hebrew and English editions of al-Ġazālī's *Maqāṣid al-Falāsifa*, as well as Narboni's commentary, are prime scholarly desiderata.

87 Note section 6.1 above.

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Doubt and Certainty in Late Modern Kabbalah

A Tale of Two Schools

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Abstract

In this paper, two test-cases for examining the role of doubt in late modern Kabbalah are addressed and compared: R. Gershon Henikh Leiner (1839–1891), leader of the controversial Izbiche-Radzin school, and R. David Kohen (1887–1972), an important student of the famous R. Avraham Itzhak ha-Kohen Kook. In the former case, Leiner frames doubt, even with regard to God's existence, as central to the existential human condition, and thus to divine worship. For Kohen, doubt was bound up in his very identity as a religious philosopher, as well as a constant companion of his often-frustrating quest for prophetic experience. He thus provides the most extensive explicit treatment of scepticism extant in kabbalistic literature. Based on these prominent examples, from adjacent yet discrete historical, cultural, and geographical settings, it is claimed that as modernity progressed, doubt occupied a more prominent and challenging place in Kabbalistic writing and experience.

Keywords

scepticism – Kabbalah – modernisation – Hasidism – Kant – antinomianism – psychobiography

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It was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity.
CHARLES DICKENS, *A Tale of Two Cities*

1 Introduction[1]

1.1 Status quaestionis

Although there are notable studies of the development of scepticism in early modern Jewish thought (such as the writings of Giuseppe Veltri and Gideon Freudenthal), as well as wider reflections on scepticism and "the modern," there is no sustained discussion of the place of doubt in the vast literature of modern Kabbalah. Moreover, there is no differentiation between attitudes towards doubt in its various sub-periods and schools. In particular, we do not have anything approaching a comprehensive treatment of the development of the theme of doubt in late modern Kabbalah,[2] in spite of the textual fact that the terms *safeq* (doubt) and *vadd'ay* (for certain) are clearly keywords in modern Kabbalistic rhetoric and phraseology.[3] Although the relationship between doubt and scepticism is complex, at the very least it nevertheless constitutes a Wittgensteinian "family resemblance." As we shall see, some of the late modern Kabbalistic formulations of doubt point towards an engagement with deeper aspects of this concept, overlapping with sceptical themes and going against the grain of viewing doubt as an obstacle to faith and spiritual progress.[4]

1 The research for this article was supported by Israel Science Foundation Grant no. 692/2020: "G.H. Leiner's *Sod Yesharim* in Its Inter-Generational Context."

2 See esp. Giuseppe Veltri, *Alienated Wisdom: Enquiry into Jewish Philosophy and Scepticism*, Studies and Texts in Scepticism 3 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018) (especially the discussions of scepticism and mysticism on 294–95); Gideon Freudenthal, "The Remedy to Linguistic Skepticism. Judaism as a Language of Action," *Naharaim: Zeitschrift für deutsch-jüdische Literatur und Kulturgeschichte* 4 (2011): 67–76, as well as Aryeh Botwinick, *Skepticism, Belief and the Modern: Maimonides to Nietzsche* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997). For a recent survey of forms of early modern scepticism (also challenging common wisdom on this period as the seat of a sceptical revival), see Stephan Schmid, "Three Varieties of Early Modern Scepticism," in *Sceptical Paths: Enquiry and Doubt from Antiquity to the Present*, ed. Giuseppe Veltri, Racheli Haliva, Stephan Schmid, and Emidio Spinelli, Studies and Texts in Scepticism 6 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019), 181–201 (to which I shall return anon).

3 For "canonical" examples, selected from a great many instances from early, mid, and late modernity respectively, see Hayyim Vital, *Derekh ʿEṣ Ḥayyim*, ed. Meir Poppers (Jerusalem, 2013) (introduction), 2, 7; Moshe Hayyim Luzzatto, *Daʿat Tvunot*, ed. J. Spinner (Jerusalem, 2019), 19, 25, 35, 40, 74, 80, 83; Shlomo Elyashiv, *Le-šem Ševo we-Aḥlamah: Haqdamot u-Šeʿarim* (Petrakov, 1909), 29A (the latter being a study partner/teacher of Rabbi Kook, who will be discussed at length below). One should note that the term *vadd'ay* itself recurs in the *Zohar*, though probably not in the epistemological sense of certainty, but rather in the exegetical sense of hyper-literalism, like the parallel term *mamaš* (literally); see Elliot R. Wolfson, *Luminal Darkness: Imaginal Gleanings from Zoharic Literature* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2007), 70–71.

4 Compare to Veltri, *Alienated Wisdom*, 143, 165–67, 236 (discussing the early modern period) and especially the methodological discussion on 287–88 (as well as Schmid, "Three Varieties,"

1.2 *Introducing the Present Study*

This article seeks to address developments closer to our time by examining later innovations within two schools.[5] Firstly (by expanding on work conducted decades ago by Shaul Magid), it will point to the remarkable centrality of doubt in the *Sod Yešarim* (*Secret of the Righteous*) corpus, which contains the teachings of R. Gershon Henikh Leiner of Radzin (1839–1891), the grandson of R. Mordekhai Yosef (and son of the latter's direct heir, R. Ya'akov Leiner of Radzin, 1814–1878).[6] Secondly, it will look at both theoretical and autobiographical texts penned by R. David Kohen ("the Nazir" or Nazarite, 1887–1972), Kook's most philosophically oriented student, though not his most influential one. The latter figure has so far been almost exclusively addressed in Hebrew scholarship.[7] Kohen's case is particularly instructive, as we are dealing with a university-trained figure who was extensively acquainted with both classical and modern philosophy (including explicit discussions of scepticism) in its original languages.[8] In both test cases—which are of Eastern European origin and relatively close in time, although there are significant differences that will be addressed below—we are speaking of "second-tier" thinkers, who have been somewhat eclipsed in the public eye by their more famous teachers/ancestors, but who are nevertheless innovative and highly erudite in their own right.

The general premise here, deliberately moving from these specific case studies towards a wider historical argument regarding an important characteristic of modern Kabbalah, is that as modernity progressed, doubt occupied a more prominent and challenging place in Kabbalistic writing. This salience bridged geographical, ideological, and cultural divides. The advent of doubt

183–84). For earlier periods, see, e.g., Christiana M. M. Olfert, "Skeptical Investigation and Its Perks: Diog. Laert. 9.69–70 and 79–89," in *Pyrrhonian Skepticism in Diogenes Laertius*, ed. Katja M. Vogt (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015), 155.

5 For a general history of modern Kabbalah and its phases, see Jonathan Garb, *A History of Kabbalah: From the Early Modern Period to the Present Day* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020).

6 See Shaul Magid, *Hasidism on the Margin: Reconciliation, Antinomianism, and Messianism in Izbica/Radzin Hasidism* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003) (for doubt, see esp. 88–99, 123–28, 144–47). Since Magid's foundational discussion (based on his earlier PhD dissertation), additional key texts by Leiner have become available. For a recent bibliographical study, see Shimeon Fogel, "The Literary Activity of Rabbi Gershon Henokh Leiner of Radzyn" [Hebrew], *Daat* 68/69 (2010): 149–85.

7 See esp. Dov Schwartz, *Challenge and Crisis in Rabbi Kook's Circle* [Hebrew] (Tel Aviv: 'Am 'Oved, 2001); Schwartz, *A Theological Profile of Religious Zionism* [Hebrew] (Tel Aviv: 'Am Oved, 1999) (briefer English-language discussions are interspersed in Schwartz, *Faith at the Crossroads: A Theological Profile of Religious Zionism*, trans. Batya Stein [Leiden: Brill, 2002]).

8 For a biographical account of Kohen's early years, see Yehuda Bitty, *The Mystical Philosopher: Studies in Qol Ha-Nevu'ah* [Hebrew] (Tel Aviv: Ha-Kibbutz Hameuchad, 2016).

in high modernity is exemplified by a statement made by a figure who was influential for both the Hasidim and their opponents, the eighteenth-century Italian Kabbalist R. 'Emmanuel Hai Ricci, regarding one of the most debated topics of modern Kabbalah, *ṣimṣum*, or the contraction/withdrawal of divinity from the world:

> All my life I was uncertain over the concept of *Tzimtzum* as to whether it is correct to believe that it is to be understood *Kipshuto*/literally or not. [...] For it is possible to doubt both points of view however, the doubt related to one point of view is much greater than that related to the other.[9]

In this strikingly personal confession, a life-long quandary is resolved not with compelling evidence, but rather through the elimination of the view that raises greater doubt. Here, doubt does not relate to the ontological scheme of things, but rather to our own perception or view of the nature and extent of the divine presence in the world. As Hai Ricci goes on to say, we are ultimately dealing with realms in which human knowledge is woefully inadequate.[10] Here, alongside a triumph of the seeming confidence in the revelatory nature of the modern Lurianic formulation of Kabbalah (exemplified by Hai Ricci's own canonisation of this system), we can observe the emergence of doubt, not merely as an occurrence, but rather as guiding a methodological principle regarding one of its basic tenets.

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9 Hai Ricci, *Yošer Levav, Batei ha-Lev*, *Bayit* 1, *Ḥeder* 1, introduction; translated and annotated in Avinoam Fraenkel, *Nefesh ha-Tzimtzum: Understanding Nefesh haChaim through the Key Concept of Tzimtzum and Related Writings* (Jerusalem: Urim, 2015), 2:250. This text is quoted by R. David Kohen, one of the two main figures addressed here, in Kohen, *Ḥug ha-Ra'ayah* (*Lectures on Orot ha-Qodeš*), ed. H. Hacohen et al., 3 vols. (Jerusalem: Nezer David, 2018–2019), 2:117. On the early modern disputation regarding the interpretation of *ṣimṣum* (literal or metaphorical), esp. in Italy, see, e.g., Nissim Yosha, *Myth and Metaphor: Abraham Cohen Herera's Philosophical Interpretation of Lurianic Kabbalah* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Ben Zvi Institute, 1994), 178–210; Moshe Idel, "Conceptualizations of Tzimtzum in Baroque Italian Kabbalah," in *The Value of the Particular: Lessons from Judaism and the Modern Jewish Experience. Festschrift for Steven T. Katz on the Occasion of His Seventieth Birthday*, ed. Michael Zank and Ingrid Anderson (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 28–54, as well as Rivka Shatz-Uffenheimer, "Ramhal's Metaphysics in Its Ethical Context (A Study in 'Qelaḥ Piṯḥei Ḥokhma')" [Hebrew], *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 9 (1990): 361–96, and cf. Elliot R. Wolfson, "Tiqqun ha-Shekhinah': Redemption and the Overcoming of Gender Dimorphism in the Messianic Kabbalah of Moses Hayyim Luzzatto," *History of Religions* 36 (1997): 292 n. 8. For a specific discussion of Hai Ricci, see Tzvi Luboshitz, "An Early Version of the Ṣimṣum Debate in Immanuel Hay Ricchi's Yosher Levav" [Hebrew], *Kabbalah* 42 (2018): 269–320.

10 See Fraenkel, *Nefesh HaTzimtzum*, 2:252.

2 R. Gershon Henikh Leiner's Onto-Epistemology of Doubt

From the very outset of his extensive commentary on the Torah (entitled, like several of his other works, *Sod Yešarim*), Leiner places doubt at the centre of his ontology. The following text on the *parašah* (pericope) of *Bereʾšit* can readily be seen as merging ontology and epistemology:

> In the matter of the tree of knowledge and the tree of life and Adam's sin, […] the lower a world is, then the smaller its light, until such point that the tree of doubt [*ilana' de-sfeiqa'*] is created, which is the entire being [*hawayat*] of the grasp of Man […]. And as God willed the being of the lowly world, there is within it the tree of doubt, which is the tree of knowledge of good and evil […]. And the matter of this tree of doubt is that just as the certainty of the existence of the emanator and His true essence are clear only to Him, Blessed be He, and all that is emanated is not very clear in the certainty of its existence […]. And indeed also in His [very] existence—[namely,] that there is a hidden creator and emanator—here too we have infinite levels in this knowledge […] until in this world of doubt all of knowledge of his existence is doubtful, for thus He willed that the work of the created would arrive so that they would worship him out of doubt and in this tree, and there is doubt in the world of this tree […] for even after several labors and attainments that Man may attain, all this is as the knowledge of doubt relative to the supernal worlds, only that God in His great grace, desiring the work of Man, shines for him amidst this doubt according to the vessel that he prepares in his work.[11]

In a highly innovative manner, Leiner renames and reframes the mythical entity of the tree of knowledge as the tree of doubt. He describes it using the central ontological term "being," conjoined with the epistemological term *tfisat*, or "grasp." The basis for this conjunction is that the tree is the end result of a long and gradual process of diminution of light (and thus the possibility of

11 Gershon Henikh Leiner, *Sod Yešarim ʿal ha-Torah* (Jerusalem, 2002), 5 (the Lurianic concept of vessels is also discussed earlier on the same page). For a very brief quote from this text (in the context of a wider discussion of the garden of Eden) and some parallels, see Magid, *Hasidism on the Margin*, 125–26. All translations from the two main corpuses discussed here are my own.

knowledge, framed here in illuminatory terms) and the descent of the worlds as part of the mechanism of emanation.[12]

Facing—far more than his predecessors did—the reality of Jewish atheism, Leiner openly admits that God's very existence is certain and clear only in His presence, or at the level of the emanator.[13] Beyond this, the very process of emanation as progressive concealment entails a plurality of onto-epistemological levels, culminating in our own "world of doubt." This arena is the existential place of worship through doubt, so that even the attainment of certainty can only be relative to the ontological constraints of our world. It is instructive to compare this discussion of the limits of certainty regarding God's existence with the second series of discourses on the Torah: there, Leiner writes that "the very existence of God was doubted by none, as even the early ones of the [Gentile] nations described Him as the God of Gods (*b. Menaḥ.* 110a) [despite also positing the existence of lesser deities]."[14] However, not only is there no contradiction, but the latter text actually reinforces the contextual-historical interpretation offered here; namely, that doubt about God's existence is a modern innovation (with certainty being the preserve of the ancients).[15]

A brief comment on the relationship between Leiner's formulations and those of his grandfather (and the founder of his school) is now in order.[16] Whilst the latter tends to regard doubt as belonging to a certain religious type, his grandson generalises, seeing this state as part of the existential human condition as such.[17] I cannot enter into the complex question of the relationship between both these figures and the intermediary figure, R. Ya'aqov Leiner, here, beyond pointing to the greater wealth of midrashic, zoharic, and

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12 Shortly before this passage, Leiner makes an explicit reference to *ṣimṣum*. For a different distinction, between the certainty of the "higher world" as opposed to "enclothing oneself" (*mitlabeš*) in the tree of doubt at the level of *hanhagat ha-middot* (God's guidance of the world through His attributes), see Leiner, *Sod Yešarim 'al ha-Torah*, 216 (pericope *Tazria'*).

13 This idea is explicit in a shorter text (*Sod Yešarim 'al ha-Torah*, 132, pericope *Bo'*) on the tree of doubt as "doubt regarding existence" (*safeq ha-meṣi'ut*), as result of the *ṣimṣum* process.

14 Gershon Henikh Leiner, *Sod Yešarim 'al Torah Tinyyana'* (Jerusalem, 2006), 257.

15 Compare, e.g., *Sod Yeṣarim Tinyyana'*, 10, on "the first philosophers."

16 In his introduction to *Beit Ya'akov*, which was written by his father, R. Ya'aqov Leiner (Leiner, *Ša'ar ha-Emunah we-Yesod ha-Ḥasidut* (*Introduction to "Beit Ya'akov"*) [Bnei Brak: Mishor, 1996], the centrepiece of Magid's monograph), R. Gershon Henikh (58) describes his grandfather's writings as resolving all doubt and perplexity.

17 It is interesting that R. Mordekhai Yosef's religious typology, which space does not permit us to discuss here, precedes those of William James, Max Weber, and Carl Jung by several decades.

Lurianic sources in the writings of R. Gershon Henikh compared with both his predecessors (namely, R. Mordekhai Yosef and R. Yaʿakov). His erudition may even be said to eclipse that of R. Mordekhai Yosef's more famous student, R. Ṣadok ha-Kohen of Lublin.

Both the restriction of certainty to much higher realms of the divine world and the pervasiveness of doubt in human perceptions of the divine (within the ontological level in which mankind is situated), which conjoinedly enable atheism (or at least agnosticism), are even more strongly pronounced in a later passage (on pericope *Toldot* in the book of Genesis). Here, the connection to the Lurianic trope of *ṣimṣum* is more prominent:

> For darkness is that which contracts [*meṣamṣem*] and limits [*magbil*] the light [...] for the light is not grasped by the human intellect because man was not granted the power to gaze at the clear light, for this world is the world of concealment and doubt. For God's entire reality in this world is known as the tree of doubt, which is only doubt. For Man has no grasp of the certainty of the reality of God in this world, as thus was His will, to be worshipped through doubt, for in this world, there are those who deny His reality. And only to His worshippers is He glimpsed through darkness, for the beginning of the attainment of a person through his worship is only from seeing wonder [*peliʾot*] and awakening to feel who created all of this [see Isa 40:26], but even so, after all the awakening, he will see in the world the branching out [*histaʿafut*] of the attributes of God in diverse images. Were he able to gaze at the light, he would see that in the root all is one, but as he is in darkness, it seems as opposites.[18]

What this text adds is a much more detailed description of the upshot of these theoretical insights for *ʿavodah*, or the psychological process of divine worship, a key concern for this entire school. Due to the concealment of the divine light, itself designed to guarantee the existential condition of worship through doubt, the avenue open to the believer leads through wonder, an affect not unrelated to the phenomenology of scepticism.[19] However, even after the awakening enabled

18 Leiner, *Sod Yešarim ʿal ha-Torah*, 52.

19 I am not aware of a modern parallel to Keagan Brewer, *Wonder and Skepticism in the Middle Ages* (London: Routledge, 2016) (framed, like some of the present discussion, in terms of the history of emotions), but such a study is a desideratum (although there are of course studies devoted to wonder as such in the modern period). It is rather uncertain as to whether one should assume conceptual stability in the use of the term *pliʾot* over long periods of Jewish thought, starting with *Sefer Yeṣirah* (see Yehuda Liebes, *Ars Poetica in "Sefer Yetsira"* [Hebrew] [Tel Aviv: Schocken, 2000], 12, and the more adventurous

by this opening, one can still only perceive a complex, diverse, and often contradictory reality rather than the source-reality of unity. In the illuminatory terms that are far more marked in this text, this partial perception of the divine is described as vision within darkness.[20]

Although these formulations are (to risk a pun) undoubtedly bold, we have not yet encountered the antinomian tinge that is commonly seen as the trademark of Izbiche-Radzin writing. This may seemingly be found in the volume on the festivals of Purim and Passover (in a discourse in honour of the final festival of Passover, celebrating the crossing of the Red Sea). Leiner's prooftext (which enables him to demonstrate his virtuosity as an exegete of the *aggadah*) is the fantastic tale (*b. Ḥul.* 7a) of the dialogue between the talmudic saint (and wonder-worker) R. Pinhas ben Yair, *en route* to redeem captives, and the river Ginnai. Upon being asked by the saint to split its waters (this being the connection to the crossing of the Red Sea, as a comment on the story later in this passage elaborates), the river responds:

> "You are on your way to perform the will of your Owner [*qonkha*]; I, too, am performing the will of my Owner. [For] you, doubtfully you will [succeed], doubtfully you will not, but I am certainly doing [God's will by providing the course of nature]." The sage angrily threatens: "If you do not divide yourself, I will decree upon you that no water will ever pass through you."[21]

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interpretation, closer to Leiner's usage, on 33), through medieval thinkers influenced by the Platonic notion of wonder as the beginning of philosophy (as in *Theaet.* 155d). It is all but certain that Leiner was not influenced to any degree by the discourse on wonder in *Haskalah* literature (see, e.g., David Sorkin, "The Early Haskalah," in *New Perspectives on the Haskalah*, ed. Shmuel Feiner and David Sorkin [Oxford and Portland, OR: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2011], 21). On the removal of doubt as concealment once the "veil (*masveh*) of hiding and forgetfulness is removed," see Leiner, *Sod Yešarim ʿal ha-Torah*, 152 (pericope *Yitro*), another *ʿavodah*-centred text.

20 In contrast to the auditory and sonorous predilection of many earlier Hasidic texts, as recently described by Moshe Idel, *Vocal Rites and Broken Theologies: Cleaving to Vocables in R. Israel Baʿal Shem Tov's Mysticism* (New York: Herder and Herder, 2019), at least in this text (and possibly in Leiner's corpus as a whole), the "root metaphors" (to use the term propagated by Owen Barfield) are visual. Though there is almost certainly no question of influence, it may be interesting to compare Leiner's notions of vision as the product of a dialectic of light and darkness to reminiscent locutions within Goethe's theory of colour (see, e.g., Dennis L. Sepper, *Goethe contra Newton: Polemics and the Project for a New Science of Color*, paperback ed. [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003], 84–84, 196–97). For Goethe's religious sources, see Paul F.H. Lauxtermann, *Schopenhauer's Broken World-View: Colours and Ethics between Kant and Goethe* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2000), 57. This study also discusses the later reception of Goethe's theory.

21 Gershon Henikh Leiner, *Sod Yešarim ʿal ha-Moʿadim* (*Purim and Pessaḥ*) (Brooklyn: Lainer, 1992), pt. 2, 79B.

Here, Leiner raises the obvious problem: "Seemingly, Ginnai answered [the sage] well!" He then explains:

> Even though it is true that I only do so doubtfully [...] yet my doubtful action is of far greater virtue than your certain action, for you were only commanded [as a natural force] to certainly act. So it follows that you have no place in the action of doubt [*peʿulat ha-safeq*], while as for my doubtful action, this doubt itself is the will of God thus, that I should act even though I am in doubt as to whether I will complete this action or not [...] and thus it is within the power of my doubt to displace your certainty.[22]

The implication seems clear: action that is shadowed by doubt is powerfully superior to that which rests in certainty, and not only in cases of humans versus rivers. Yet a slightly later passage in this same commentary casts doubt on this reading:

> The action of [or with] doubt encloses [*magdir*] the person and he constricts [*meṣamṣem*] himself due to the doubt, for all the restrictions [*siyagim*] and fences of Israel all stem from the tree of doubt, and even though they are only occasioned by doubt, so that they shall not deviate even a hairsbreadth from the target of God's will; even so, these fences are included in the words of the Torah—for these fences themselves come from the depth of God's will.[23]

Here, we see that the theme of the joint tropes of the tree of doubt and the *ṣimṣum* lead to hypernomian formulations, according a superior status to post-biblical regulations as expressing the very depth of the divine will. In other words, the Law is extended, rather than abrogated, by the very logic of doubt and transcending God's apparent will in order to attain its depth that could also be employed in antinomian pursuits.[24]

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22 Leiner, *Sod Yešarim ʿal ha-Moʿadim*, pt. 2, 79B.

23 Leiner, *Sod Yešarim ʿal ha-Moʿadim*, pt. 2, 79B.

24 On hypernomianism in Kabbalah, see various studies by Elliot R. Wolfson (see especially *Venturing Beyond: Law and Morality in Kabbalistic Mysticism* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006], 195–96, 232–40, 269–85). As may be seen from Wolfson's discussions, in our text this concern is interlinked with a stress on nationality: "fences of Israel" (compare to Leiner, *Sod Yešarim ʿal ha-Moʿadim*, pt. 2, 101A). My focus here is on the close reading of this particular text and its comparison to others penned by Leiner rather than on

The practice-directed implications of Leiner's understanding of doubt are developed more fully in a passage on pericope *Šoftim* in the book of Deuteronomy. After discussing the topic of this portion of the Torah, the role of the judges, he goes on to say:

> And so it is for each individual soul: in any matter in which he finds himself in doubt, he needs to return it to the root of his intuitive knowledge [*daʿat*] so that it does not contain any ulterior interest [*negiʿah*] and thus he should clarify [*yevarer*] it in all gates of the soul[25] until the conclusion of the action, and through this [procedure], he can clarify for himself all manner of doubts and infuse the action and [motivating] will with wisdom and intuitive knowledge. For as long as he is balanced in his intuitive knowledge,[26] then he judges himself without any ulterior interest.[27]

Precisely because of the high level of trust in individual judgement found in the successive generations of Izbiche-Radzin Hasidism, the spectre of ulterior concerns (as opposed to genuine spiritual motivations) constantly haunts the discussions of individual decision-making. Here, the Lurianic-Hasidic trope of *birur* (employed in numerous contexts in the Izbiche-Radzin corpus, which cannot detain us here) is described as part of a detailed method for resolving the manifold manifestations of doubt.[28] The main accompanying procedure is that of returning to the source of the aspect of *daʿat* (a key though not omnipresent player in the Kabbalistic field of the *sefirot*) and thus infusing the more pragmatic and motivational aspects of the individual's psychic structure with deeper forms of input.[29] Without mentioning the term

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the wider theme of hypernomianism and its implications for the historiography of the Izbiche-Radzin tradition and Jewish mysticism as a whole.

25 Reading the biblical expression "your gates" (Deut 16:18) in a hyper-literal manner (often found in Hasidic exegesis) as referring to each and every individual. On hyper-literal reading in earlier forms of Jewish mysticism, see Wolfson, *Luminal Darkness*, 70–71, 80–83.

26 This is a reference to the talmudic term *šiqul ha-daʿat*, which appears in tractate Sanhedrin (e.g., 6a, 33a) in the context of possible judiciary errors.

27 Leiner, *Sod Yešarim ʿal ha-Torah*, 303.

28 For the theme of *birur* in *Mei ha-Šiloaḥ* see Israel Koren, "'Clarifications of Truth' in Mordechai Joseph of Izbicha's Mei ha-Shiloah," *Kabbalah* 48 (2021): 197–258. See also Eli Yoggev, "Mei Hashiloaḥ Between Parallel Worlds: New Investigations into the Philosophy, Mysticism and Religious Outlook of Rabbi Mordecai Yosef Leiner of Izbica" (PhD diss., Bar Ilan University, 2017), 187–287.

29 It is tempting to interpret this process in the Lurianic terms (which again were clearly very familiar to Leiner) of drawing "intelligences" (*moḥin*) down into lower levels. (On the

"doubt," Leiner described the pinnacle of this process in rather radical terms, transcending *ʿavodah* itself, earlier in this volume: "When a person is clarified, when he reaches the light of God [...] that is to say, when he recognises that this is his root and that this is the light that God gave him at his root and that there is no work (*ʿavodah*) that reaches this place, for it is above all works."[30] if we compare this text to its predecessors, we find that while God intended to be worshipped in the midst of the darkness of doubt, it is possible, precisely through this labour, to reach a state of illumination in which one rests in one's source.

A more eschatological formulation of the ultimate transcendence of doubt, also pointing at a tangent from the texts discussed up to this point, can be found in the final text examined in this section, again from the discussion of the concluding festival of Passover:

> For truly, they are holy Israel, even without any action or work on their part [...] for the holiness of Israel precedes all works. [...] For the entire matter of doubt is only due to the concealment before the *birur* is completed in perfection. But in the future, after the perfection of the *birur*, God shall open and shine so that the tree of doubt, which is seen in this world, this was posited by God in his will, for this was his simple will [...] that Israel will constrict themselves in their work in these doubts [referring to enactments stemming from doubt such as the second day of the festivals in the Exile] and as of itself [*mimeile'*] it will be clarified that there was no action and work from Israel in doubt, and that even the observance of this [second] day contained no doubt, for they intended [*hitkawwnu le*] the will of God, since God thus established his will at the beginning of creation, and Israel on their part were always drawn after the depth of will, and at the time that it was God's will that the work should be from doubt, they were also drawn in [to] this and in this [...] they were clarified [...] and they are above all works. [...] In the World-to-Come [...] there will be no need for any constrictions [...] for then the light of *ʿatiqah* (ancient) will shine for Israel without any garment.[31]

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lack of *moḥin* as the primal cause of sin, see the Lurianic text quoted in Magid, *Hasidism on the Margin*, 312 n. 51.)

30 Leiner, *Sod Yešarim ʿal ha-Torah*, 44 (pericope *Ḥayyei Śarah*). Compare this with page 47 on the interplay of *birur* and *daʿat*.

31 Leiner, *Sod Yešarim ʿal ha-Moʿadim*, pt. 2, 101 A–B.

This lengthy text (excerpted from an even longer discourse) preserves the dialectic of seemingly antinomian formulations actually leading to nationally based hypernomianism (while also preserving the antinomian flavor through quietist formulations). It also encapsulates the various themes that we have hitherto encountered (almost explicitly cross-referencing the discourse on Genesis). Yet it is predicated on a much stronger distinction between the present era and the eschaton. Also, its employment of Kabbalistic language is more prominent, echoing the tendency of some writers influenced by this terminology to focus on a specific aspect of the supernal world. Here as in many other texts, Leiner foregrounds the crown of the Lurianic system of *parṣufim* (countenances): *'attiq*.[32] In this specific text, it denotes luminous revelation that is devoid of concealing mediation.

Recently, the scholarly convention regarding the radical nature of the Izbiche teachings was challenged by Benjamin Brown.[33] However, Brown, employing the very case study mode opted for here, focused only on the founder of the school, R. Mordekhai Yosef. On the one hand, the present case study, deliberately chosen from a lesser-researched corpus from the same tradition, points at the continued centrality of the nomian and even the hypernomian, challenging the antinomian interpretation prevalent in the scholarly discourse that is summarised and aptly critiqued by Brown. However, at least with regard to the vitality of doubt as the linch-pin of human reality and spiritual development, in response to secularisation, it is difficult not to describe Gershon Henikh's teaching as radical, if we employ the very contextual approach that is called for by Brown. This will hopefully become even more apparent in a future wider study, in which I intend to place his positions against the background of a prevalent anti-sceptical Jewish tradition, both premodern and modern (as well as pointing to several related radical dimensions of his writing).

32 The Lurianic system is in turn based on the *idrot* layer of zoharic literature (see, for now, Pinchas Giller, *Reading the Zohar: The Sacred Text of the Kabbalah* [New York: Oxford University Press, 2001]).

33 See Benjamin Brown, "Theoretical Antinomianism and the Conservative Function of Utopia: Rabbi Mordekhai Yosef of Izbica as a Case Study," *The Journal of Religion* 99 (2019): 312–40, as well as the wider implications drawn in Brown, "Substitutes for Mysticism: A General Model for the Theological Development of Hasidism in the Nineteenth Century," *History of Religions* 56 (2017): 247–88.

3 R. David Kohen: Kabbalah, Philosophy, and Doubt

There has been quite a bit of writing about R. Kohen's transformational encounter with his teacher R. Kook in St. Galen (Switzerland) in 1915, culminating in the jubilant, transformative exclamation that "I have become a different person [...] more than I hoped for I have found [...] I have found a teacher."[34] Yet not much has been said about the role of doubt in this process. Already when writing to Kook to request the meeting and to explain what he hoped to achieve by it, Kohen describes himself as being "full of shame and doubt."[35] In his famous account of the meeting itself cited above, he depicts himself arriving equipped with R. Hayyim Vital's manual of prophecy, *Šaʿarei Qedušah* (*Gates of Holiness*), after a purifying immersion in the Rhine river, and yet "full of doubt and anticipation."[36]

Furthermore, when he wrote to his new teacher a mere week after the meeting, after what he describes in this missive as the creation of a new world, he reports a weakening of these exalted feelings, so that "slowly, slowly doubts were born."[37] Indeed, in the next spring, Kook's son and far more influential student R. Ṣevi Yehuda (1891–1982), who participated in this first encounter, rebukes both Kohen and the Hasidic sources that he (unlike R. Ṣevi Yehuda himself) espoused. R. Ṣevi Yehuda's critique focused on the instability entailed in such psycho-spiritual ups and downs. Kohen responded with a spirited defence of their value in terms of personal renewal.[38]

Here, we have a valuable glimpse into the role of doubt in the making of a late modern Kabbalist. A slightly psycho-biographical reading of all these sources in tandem points towards the necessity of doubt for an individualistic

34 Kohen's introduction to Avraham Itzhak Kook, *Orot ha-Qodeš*, ed. D. Kohen, 4 vols. (Jerusalem: Mossad ha-Rav Kook, 1963–1964), 1:18. For a scholarly analysis, see, e.g., Bitty, *The Mystical Philosopher*, 140–45.

35 Manuscript cited in Bitty, *The Mystical Philosopher*, 141. On shame in modern Kabbalah, including R. Kook, see Jonathan Garb, "Shame as an Existential Emotion in Modern Kabbalah," *Jewish Social Studies* 21 (2015): 83–116. Compare to the text on doubt and embarrassment below.

36 Kohen's introduction to Kook, *Orot ha-Qodeš,* 1:17.

37 Manuscript quoted in Bitty, *The Mystical Philosopher*, 143.

38 David Kohn and Ṣevi Yehuda Kook, *Dodi Le-Ṣevi*, ed. H. Cohen and Y. Toledano, expanded ed. (Jerusalem: Nezer David, 2005), 43, 45. R. Ṣevi Yehuda's approach is currently continued by his followers, who describe certainty as the heart of his teaching, amidst a very negative description of doubt (see E. Klein, A. Sontag, and M. Sro, eds., *Tešuʿatam Haytah la-Neṣaḥ: Collected Talks on Purim* [Jerusalem: Har ha-Mor, 2014], 256–64, and compare to 234–81).

path of constant transformation, as opposed to the more ideological predilection of R. Ṣevi Yehuda, the eventual leader of the Kook circle, for "absolute certainty" (as he elsewhere described the process of redemption and revelation that lay at the heart of his doctrine).[39] In other words, one can also view the contested theme of doubt as a vista into the socio-psychological dynamics of a prominent mystical circle.[40]

Returning to Kohen, his predilection for doubt, especially doubt unto despair regarding his attempt to attain prophecy, was more than a personal tendency.[41] Rather, it was bound up in his very identity as a religious philosopher. In a telling passage in his programmatic article on Jewish religious philosophy, Kohen differentiates between apologetics, which works with already known truths, and the "birth pangs" of "true religious philosophy." The latter "knows moments of pain and despair, and is situated in doubt and embarrassment, which purify it, until through seeking and prayer it escapes embarrassment, and finds the path."[42] For Kohen, apologetics is typified by the early medieval polymath R. Saadia Gaon, which he believed to be the reason why he was never mentioned by Maimonides, whom he considered the exemplar of true religious philosophy. Nonetheless, Kohen devoted entire volumes to a commentary on R. Saadia's magnum opus, *Emunot we-Deʿot*.[43] For Kohen, the value of R. Saadia's writing lay precisely in the fact that his works constituted an antidote to doubt. Quoting his statement (at the end of the second discourse, which is on the unity of the creator) on perfect love, which contains no doubt, Kohen exclaims: "Doubts vanish, and one ascends to the supreme God."[44] As we shall see anon, the vanishing of doubt was a recurrent theme in Kohen's thought and writing.

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39 See, e.g., Ṣevi Yehudah Kook, *Le-Netivot Yiśraʾel* (Beit El: Me-Avnei ha-Maqom, 2002), 1:172. R. Ṣevi Yehuda has also heretofore been almost entirely discussed in Hebrew.

40 The concept of the "Kook circle," espoused mainly in the studies by Schwartz cited above, has been critiqued by Yonatan Meir, "Lights and Vessels: A New Inquiry into the 'Circle' of Rabbi Kook and the Editors of His Works" [Hebrew], *Kabbalah* 13 (2005): 163–247 (an opinion tacitly shared by Yosef Avivi, *The Kabbalah of Rabbi A.I. Kook* [Hebrew], 4 vols. [Jerusalem: Ben Zvi Institute, 2018]).

41 On despair and doubt around the lonely prophetic quest, see the diary manuscript quoted and discussed in Bitty, *The Mystical Philosopher*, 243 (see also 196).

42 David Kohen, *Nazir Ehav* (Jerusalem: Nezer David, 1977), 2:315.

43 See David Kohen, *Derekh Emuna: Commentary on Emunot we-Deʿot*, ed. A. Ariel, 4 vols. (Jerusalem: Ariel, 2012–2014).

44 Kohen, *Ḥug ha-Raʾayah*, 1:146.

One must by no means overlook Kohen's magnum opus, *Qol ha-Nevu'ah* (*Voice of Prophecy*), which provides a history of Kabbalah combined with that of Jewish religious philosophy from Philo to Hermann Cohen (including an extensive evaluation of non-Jewish philosophy from the pre-Socratics to Schopenhauer).[45] In this and other ways, Kohen was consciously competing with the histories provided by his conversation partner Gershom Scholem, who is frequently mentioned in this work. In the recently published selection from the unfinished third part of the book, a treatise on the *sefirot* (what we have, unsurprisingly, is the section on the *sefirah binah*, with which Kohen personally identified), Kohen leads a Schopenhauerian discussion of the arts towards a surprising (and unnoticed in existing scholarship) excursion into Buberian philosophy:

> When suspicion, or doubt, separates those who are joined, [...] peace enters the quality of humility, which forgets the "I," when it adheres to the Thou with love [...]. But a danger of idolatry is involved here, found in the aspect of *nogah* [the husk, or negative potency that is closest to holiness] that adheres to the existent [*yeš*] [...][46] were it not for the pure *binah* and the crown of the virtues of Hebrew morality [*musar*], humility.[47] The innocent humility, in complete annihilation of the existent, the I and Thou, listens to the absolute voice, Him, the hidden, the *Ein Sof* [Infinite], Blessed be He.[48]

This is a rather complex text.[49] On the one hand, the path to overcoming doubt is in self-forgetting in the face of the divine Thou. One should add that Kohen

45 On Kohen, Scholem, Hermann Cohen, and Schopenhauer, see at length Tzemach Halperin, "Rav HaNazir as a Follower of Hermann Cohen" (PhD diss., Bar Ilan University, 2015). On the especial influence of Kabbalah on modern philosophy, see Kohen, *Ḥug ha-Ra'ayah*, 1:339–40; 2:369 (and see 1:379 for de Herrera's influence on Hegel).

46 On *noga*, see, e.g., Isaiah Tishby, *The Doctrine of Evil and the "Kelippah" in Lurianic Kabbalism* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1984), 70–72, 107–8, 110–12, 141–43; Moshe Idel, "The 'Tsadik' and His Soul's Sparks: From Kabbalah to Hasidism," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 103 (2013): 211 n. 49; 221 n. 82.

47 On humility in Kohen's writing, see Yuval Cherlow, "On Modesty and Regeneration: An Exchange of Letters Between R. Kook and R. David Cohen" [Hebrew], *Iyyun: The Jerusalem Philosophical Quarterly* 46 (1998): 441–50.

48 David Kohen, *Qol Ha-Nevu'ah*, 3rd. aug. ed. (Jerusalem: Nezer David, 2002), pt. 3, 26.

49 To fully explicate it, one would need to go beyond the scope of this article and address Kohen's auditory philosophy (which guides his discussion of music shortly before this selection) at far greater length than in the discussions below.

described this state, which is associated with *binah*, as one of the effects of his first meeting with Kook.[50] As in the quote from R. Saadia, love is the antidote to doubt. However, the I–Thou relationship still contains an element of potentially idolatrous self-existence. Thus, it is only his chosen *sefirah* of *binah* that enables true self-forgetting, establishing a third principle beyond Martin Buber's binary: Him.[51] One can posit that the certain, doubtless state contains a certain element of pride.

We should now turn to Kohen's *Pitḥei ha-Pardes*, a didactic commentary on the above-noted *Qlaḥ Pitḥei Ḥokhmah* (from the Luzzatto circle), if only because it is the first consecutive commentary on the first major explicit Kabbalistic treatment of epistemological doubt.[52] Unfortunately, at least in what is available to us, Kohen's classes did not reach *ptaḥim* (gates) 86 and 89, which discuss the inherent doubts in the vision of the supernal configurations. However, this principle itself goes back to *petaḥ* 9, which clearly states:

> For whoever wishes to know the essence of these powers should have to know the essence of divinity, for the *sefirot* are nothing but divinity, yet since the essence of divinity is totally unknown, the essence of the *sefirot* also cannot be known. And all that is known of them is only that they are given to be seen thus, and not that they are thus.[53]

In other words, the deep doubt regarding the visionary manifestation of the *sefirot* and other supernal aspects stems from their essential unknowability. Kohen, when commenting on this text, links the subjectivist foundation of the scepticism of *Qlaḥ* to the eighteenth-century classic of epistemology:

> There is a vision here [...]. But it is connected to *binah*, to supreme knowledge [*daʿat*].[54] In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, intellect without sensation is blind, the sensed without intellect—deaf [!]. [...][55] So according to Kant,

50 Manuscript cited in Bitty, *The Mystical Philosopher*, 143.

51 See, most famously, Buber's 1923 *Ich und Du* (translated into English as "I and Thou").

52 Since then, several annotated editions of this work have appeared, of varying quality. The best are Hayyim Freidlander, ed., *Qlaḥ Pitḥei Ḥokhmah* (Bnei Brak, 1992), and Yosef Spinner, ed., *Qlaḥ Pitḥei Ḥokhmah* (Jerusalem, 2019).

53 Spinner, ed., *Qlaḥ Pitḥei Ḥokhmah*, 40.

54 I do not believe that he is referring to this term in the technical sense of the *sefirah* of that name.

55 It is likely that Kohen replaced "empty" with "deaf" when translating *leer* in line with his claim that pure intellect is of an auditory nature (as we shall soon see). The editor (n. 289) duly notes the pages in the 1954 Jerusalem edition of the *Critique*, where we have Kohen's own underlining (the original being from Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (B75): *Gedanken*

> the vision is the *phenomenon*, which is all that is known and apparent to Man, as opposed to the thing in itself, which we do not apprehend. And the phenomenon as seen as if from without is really nothing but a phenomenon for those who look at it […] [it is] subjective. And as for the visions [for Luzzatto],[56] these are not reality in themselves, rather seen to the […] observer.[57]

Elsewhere, Kohen explicitly relates Kantian subjectivism to scepticism: in discussing the *sefirah* of *binah* as the origin of the process of questioning as such, he heralds the overcoming of "the view of sensualism and scepticism."[58] Though he regards Kantian epistemology as both a response to and an improvement on the sceptical approach of John Locke and David Hume, he seeks to go beyond the notion of *a priori* knowledge as pure reason (in his concise reading of Kant) to his "auditory prophetic logic."[59] For him, the latter "proves" that *binah*, as questioning, transcends mental representations. The rhetoric here is one of overcoming, while in fact the argument is that questioning is a purely

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ohne Inhalt sind leer, Anschauungen ohne Begriffe sind blind). I have attempted to be faithful to Kohen's own rendition rather than to earlier or recent Hebrew translations.

56 Here, Kohen follows the standard identification of the author of the text, including its internal commentary, as Luzzatto, a claim that he himself slightly doubted (see David Kohen, *Pitḥei ha-Pardes: Lectures on Qlaḥ Pitḥei Ḥokhmah and Šaʿarei Orah*, ed. E. Shilo [Jerusalem: Nezer David, 2009], 19–24).

57 Kohen, *Pitḥei ha-Pardes*, 126–29 (including the interpreted text; emphasis in original), and compare to Kohen, *Ḥug ha-Raʾayah*, 1:301. In my translation, I have amended a slight clumsiness in the rendition of Kohen's lecture by his auditors and the editors of the lectures. See there the parallels drawn with R. Kook's own discussions of Kant in various letters (and compare to 1:329–30). For Kohen's main treatment of Kant, again emphasising Locke's and especially Hume's scepticism as the impetus for the development of his system, see *Qol ha-Nevuʾah*, 113–15. There, Kohen describes the adage on intellect without sensation as "the main error" in Kant's system, opposing it to the views of Hermann Cohen and Shlomo Maimon, which allow for pure thought devoid of sensory input (*binah* in Kohen's Kabbalistic rendition; compare to Kohen, *Ḥug ha-Raʾayah*, 2:422). It is clear that Kohen was significantly influenced by the integration of Kantian philosophy and Kabbalah in the late eighteenth-century *Sefer ha-Brit* by R. Pineḥas Eliyahu Horowitz (see, e.g., Kohen, *Ḥug ha-Raʾayah*, 2:317–18, and compare 1:278, as well as Avraham Itzhak Kook, *Meṣiʾut Qaṭan*, ed. H. Kohen [Jerusalem: Maggid, 2018], 95).

58 There may well be some Hegelian influence here (see, e.g., Kohen, *Ḥug ha-Raʾayah*, 2:491–92).

59 For questions vanishing by means of supernal *niggun* (sacral melody), see the editor's note to Kohen, *Ḥug ha-Raʾayah*, 2:109 n. 49. On Humean scepticism as a general (early) modern variety of scepticism and as a key to understanding Kant, see Schmid, "Three Varieties," 190–94, 197–98. I cannot enter here into the question of the accuracy of Kohen's claims as to the basic continuity between the sceptical thought of Locke and Hume.

mental process, removed only from representations (trailing with them the residue of sensory perception) and thus inherently undermining the sceptical neutralisation of reason in "English sensuality."[60] In other words, a lower form of scepticism is overcome, more thoroughly than in Kant's system, by a Kabbalistic ontological metaphysics of questioning.

Nonetheless, one can reinforce this containment of scepticism, which is reminiscent of similar moves by his teacher Kook, thanks to a rich passage in the same recently published lecture series.[61] After rapidly surveying the history of scepticism from Pyrrho to "the new sceptics" (presumably Locke and Hume) and admitting that "indeed, the basis of doubt is deep; there is almost no certainty without doubt," he declares that "doubt withdraws [*mistaleq*] with the appearance of the spirit of wisdom, as in 'the holy logic,' 'the original certainty.'"[62] This is a reference to the lengthy section with the latter title in Kook's *Orot ha-Qodeš* (*Lights of Holiness*), which was heavily edited by Kohen, and most likely to the following formulation in particular:

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60 Kohen, *Ḥug ha-Ra'ayah*, 2:195–98 (and see also 76–77, 253). Compare to Michael N. Foster, *Kant and Skepticism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008). For Kohen's elder contemporary R. Itzhak Breuer (1883–1946) and his attempt to synthesise Kabbalah and Kantian philosophy based on a far more positive appreciation of the latter, see Alan L. Mittleman, *Between Kant and Kabbalah: An Introduction to Isaac Breuer's Philosophy of Judaism* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1990). Breuer conversed with Kook on several occasions (on parallels between their approaches, see for now Rivka Horwitz's introduction to Isaac Breuer, *Signposts* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Mossad ha-Rav Kook, 2007) (this being the last essay penned by the main academic commentator on Breuer) and had at least some acquaintance with Kohen (see Bitty, *The Mystical Philosopher*, 129), whose teacher, R. Menahem Mendel Nai, was on good terms with his father R. Shlomo Zalman Breuer (see the biographical survey by Harel ha-Cohen in Kohen, *Pitḥei ha-Pardes*, 20). I do not know of a discussion dedicated to Breuer's rather accepting view of doubt regarding the tenets of religion (see for now Breuer, *Signposts*, 69).

61 See, e.g., Avraham Itzhak Kook, *Ma'amrei ha-Ra'ayah*, rev. ed. (Jerusalem: Golda Katz Foundation, 1988), 99, as well as the text cited now (and compare to Kook, *Orot ha-Qodeš*, 1:205–7. See also Jonathan Garb, *The Chosen Will Become Herds: Studies in Twentieth-Century Kabbalah*, trans. Yaffah Berkovits-Murciano (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009), 84, 88, for a rare moment of self-doubt in R. Kook's mystical career. One can differentiate between R. Kook's tolerance for states of doubt and his more reserved attitude towards scepticism as a philosophical stance: here, see Kook's diary entries (many of which did not make it past R. Kohen's editing of these passages in *Orot ha-Qodeš*), such as *Šemonah Qevaṣim* (*Eight Notebooks*) (Jerusalem, 1999), vol. 1, notebook 1, pars. 535, 641; vol. 2, notebook 5, pars. 116, 183.

62 Kohen, *Ḥug ha-Ra'ayah*, 2:166 (compare to 354 and to 1:203).

> The shadows of doubts expand according to the degree to which the divine light is not grasped in the internality of the essence of life and according to its self-deepening—**thus it shines and negates all doubt** [...]. And hence the spiritual economy of the order of life [...], when made according to the holy content of the divine light, itself illuminates the light of supernal faith, from which all shadows of doubt flee.[63]

In a parallel text in the same volume of classes on the self-same *Orot ha-Qodeš*, Kohen writes in a much more personal mystico-poetic vein, explicitly contending with atheism. Here, it is clear that although, as we have seen, Kohen has a consciously panoramic stance, reaching back to Greek philosophy (which he read and even attempted to teach in the original language), ultimately his main concern, in both Kabbalah and philosophy, was with the modern period and with contemporary issues. Kohen exclaims:

> Doubts, doubts, see how many sceptics there are, who doubt everything, the supreme. Oy, Oy, there are so many free ones [*frei* or *ḥofši* being the term still used for secular people in the 1960s, when this was written], free of all opinion, all metaphysics, all that is after nature, their empty intellect [...]. Free, free of all higher knowledge, how did one [of them] say: I travelled the entire expanse of the heavens and did not find Him there.[64]
>
> But when the supernal manifestations reveal themselves, all doubt withdraws [...] supernal lights, sublime thoughts, true, real, certain. He who lives in the *kawwanot* [mystical intention] of prayers, the *kawwanot* of the ministers of the secrets of Torah [a term at times used for the great eighteenth-century Kabbalist R. Šalom Šarʿabi], then [for him] they are certain realities.
>
> The river of the supreme *binah* [...] is the brook of maybe [see Dan 8:2 and its Kabbalistic exegesis], maybe, and the maybe is the source of supreme certainty. And this will be explained more in [the lessons on] the holy logic.[65]

63 Kook, *Orot ha-Qodeš*, 1:209 (bold in the original). It is worth noting the overwhelmingly visual imagery here, contrasting with Kohen's explicitly auditory predilection.

64 The quote was attributed to the Russian cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin in 1961.

65 Kohen, *Ḥug ha-Raʾayah*, 2:44.

Moving from the last text, one should further consider the relationship between Kohen's treatment of doubt and that of his teacher (especially as here, too, several of the texts discussed originate from classes that Kohen gave on Kook's texts, which he himself had edited). Although there is some continuity in the dialectic of doubt and certainty (and here, as in other places, the student is closer than the son to the religious personality of Kook the elder), Kohen's treatment is far more detailed, both in his profound acquaintance with philosophical texts and in his explicit employment of Kabbalistic terms (which are disguised in Kook's works).[66] Furthermore, Kohen's ups and downs (and self-doubt) continued in his later years—and can even be described as a sense of failure—in his pursuit of prophecy, while his mentor experienced doubt regarding the halakhic status of his prophecy, but never about the experience itself.[67]

However, one should not err in reducing Kohen's importance to his being part of a "Kook circle," which is in itself a debatable notion (as noted above). Besides the value of the texts surveyed just now for the psychobiography of religious figures and for a phenomenology of doubt in relation to epistemology, as well as emotive concerns such as humility, one can point to the value of granting access to texts which have not only not been previously discussed in academic writing, but which have actually only very recently been printed. In terms of the *longue durée*, Kohen was (to date) the last manifestation of an attempt to synthesise Kabbalah with university-based scholarship and philosophical discourse. Striking past exemplars of this pattern include the seventeenth-century R. Avraham de Herrera (with whom Kohen almost explicitly identified) and the Sabbatean Abraham Miguel Cardozo.[68]

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66 For this interesting, though not entirely unique choice, see now at length Avivi, *The Kabbalah*. See Halperin, "Rav HaNazir," 241, for a treatment of Kohen's discussions of Kant with his teacher.

67 Compare the texts cited in Garb, *The Chosen*, 84–89, to Kohen, *Nazir Eiḥav*, vol. 1, esp. 289–90, 295–96.

68 See Kohen, *Ḥug ha-Ra'ayah*, 2:286, 285–86, 426, in praise of the blend of philosophy and Kabbalah in early modern Italy (de Herrera being one example given) and describing Luzzatto as in some sense continuing that direction. See also Bitty, *Mystical Philosopher*, 139. For R. Kook's description of de Herrera as a model, see his *Pinqasei ha-Ra'ayah* (Jerusalem: Makhon ha-Retzia, 2017), 4:88.

4 Comparative-Contextual Conclusion

While this article has in the main focused on the more extensive discourses by Leiner, it has also pointed to a parallel prominence of doubt in the slightly later texts by Kohen, who emerged from the same Eastern European rabbinic culture and drew on the same Kabbalistic tradition. There are speculations as to the possible influence of R. Mordekhai Yosef on R. Kook (and there is also some writing on the influence of his above-mentioned student R. Zadok).[69] Yet it is doubtful, so to speak, that *Sod Yešarim* influenced either Kook, who usually indicated his sources, or Kohen, who was extremely meticulous about recording them.[70] While the volumes of Leiner's discourses on the holidays were printed in 1902 to 1908 (i.e., the time around 1904, when Kook relocated to Jaffa), the volumes on the Torah were only printed in 1971 and 1983 (after even Kohen was already deceased!). This being said, Leiner's *Tif'eret ha-Ḥanokhi* on the *Zohar* (which deserves a separate study) was first printed in Warsaw as early as 1900. In addition, in his earliest manuscript, the recently printed *Meṣi'ut Qaṭan*, the young R. Kook cites Leiner's first halakhic essay *Ṣefunei Ṭmunei Ḥol*, which concerns the renewal of the *tkhelet* colouring of the ritual fringes and which was printed in Warsaw in 1887.[71]

Furthermore, albeit as late as 1965, a mere seven years before his death, Kohen wrote in a typically autobiographical mode: "Just now I received in the mail the book *Mei ha-Šiloaḥ* by the *rebbe* of Izbiche [...] kindly dispatched to me by R. Šlomo Zalman Šrag'ai, and he [Leiner] was the grandfather of R. Gershon Henikh of Radzin, instigator of the *tkhehlet* and the

69 See Garb, *The Chosen*, 49–50, 83–84; Hayyim Yeshaya Hadari, "Two High Priests," in *Ha-Reiyah: A Collection of Articles on the Doctrine of Rabbi Avraham Yitzhak ha-Kohen Kook*, ed. Y. Raphael (Jerusalem: Mossad ha-Rav Kook, 1966), 154–68; Hayyim Hirsch, *"Ahavat Ṣedek": The Defence of the Jews and Their Exalted Degree in the Thought of Rabbi Kook and R. Zadok ha-Kohen of Lublin* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem, 2001).

70 Although, as we have seen, Kohen differed from R. Ṣevi Yehuda in his espousal of Hasidic sources, he appears to have been mostly familiar with the "logical Hasidism" of Habad (see Kohen, *Qol ha-Nevu'ah*, 26) and that of Bratzlav (I have heard from a highly reliable source that there is a manuscript containing his reflections on its founder, R. Nahman, in the semi-catalogued Nezer David archives. On the first two generations of Bratzlav writing, see Kohen, *Ḥug ha-Ra'ayah*, 2:257, 295, 298, 381, 386).

71 Kook, *Meṣi'ut Qaṭan*, 153. Kook cites it as "*Quntres Ptil Tkhelet*" (see n. 297). On this early period of writing, see Yehuda Mirsky, *Towards the Mystical Experience of Modernity: The Making of Rav Kook 1865–1904* (Brookline, MA: Academic Studies Press, 2021).

author of *Orders of Purity* [his main halakhic work]."[72] One should carefully note that Kohen's previous acquaintance with R. Gershon Henikh appears to be limited to his legal treatises and innovations. However, one should also recall that Kohen's teacher, the above-noted R. Nai, studied with both R. Gershon Henikh and his father Ya'akov.[73]

To what extent is a comparison between these two test cases of second-tier late modern figures instructive, also in terms of their contribution to the methods of intellectual history at large? The most apparent difference between the two corpuses examined here is in their genre: ego-documents (letters, diary entries) and so on and philosophical treatises as opposed to homiletics about the Bible and festivals (the latter form being very common in Hasidic discourse, both oral and written).[74] This distinction is related to the substantially different social position of the two writers: Kohen, a recluse who, despite his teaching activities, was committed to long-term Nazarite vows, observed long periods of silence. As we have seen, he vied with R. Kook's son for the position of successor to his teacher. In contradistinction, Leiner was the main (though not unchallenged) heir to a dynasty, and he was also a halakhic decisor who was held in high regard even outside the Hasidic world.[75]

More generally, Izbiche-Radzin's theology can be described as a purely "internal" discourse, couched exclusively in terms of Hasidism and Lurianic Kabbalah, although, as we have seen, it explicitly responds to secularised agnosticism. The Kook school, drawing on its increasing exposure to European culture, as can be especially seen in Kohen's first-hand engagement with

72 Kohen, *Meṣi'ut Qaṭan*, 249 (also mentioning the strongly Kabbalistic Komarno school of Hasidism, and see also 240). Šrag'ai, the mayor of Jerusalem during 1950–1952, was a Radzin Hasid and wrote several books on the history and thought of the dynasty. As this account by Kohen was published very recently, one can perhaps look forward to more such discoveries as the planned further volumes are published (one just as this article was finalised).

73 See the above-noted essay by Harel ha-Cohen in Kohen, *Piṭḥei ha-pardes*, 19.

74 On modern ego-documents, both Jewish and general, see, e.g., Joseph H. Chajes, "Accounting for the Self: Preliminary Generic-Historical Reflections on Early Modern Jewish Egodocuments," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 95 (2005): 1–15; Rudolf Dekker, "Jacques Presser's Heritage: Egodocuments in the Study of History," *Memoria y Civilización* 5 (2002): 13–37.

75 At a convention of Radzin Hasidim in 2011, the author heard an elderly Hasid describe the esteem in which R. Hayyim Soloveitchik, the paragon of talmudic analytics, held Leiner's halakhic writings and teaching. The difference of approach around the issues discussed here between Leiner and his brother R. Šmuel Dov Ašer Leiner, who broke off and led a minority branch after the death of their father, will be addressed in a future study.

philosophical texts, can be regarded as more "external." Paradoxically, though one cannot deny the salience of doubt in Kohen's writing, Leiner's engagement with doubt (of which only a cross-section is presented here) is more profuse, more interlocked with other key terms, and in a sense, less inclined towards the containment of doubt (at least on the rhetorical level). Simply put, Leiner (even more than the founder of his school) accords doubt a place in the existential and individual process of spiritual development. On the other hand, for Kook and especially for his student Kohen (precisely because of his philosophical engagement), doubt is more of a brick in a metaphysical edifice. We have already noted the visual imagery that Leiner employs, which contrasts vividly with Kohen's strong stress on auditory experience. Finally, on the basic historical level, the latter school was dramatically transformed by the relocation of Kook and later Kohen to the remarkably different context of Ottoman and later Mandatory Palestine, while Izbiche-Radzin remained embedded in Europe until after the Holocaust.

However, there are also some intriguing commonalities. Both writers have great admiration for and exposure to the Lurianic corpus and the midrashim (though Kohen was more specifically oriented towards midrash halakha and Leiner was more conversant with the *Zohar*).[76] The national element noted above plays a key role in both corpuses, as noted in previous scholarship.[77] To put it more broadly, their shared and repeated contention with deep doubt and their willingness to find a place for it in the mystical scheme of things can be conjointly understood against the background of the progressive modernisation of Kabbalah, with doubt as a significant expression of the process. Indeed, despite my characterisation of Izbiche-Radzin theology as "internal," in Leiner's innovative and controversial halakhic writing, which is not addressed here, one can find a marked recourse to modern scientific discoveries and

76 On Kohen and midrash halakha, see Yedidyah Hacohen, "Rabbi David Cohen Hanazir's Commentary on Halachic and Aggadic Midrashim, and His Interpretative Methodology" (PhD diss., Bar-Ilan University, 2017). The marginal place of the *Zohar* in Kohen's corpus is interesting, reinforcing my claim above as to his modern focus: while granting the entire zoharic literature a mere three pages (146–48) in his magnum opus *Qol ha-Nevu'ah*, he devoted a long series of lectures (published in *Piṯḥei ha-Pardes*, 595–654) to the *Zohar*'s contemporary and curricular competitor, *Ša'arei Orah* (*The Gates of Light*) by R. Yosef Gikatilia.

77 As the role of national mysticism in Izbiche-Radzin writing is still less well known, a reference is called for: see Yaakov Elman, "The History of Gentile Wisdom according to R. Zadok ha-Kohen of Lublin," *Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy* 3 (1993): 153–87.

methods.[78] Thus, we are not dealing with two isolated samples, but rather with two related expressions of wider trends in later Jewish European modernity. At the same time, they are instructive for appreciating the impressive variety of strategies that the late modern Kabbalistic world deployed in contending with the new currents of doubt.

It is fitting to conclude with a literary allusion to the above-noted Gershom Scholem. In the novel *The Book of Lights* by the American Jewish novelist Chaim Potok, Gershon, the young and troubled student of Professor Keter, or Gershom Scholem, explains the attraction of the ambiguity of Kabbalistic texts as follows: "Doubt is all that's left to us."[79]

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78 See Shaul Magid, "'A Thread of Blue': Rabbi Gershon Henoch Leiner of Radzyn and His Search for Continuity in Response to Modernity." *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry* 11 (1998): 31–52. One should note that these texts were already in print even before R. Kook left Europe.

79 Chaim Potok, *The Book of Lights* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1982), 308.

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Where Is Sanctity to Be Found?

A Sceptical Approach to Jewish Tradition and Zionist Utopia in Agnon's A Guest for the Night

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Abstract

This article investigates the connection between scepticism and modernism in Shmuel Yosef Agnon's novel *A Guest for the Night*. What is at stake here is not simply the "old-fashioned" opposition between faith and its contrary or between doubt and certainty, but rather the positioning of Agnon in the modernist literary current that is in turn characterised by uncertainty and doubt about reality and the subject.

Keywords

modernist literature – modern Hebrew literature – scepticism – Zionism – Jewish folklore – Sambatyon

1 Introduction[1]

> "Where is it more beautiful, there or there?" "What do you mean, Raphael, what do you mean by 'there or there'? Or perhaps you meant to ask about

1 I conceived the idea and the main outline of this article while I was a research assistant at the Maimonides Centre for Advanced Studies—Jewish Scepticism from 2015 to 2016. My gratitude goes to the centre's director, Prof. Giuseppe Veltri, for nurturing its intellectually stimulating ambience and for his guiding hand. Where not otherwise indicated, I have used the following English translations: the JPS Bible, available at http://www.mechon-mamre.org/p/pt/pt0.htm; Isidore Epstein, ed., *Hebrew/English Babylonian Talmud*, 36 vols. (London: Soncino Press, 1935–52); Harry Freedman and Maurice Simon, eds. and trans., *Midrash Rabbah. Translated into English with Notes, Glossary, and Indices. Volumes 1–2: Genesis*,

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> there or here, meaning in the Land of Israel or in Szibucz." Said Raphael, "Yesterday I read in a book about the River Sambatyon and the Ten Tribes and the Sons of Moses, and I ask where is it more beautiful, there or in the Land of Israel?" "You are asking something that is clear of itself," I replied; "after all, the Ten Tribes and the Sons of Moses look forward all their lives to go up to the Land of Israel, and unless the Holy One, blessed be He, had not surrounded them with the River Sambatyon, wouldn't they hurry to the Land of Israel? But all week long the River Sambatyon races rapidly and casts up stones, so that no one can cross, because they are very pious men and observe the Sabbath. And you ask where it is more beautiful! Certainly in the Land of Israel."[2]

The above-quoted conversation is drawn from "Beyond the River Sambatyon," a chapter of Shmuel Yosef Agnon's novel *A Guest for the Night*, whose plot is quite simple: on the eve of the first Yom Kippur after the First World War, the nameless protagonist-narrator, afterwards labelled "the guest," returns to his hometown of Szibucz from the Land of Israel. The novel essentially recounts the story of his stay there, during which he re-encounters the people he left behind when he made his *ʿaliyah*, hears what happened to them while he was away, and also meets some other people who were previously unknown to him.

This chapter deals with the legend of the River Sambatyon, whose origin is to be traced back to stories surrounding the ten lost tribes of Israel who did not return from exile after being taken captive by the Assyrian king Shalmaneser V, as reported in the Bible.[3] Later sources slowly yet constantly adapted the story, turning it into a legend whose main ingredients are the destiny and whereabouts of the Ten Tribes[4] and the possibility of their return, which is at first

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foreword by Isidore Epstein, 3rd ed. (London: Soncino Press, 1961); Jacob Neusner, ed., *The Jerusalem Talmud: A Translation and Commentary on CD*, trans. Jacob Neusner and Zvee Zahavy (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2010).

2 Shmuel Yosef Agnon, *Oreaḥ Naṭah Lalun*, repr. ed. (Jerusalem: Schocken, 1972), 322, henceforth *Oreaḥ*; English translation taken from Agnon, *A Guest for the Night*, trans. Misha Louvish (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2014), 373, henceforth *Guest*. The Hebrew name of the town *Šibuš* will be transliterated as Szibucz according to the usage in the official English translation.

3 Accordingly, see 2Kgs 17:6; 18:11; 1Chr 5:26. For a discussion of the biblical and later sources about the ten lost tribes, see the classical study by Adolf Neubauer, "Where Are the Ten Tribes?: I. Bible, Talmud and Midrashic Literature," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 1 (1888): 14–28. For a scholarly examination of the Assyrian strategies of deportation, see Karen Radner, "The 'Lost Tribes of Israel' in the Context of the Resettlement Programme of the Assyrian Empire," in *The Last Days of the Kingdom of Israel*, ed. Shuichi Hasegawa, Christoph Levin, and Karen Radner (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019), 101–24.

4 Josephus simply states that the Ten Tribes decided to remain beyond the Euphrates, but the apocryphal 2 Esdras reports that they decided to leave the lands of the heathens in order to

denied and then turned into an object of messianic expectations and hopes.[5] As for the River Sambatyon, it is first mentioned in non-Jewish sources—namely, Pliny the Elder and Josephus Flavius[6]—without connection to the Ten Tribes. It appears in the Babylonian Talmud in the context of a discussion of the Shabbat, while in the Jerusalem Talmud, it is mentioned in relation to the three lands to which the Israelites were exiled, one of which is beyond the Sambatyon. This information is reiterated in *Genesis Rabbah*.[7] Substantial additions were made during the Middle Ages, and here we come to a key point for the argument of this essay with the story recounted by Eldad the Danite (ninth century), who, when narrating the story of four of the ten lost tribes and how they are now living an independent life in their own land cultivating religious piety and military strength, is the first to make extensive reference to the *Benei Mošeh* (Sons of Moses), a Levite tribe that God secluded beyond the Sambatyon river in order to preserve their purity and righteousness.[8]

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be able to keep their statutes, so they went beyond the Euphrates to reach "another land" that was a year and a half's journey away. See Neubauer, "Where Are the Ten Tribes? I. Bible, Talmud and Midrashic Literature," 16–17 and annexed sources. For a history of the myth of the Ten Tribes, see Tudor Parfitt, *The Lost Tribes of Israel: The History of a Myth* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2002).

5 While 1 Chr 5:26 states that the tribes are exiled beyond the River Gozan "unto this day," the biblical prophets already cherished the messianic hope of their return. Accordingly, see Neubauer, "Where Are the Ten Tribes? I. Bible, Talmud and Midrashic Literature," 17–18, and Zvi Ben-Dor Benite, *The Ten Lost Tribes: A World History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 16 and annexed sources. In the Talmud, opinions diverge—see, for example, *b. Sanh.* 110b. For a scholarly discussion of Rabbi Akivah's view as opposed to those of the other rabbis, see Louis Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews*, trans. Henrietta Szold and Paul Radin, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2003), 2:1089 n. 56 and annexed sources.

6 For an analytical discussion of the Sambatyon in these sources, see Daniel Stein Kokin, "Toward the Source of the Sambatyon: Shabbat Discourse and the Origins of the Sabbatical River Legend," *AJS Review* 37 (2013): 1–28.

7 For a discussion of the sources about the River Sambatyon, see Max Seligsohn, "Sambation, Sanbation, Sabbation (Sambaṭyon)," in *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, ed. Isidore Singer, 12 vols. (New York: Funk & Wagnells, 1901–1906), 10:681–83, available at http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/13062-sambation-sanbation-sabbation-sambatyon; Elena Loewenthal, "La storia del fiume Sambaṭion: Alcune note sulla tradizione ebraica antica e medievale," in *Biblische und judaistische Studien*, ed. Angelo Vivian (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1990), 651–63.

8 However, it has been argued that the Sons of Moses were first integrated in the legend of the Sambatyon in the *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* on Exod 34:10 See John W. Etheridge, ed. and trans., *The Targums of Onkelos and Jonathan Ben Uzziel on the Pentateuch with the Fragments of the Jerusalem Targum from the Chaldee. 1: Genesis and Exodus* (London, 1862), 558–59. For Eldad the Danite's sources and modern interpretations, see Adolf Neubauer, "Where Are the Ten Tribes? II. Eldad the Danite," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 1 (1889): 95–114; Richard Gottheil and Isaac Broydé, "Eldad Ben Mahli Ha-Dani," in *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, 5:90–92 available at http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/5515-eldad-ben-mahli-ha-dani, and annexed

The travels of Eldad the Danite enjoyed a renewed wave of success during the fifteenth century, when the first printed edition of the book was published (Mantua, 1480). This also led to the translation of excerpts into several languages (Latin, Arabic, and German), while scholarly editions of the sources based on collation of the manuscripts were prepared by Adolf Jellinek (1821–1893) and Abraham Epstein (1841–1918).[9]

Between the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, the story was also assimilated into and reinterpreted in Yiddish and modern Hebrew literature.[10] As it happens, Agnon's treatment of the Sambatyon legend has already attracted some scholarly attention: Shmuel Werses noted the combination of autobiographical references and collective issues which have historical and ideological implications in Agnon's adaptation of the legend,[11] while Hillel Weiss focused on the appraisal of the Ten Tribes as a "wonderful community" that embodies a reversal of the image of the Jewish communities who had been humiliated and persecuted in the Diaspora.[12]

Indeed, the issue of collectivity, with its ideological and historical implications, is prominent in this chapter, which I consider a metonymy for the whole novel. To be more specific, the discussion of the land beyond the Sambatyon epitomises a pivotal question raised in the novel: Where is it better to live; or, in other words, is there a place where Jews can live, if not happily, then at least in a certain peace and safety? Yet this plain, pragmatic question implies others that are profound and complicated. Where is sanctity to be found? Can

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sources; Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews*, 2:1086–90 and annexed sources; Micha J. Perry, *Eldad's Travels: A Journey from the Lost Tribes to the Present* (London: Routledge, 2019) and annexed sources and bibliography.

9 A member of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* movement, Adolf (Aaron) Jellinek published a collection of midrashim entitled *Bet ha-Midrasch. Sammlung kleiner Midraschim und vermischter Abhandlungen aus der ältern jüdischen Literatur*, 6 vols. (Leipzig and Vienna, 1853–1877), which included some excerpts from the story of Eldad the Danite. Abraham Epstein published a critical edition of Eldad's travels: Epstein, ed., *Eldad ha-Dani seine Berichte über die X Stämme und deren Ritus in verschiedenen Versionen nach Handschriften und alten Drucken mit Einleitung und Anmerkungen nebst einem Excurse über die Falascha und deren Gebräuche* (Pressburg, 1891).

10 See Shmuel Werses, *From Mendele to Hazaz: Studies in the Development of Hebrew Prose* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1987), especially the chapter entitled "The Stories about the Ten Tribes and the Sambatyon and Their Absorption into Modern Hebrew Literature," 300–328.

11 See Werses, *From Mendele to Hazaz*, 321–28; for a specific discussion of the legend in *A Guest for the Night*, see 323–25.

12 Hillel Weiss, "The Ten Tribes, Bnei Moshe, and Bnei Rechav (Rechabites) Then and Now: Between Utopia and Dystopia in Agnon's Works" [Hebrew], *Ayin Gimel: A Journal of Agnon Studies* 2 (2012): 2.

the sanctity of Jewish life in the Diaspora be infused with new life, or is it better in the Land of Israel? And finally, what meaning should be attached to the concept of sanctity?

Agnon does not give a clear-cut answer to these questions. Instead, he suggests several possible solutions, none of which is final or permanent. In fact, a sceptical atmosphere lingers throughout the novel and also throughout the conversation that will be the subject of the latter part of this paper, where Agnon opposes Raphael's arguments against those of the protagonist-narrator and then, at a deeper level, submits traditional and folkloric sources to the scrutiny of a modern and sceptical method of examination that debunks their authority. This process entails a metaliterary and metalinguistic reflection on the value and authority of the written word, especially the written word of the sacred texts, written in the sacred language, which, while Agnon was alive, was in the process of transforming into modern Hebrew. Moreover, in light of these considerations, how valuable and authoritative could modern Hebrew literary texts be? In this reflection, scepticism plays a major role.

2 Agnon and Scepticism: Why an Old Question Matters

At the beginning of February 1938, immediately after publishing *Yamim Nora'im* (*Days of Awe*) and *Sefer Sofer we-Sippur* (*Book, Writer and Story*), Agnon found himself working on *A Guest for the Night*, which first appeared in 139 instalments in the *Haaretz* newspaper from 18 October 1938 to 7 April 1939 and was later published as a single volume.[13] *A Guest for the Night* was quickly acknowledged as central in the corpus of Agnon's works,[14] and it was also recently

13 Shmuel Yosef Agnon, *Yamim Nora'im* (Jerusalem: Schocken, 1938); English translation: Agnon, *Days of Awe: A Treasury of Jewish Wisdom for Reflection, Repentance, and Renewal on the High Holy Days*, trans. Maurice T. Galpert, ed. Nahum N. Glatzer, new ed. (New York: Schocken, 1995); Agnon, *Sefer Sofer we-Sippur* (Jerusalem: Schocken, 1938; repr. Jerusalem: Schocken, 2000). For the history and context of the publication of *A Guest for the Night*, see Dan Laor, *S.Y. Agnon: A Biography* [Hebrew], new ed. (Tel Aviv: Schocken 2010), 300–313, 426, 680 n. 4. See also Laor, *Sh.Y. 'Agnon* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar Center for Jewish History, 2008), chapter 6, "Between Trouble and Trouble," 105–34.

14 Nonetheless, the scholarly debate about which is the most important novel in Agnon's literary production still continues: see Dan Miron, "Domesticating a Foreign Genre: Agnon's Transaction with the Novel," *Prooftexts* 7 (1987): 3. Gershon Shaked considers this novel to be the pinnacle of Agnon's artistic abilities: see Shaked, *The Narrative Art of S.Y. Agnon* [Hebrew] (Merhavia: Sifriat Poalim, 1976), 228; see also Shaked, *Shmuel Yosef Agnon: A Revolutionary Traditionalist*, trans. Jeffrey M. Green (New York: New York University Press, 1989), 137.

confirmed to be among the reasons why he was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1966.[15] Furthermore, during the 2000s, the novel has enjoyed a new wave of critical interest, with scholars focusing on the issues of literary modernism, Jewish modernity, nationalism and intertextuality with the Bible.[16]

Both individual and national historical tragedies are reflected and echoed in the text like a game of shifting mirrors. Autobiographically speaking, the plot of the novel was inspired by a brief visit Agnon paid to his hometown of Buczacz after Arab rioters destroyed his house in the Talpiot neighbourhood of Jerusalem on 23 and 24 August 1929.[17] Traumatised by the second destruction of his home—the first being the fire that had destroyed his house in Bad Homburg on 6 June 1924[18]—and unable to face the ordeal of reorganising his entire life once again, he decided to travel to Leipzig in Germany in order to work on the proofreading of his works that were about to be published there by the Schocken publishing house. After finishing the proofreading, Agnon left Germany on 10 August 1930 and headed to Buczacz, where he arrived on 13 August. He spent a week there, during which time the inhabitants of the

15 See Dan Laor, "War of the Words: The Intrigues Behind Israel's First Nobel Prize Win," *Haaretz*, 23 January 2017, https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/culture/the-intrigues-behind-s-y-agnon-s-nobel-prize-win-1.5489331. See also Gershom Scholem, "S.Y. Agnon—The Last Hebrew Classic?" in Scholem, *On Jews and Judaism in Crisis: Selected Essays*, ed. Werner J. Dannhauser, new ed. (Philadelphia: Paul Dry Books, 2012), 112: "*A Guest for the Night*, the excellent translation of which into German undoubtedly played a great part in the decision of the Nobel Prize Committee." Scholem's essay was delivered as a lecture on 30 May 1967 and was published in both English (in December 1967) and German (in 1970). Furthermore, in the wake of the enthusiasm awoken by the Nobel Prize, *A Guest for the Night* was the first of Agnon's novels to receive French and English translations.

16 Uri Cohen, "Agnon's Modernity: Death and Modernism in S.Y. Agnon's *A Guest for the Night*," *Modernism/Modernity* 13 (2006): 657–71; Ruth Wisse, "A Farewell to Poland," in Wisse, *The Modern Jewish Canon: A Journey Through Literature and Culture* (New York: The Free Press, 2008), 163–89; Mikhal Arbell, "Messianism and Crisis of the National Identity in Agnon's Works: *Oreaḥ natah Lalun*, 'Ha-mikhtav,' and 'Ha-siman'" [Hebrew], in *Times of Change: Jewish Literatures in the Modern Era—Essays in Honor of Dan Miron*, ed. Mikhal Arbel, Michael Gluzman and Gideon Nevo (Sde Boker: Ben-Gurion Research Institute, 2008), 173–208; Sheila E. Jelen, "Salvage Poetics: S.Y. Agnon's *A Guest for the Night*," *Journal of Jewish Identities* 7, no. 1 (2014): 187–99; Yael Halevi-Wise, "Agnon's Conversation with Jeremiah in *A Guest for the Night*: 'Aginut in an Age of National Modernization," *AJS Review* 38 (2014): 395–416; Shirli Sela-Levavi, "'As He Had Betrayed the Land, So He Betrayed His Betrothed': Erotic Love, Nationalism, and Authorship in *A Guest for the Night*," *Hebrew Studies* 58 (2017): 382–400; Riki Ophir, "'If I Could Burn the Space': On Homelessness and the Collapse of Subjectivity in S.Y. Agnon's *A Guest for the Night*," *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies* 18 (2019): 92–107.

17 See Laor, *S.Y. Agnon: A Biography*, 208ff.

18 See Laor, *S.Y. Agnon: A Biography*, 160–68.

town organised a celebration for their fellow citizen who had left as a young man and returned as a reputed and renowned Hebrew writer.[19] In *A Guest for the Night*, this one-week visit is turned into a year-long stay. In a similar move, the Arab pogrom of 1929 had its grim European counterpart in the violence of the First World War and the war between Poland and Soviet Russia—Buczacz being on the front line in both wars—and in the pogroms that the Jewish population of the city, and indeed of the whole of Galicia, had had to endure immediately after the war.[20] These two past and yet recent tragedies are paralleled and mirrored in the two historical tragedies that were befalling the Jews while Agnon was writing and publishing *A Guest for the Night*: namely, the 1936 to 1938 Arab revolt in Mandatory Palestine and the tragic escalation of Nazism in Europe. The atmosphere of increasing pessimism that lingers in the novel is therefore not surprising,[21] and it was echoed in the first critical reactions, appreciations, and evaluations of *A Guest for the Night*, which date back to 1939 and which almost entirely focused on a reading of the novel as an elegy for the agonising world of Jewish communities in Eastern Europe whose history was about to come to an end. Although hardly anyone would have been able to fathom the devastation of the Shoah, which was still being prepared by the Nazis, the word used by the first reviewers such as Rabbi Binyamin was either *shoah*, to be understood in the general sense of "catastrophe," or *ḥurban*, "destruction."[22] In an essay published in 1970, Gershom Scholem still labelled *A Guest for the Night* the most melancholy of Agnon's works.[23]

This feeling of impending historical catastrophe was not only rooted in the dramatic unfolding of events in Europe, but also in the intellectual, literary,

19 Laor, *S.Y. Agnon: A Biography*, 221–35. He left for Germany on 23 February 1930 and stayed in Leipzig from 5 March until the end of July 1930.

20 Accordingly, see Omer Bartov, *Anatomy of a Genocide: The Life and Death of a Town Called Buczacz* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2018), chapter 2, "Enemies at their Pleasure," 37–81; Nicolas Werth, *Le cimetière de l'espérance: Essais sur l'histoire de l'Union Soviétique, 1914–1991* (Paris: Perrin, 2019), chapter 5, "1918–1921. Les pogroms des guerres civiles russes," 109–26. See also Elissa Bemporad and Thomas Chopard, eds., *The Pogroms of the Russian Civil War at 100: New Trends, New Sources* (= *Quest. Issues in Contemporary Jewish History. Journal of Fondazione CDEC* 15 [August 2019]); Bemporad, *Legacy of Blood: Jews, Pogroms, and Ritual Murder in the Lands of the Soviets* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019).

21 See Laor, *S.Y. Agnon*, 312–14. Stephen Katz's study of the evolution of the text from manuscript to printed version testifies to Agnon's increasingly pessimistic vision (see Katz, "Evolution and Development of S.Y. Agnon's *'Ôrēaḥ nāṭā lālûn*, 1938–1939," *Hebrew Annual Review* 11 [1987]: 185–205; Katz, *The Centrifugal Novel: S.Y. Agnon's Poetics of Composition* [London: Associated University Presses, 1999], chapter 2 "From 'Becoming' to 'Being': *A Guest for the Night* in the Making," 36–57).

22 Accordingly, see Laor, *S.Y. Agnon*, 324–25 and annexed bibliography.

23 Scholem, "S.Y. Agnon," 112.

and metaliterary debates of the 1930s, when the novel was conceived and published. While European Jewry was on the wane, many questions arose concerning the Zionist enterprise in the Land of Israel and "the issue of continuity versus revolutionary innovation."[24] Incidentally, this very same decade was also the point when Barukh Kurzweil and Dov Sadan laid the foundations for the scholarly criticism and interpretation of Agnon's works.[25]

This is not the appropriate context to enter into the details of the discussion, and it will suffice here to recapitulate the main points of the argument. Kurzweil was looking for continuity, possibly historical and causal continuity, between past and present, old and new,[26] and from this point of view, it is not surprising that he took *A Guest for the Night* as an example and model of the irretrievable loss of the past; namely, the loss of the world of the fathers,[27] an interpretation that remained influential at least until the 1960s.[28]

I shall dwell briefly on Dov Sadan's interpretation of Agnon, which is of greater interest for the purposes of this essay. In fact, instead of pointing out radical oppositions—old vs. new, tradition vs. modernity, religion vs.

24 Dan Miron, *From Continuity to Contiguity: Toward a New Jewish Literary Thinking* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010), 204.

25 Dan Miron, *Le médecin imaginaire—Studies in Classical Jewish Fiction* [Hebrew] (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1995), 165. For an overview of criticism of Agnon in both Hebrew and English, see Shmuel Werses, "Trends and Methods in the Study of Sh.Y. Agnon's Works" [Hebrew], *Newsletter* (*World Union of Jewish Studies*) 29 (1989): 5–28; Anne Golomb Hoffman, "Agnon for All Seasons: Recent Trends in the Criticism," *Prooftexts* 11 (1991): 80–96; Nurith Govrin, "New Directions in the Study of Agnon" [Hebrew], *Ayin Gimel: A Journal of Agnon Studies* 1 (2011): 1–19.

26 For a discussion of how Kurzweil's conception of Judaism influenced his critical reading of Hebrew literature, see Miron, *From Continuity*, 235–42.

27 Kurzweil frankly acknowledged that he had read the novel when he first arrived in the Land of Israel after the war and the Shoah and that he had immediately felt that it was "the greatest artistic expression of the tragedy of European Jews" and therefore the tragedy of the loss of the world of the fathers: see Kurzweil, *Essays on the Stories of Sh.Y. Agnon* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Schocken 1966), 5, 56, and 312. For a discussion of Kurzweil's interpretation of Agnon's works, see Miron, *From Continuity*, 233. On Kurzweil's first experience of reading *A Guest for the Night*, see also James S. Diamond, *Barukh Kurzweil and Modern Hebrew Literature* (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1983), 11 and 15–16.

28 See, for example, Simon Halkin, *Modern Hebrew Literature: Trends and Values* (New York: Schocken, 1950), 115–16; Arnold J. Band, *Nostalgia and Nightmare: A Study in the Fiction of S.Y. Agnon* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), 283–84. Harold Fisch, while acknowledging the disintegration of the old world, also considers that "past and present can still somehow be brought together" in the novel; see Fisch, *S.Y. Agnon* (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1975), 51; Shaked, *Shmuel Yosef Agnon*, 141. See also Judith Romney Wegner, "*A Guest for the Night*: Epitaph on the Perished Hopes of Haskalah," in *Tradition and Trauma: Studies in the Fiction of S.J. Agnon*, ed. David Patterson and Glenda Abramson (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1994), 117.

secularism—Sadan highlighted how in Agnon's works, paradox and doubt about tradition are born from a world that is fully immersed in this very same tradition.[29] From 1932 to 1934, he laid the first foundations of his interpretation in two seminal articles.[30] In a later essay—published in 1980, ten years after Agnon's death—he enlarged his analysis by arguing that the protagonists of the works published between *Hakhnasat Kallah* (*The Bridal Canopy*) and "Kisui ha-dam" ("Covering the Blood") are suffering individuals characterised by atheism and doubt.[31] Among the works featuring doubt, there is also *A Guest for the Night*, "the great story that stands between" *The Bridal Canopy* and *Tmol Šilšom* (*Only Yesterday*), which expresses an awareness of a crisis that is beyond repair and that co-exists with doubt.

Sadan's analysis is built upon a comprehensive psychoanalytical interpretation of the author's relationship to the characters he portrayed in his stories. According to him, these characters are vital autobiographical evidence that allows the reader to become familiar with Agnon and his beliefs. In other words, the writer poured himself and his beliefs into some of his characters, who are wandering in a world that seems at certain moments to be governed by providence until things happen that come to contradict this belief and cast doubt and uncertainty over everything. Accordingly, the faith, certainty, and serenity of Agnon's characters is actually rooted in the very same perplexity that compels them to look for shelter in the illusion of a world of certainties that is guided by providence. Through these perplexed characters, Agnon gave his readers an overview of his spiritual world, where nothing can be held for certain.

Yet doubt as such both is and is not at the core of Sadan's analysis, since in his opinion, it is not the most relevant aspect. It is worth noting that he never uses the word "scepticism." In fact, he goes somewhat beyond the nuances that doubt allows to interpreters and is more inclined towards the clear-cut opposition between "faith and its contrary or substitute" or "atheism and its contrary or substitute," which allows interpreters to understand and outline

29 Sadan's interpretation was influenced by psychoanalysis, especially Freud: see Miron, *From Continuity*, 252.

30 Dov Sadan, "'Im arba'at kerakhaw ha-ri'šonim" (1932) and "Mevukhah we-gilguleiha" (1934), in Sadan, *On Sh.Y. Agnon—An Essay of Study and Research* [Hebrew] (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1967), 9–31. Like many other essays by Sadan, "Mevukhah we-gilguleiha" was also published in *Davar: Musaf le-Šabbatot we-le-Mo'adim* 9, no. 25, 12 Sivan 1934: 1–2, with a slightly different title: "Mevukhat adam we-gilguleiha." All quotations will be taken from *On Sh. Y. Agnon*. The translation from Hebrew is mine. I am especially thankful to Prof. Nurith Govrin for bringing Sadan's essays to my attention.

31 Dov Sadan, "On the Doubt That Stands In Between" [Hebrew], *Maariv*, 16 May 1980: 33 and 36.

Agnon's spiritual world. If one wished to resort to another opposition, he adds, then "certainty and doubt, confidence and uncertainty"[32] could be invoked, although in his eyes, they seem to be somewhat reductive.

Finally, the written text plays a pivotal role in Sadan's analysis, and the written text *par excellence* is the Torah. In his view, Agnon's twofold approach to the Torah stands at the core of his approach to faith and atheism, which is conveyed through either the annulation or the substitution of the sacred text[33] This remark is crucial, since it shows that Sadan was conscious that atheism—or, more reductively, doubt—finds its expression through the debunking of authority and that in Agnon's case, the first authority that stands in the line of fire is that of the sacred texts.

While the majority of scholars active from the 1970s on approached Agnon's works by focusing on the structure of the text, or on a semiotic, metaphorical, and psychoanalytical reading of it,[34] doubt and scepticism resurface in the seminal pages that Dan Miron devoted to the turn—or, more precisely, to the "far-reaching literary shift"[35]—that Agnon underwent in the mid-1930s. Influenced by Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*, he saw in the mediocre, bourgeois, voluptuous, tragic Emma "the image of the human individual as such."[36] Her suicide represents the moment when the individual takes back control of his life, albeit in a destructive way. Therefore, Agnon put the idea that the human condition is fundamentally characterised by pain at the core of his works,

32 Sadan, "On the Doubt," 33.

33 Sadan, "On the Doubt," 36.

34 And in so doing they raised the issue of scepticism as something that can, in a general, intuitive way of speaking, be opposed to piety, religious belief, and/or nationalism. For example, Anne Golomb Hoffman writes that in Agnon's time, scepticism had to be counted "among the competing tendencies of modern Jewish thought" and that Agnon was aware of this, Anne Golomb Hoffman, *Between Exile and Return: S.Y. Agnon and the Drama of Writing* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1991), 4; see also Shaked, *The Narrative Art*; in this context, see esp. 228–78, dedicated to an analysis of *A Guest for the Night*; Naomi B. Sokoloff, "Metaphor and Metonymy in Agnon's *A Guest for the Night*," *AJS Review* 9 (1984): 97–111; Yael S. Feldman, "How Does a Convention Mean? A Semiotic Reading of Agnon's Bilingual Key-Irony in *A Guest for the Night*," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 56 (1985): 251–69; Feldman, "The Latent and the Manifest: Freudianism in *A Guest for the Night*," *Prooftexts* 7 (1987): 2–39; Wegner, "*A Guest for the Night*: Epitaph on the Perished Hopes of Haskalah." In addition to this, one might also mention Amos Oz, *Šetiqat ha-Šamayim: Agnon Mištomem 'al Elohim* (Jerusalem: Keter, 1993), 18; English translation: Oz, *The Silence of Heaven: Agnon's Fear of God*, trans. Barbara Harshav (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), where the author labels Agnon "that Ecclesiastes, who disguised himself in all sorts of beautiful disguises" (*Šetiqat ha-Šamayim*, 18; *Silence of Heaven*, 12).

35 Miron, *Le médecin imaginaire*, 217.

36 Miron, *Le médecin imaginaire*, 218.

turning madness and illness into something worthy of description and narration. This new vision, Miron goes on to argue, moved Agnon to set aside the traditional and pious style that dominated his earlier works in order to switch to a new poetics "based on the new consciousness of the immediacy, the compelling inescapability of pain, of suffering, of emotional chaos, of erotic desire."[37] According to Miron, this shift has its origins in historical as well as personal causes, which I have already described above,[38] yet there remains one seminal point to be discussed: the change that Agnon made when he chose to abide by a scrupulous observance of the *miṣwot* in the mid-1920s. In Miron's argument, it is precisely this renewed observance of the *miṣwot* that allowed Agnon to be intellectually and artistically free. Being an observant Jew, "he was able to allow himself not only doubt, but even atheism and mockery."[39]

Both Sadan and Miron argue in favour of the presence of doubt in Agnon's works. In Sadan's interpretation, doubt is ever-present and is the motivation that induces Agnon's characters to search for certainty, eventually religious certainty. More interestingly, and possibly in an even more provocative move, Miron argues that certainty—in this case, the certainty of the observance of the *miṣwot*—allows Agnon to think freely as an artist and to trespass the limits of doubt.

I do not wish to bring research on Agnon back to the time when his works were studied by discussing the oppositions of old vs. new, past vs. present, and tradition and faith vs. secularism. However, I think that the dialectics of certainty and doubt in Agnon's works—and, in this case, in *A Guest for the Night*—deserve an in-depth exploration that does more than simply taking into account the thematic opposition or even clash between tradition and secularism. One might, of course, begin by researching Agnon's familiarity with philosophical Jewish texts conveying the idea and strategies of Jewish scepticism and their influence on his work.[40] However, there is another parallel, or perhaps even converging direction that can be followed. I see the dialectics between certainty and doubt as being deeply rooted in Agnon's works not only as a subject, but also as a literary strategy that may have percolated into them from a non-Jewish literary source: modernism.

37 Miron, *Le médecin imaginaire*, 219.

38 See above pages 112–113.

39 Miron, *Le médecin imaginaire*, 221.

40 Accordingly, see Giuseppe Veltri, *Alienated Wisdom: Enquiry into Jewish Philosophy and Scepticism*, Studies and Texts in Scepticism 3 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018), especially part 3, "(Jewish) Scepticism," 143–280; Racheli Haliva, ed., *Scepticism and Anti-Scepticism in Medieval Jewish Philosophy and Thought* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018).

This connection between scepticism and modernism in Agnon's works was first made by Ortsion Bartana in an essay published in 2004, and to my knowledge, he remains the only scholar to have brought it to light by arguing that "the Agnon school entails staying within the boundaries of methodical doubt."[41] This methodical doubt is unleashed "toward the human way of life as it is."[42] This application of doubt makes Agnon a modernist, and as such, he "gives his scepticism psychological expression."[43] In Bartana's formulation, scepticism becomes the modern and modernist aspect of Agnon's works, but it remains confined to the psychological sphere that concerns both the characters' passions and their instincts and drives, whether conscious and unconscious. According to Bartana, Judaism remains the answer to this psychological scepticism. Scepticism, therefore, has only a minor effect on Judaism.[44]

I would suggest that the connection between scepticism and modernism is precisely the reason why it is worth dwelling on the question of how sceptical modernist literature is. Furthermore, it seems beneficial to discuss the interrelatedness of modernism and scepticism in general before approaching Agnon's works, particularly *A Guest for the Night*. What is at stake here is not only—or, to put it better, not simply—the "old-fashioned" opposition between faith and its contrary or between doubt and certainty, but rather the positioning of Agnon in the modernist literary current that is in turn characterised by uncertainty and doubt about reality and the subject.

3 Modernism and Scepticism

"I never see the whole of anything."[45] So wrote Montaigne in the *Essays* that he composed and published in different augmented editions between 1580 and 1588. With this oxymoronic formulation, he dismissed whatever aspiration and claims metaphysical reason could put forward to confirm its ability to know the totality of reality. Montaigne was able to do so also, though not exclusively, because he was able to resort to the strategies made available to

41 Ortsion Bartana, "The Brenner School and the Agnon School in Hebrew Literature of the Twentieth Century," *Hebrew Studies* 45 (2004): 51. In fact, the essay draws a comparison between Brenner's radical doubt and Agnon's methodical, yet partial doubt.

42 Bartana, "The Brenner School," 61.

43 Bartana, "The Brenner School," 61.

44 Bartana, "The Brenner School," 60–61.

45 Michel de Montaigne, *Essais*, book 1, chapter 50, "De Democritus et Eraclitus"; English translation in Montaigne, *Essays*, trans. J.M. Cohen (London: Penguin, 1993), 130.

him by philosophical scepticism.[46] During the Renaissance, as can be particularly observed in the *Essays*, sceptical arguments were unleashed against every form of authority, especially religious authority, introducing what has classically been labelled *la crise de la conscience européenne*.[47]

Modernity, understood as a liberation from and even a revolt against the principle of authority, is stirred by the sensation, or perhaps even the vertigo, of uncertainty and doubt. Knowledge cannot be eternal and fixed, but only temporary and in perpetual change. Therefore, the new modern world as Montaigne saw and experienced it "seemed immense, boundless, incomprehensible. The need to orient oneself in it seemed hard to satisfy and yet urgent."[48] According to Erich Auerbach, Montaigne described a historical and cultural process "which began in the sixteenth century, [and] continued through the nineteenth at an even faster tempo."[49] Yet the issue of the continuity of this process appears to be somewhat problematic. The modernity project reached its height during the Enlightenment, which laid its foundations in the autonomy of the critical subject being dependent on reason. Most of all,

46 Conceived by Pyrrho in the fourth century BC and formulated by Sextus Empiricus during the Hellenistic age, scepticism resurfaced during the last part of the fifteenth century in the Medicis' Florence, especially in Gianfrancesco Pico della Mirandola's *Examen vanitatis doctrinae gentium et veritatis christianae disciplinae* (s.l., 1520). See Richard H. Popkin, *The History of Scepticism from Erasmus to Descartes* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1960), chapter 2, "The Revival of Skepticism," 17–43; Popkin, *The History of Scepticism from Savonarola to Bayle*, rev. ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), chapter 2, "The Revival of Greek Scepticism in the Sixteenth Century," 17–43; Luciano Floridi, *Sextus Empiricus: The Transmission and Recovery of Pyrrhonism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002). Gianfrancesco became acquainted with Pyrrhonian scepticism through the Jewish philosopher Ḥasdai Crescas's *The Light of the Lord*; see David Harari, "Who Was the Learned Jew That Made Known Ḥasdai Crescas' *The Light of the Lord* to Gianfrancesco Pico della Mirandola?" [Hebrew], *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 14 (1998): 257–69; Mauro Zonta, "The Influence of Hasdai Crescas's Philosophy on Some Aspects of Sixteenth-Century Philosophy and Science," in *Religious Confessions and the Sciences in the Sixteenth Century*, ed. Jürgen Hel and Annette Winkelmann (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 71–78. For the history of Greek scepticism in general, see Anthony Arthur Long and David Neil Sedley, eds., *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Richard Bett, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Ancient Scepticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

47 Paul Hazard, *La crise de la conscience européenne*, new ed. (Paris: Fayard, 1961).

48 Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, trans. Willard R. Trask with an introduction by Edward Said, 50th anniversary ed. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003), 310.

49 Auerbach, *Mimesis*, 549.

embedded in the concept of modernity is the idea of progress, in the sense of a confidence in the constant improvement of human life.[50]

There are certainly many different definitions of modernism, and the debate continues as to its life-span and the features that differentiate it from post-modernism.[51] For the sake of the current argument and taking into account the circumstance that this discussion focuses on modernism in the specific cultural context of a Jewish author writing in modern Hebrew, I would understand modernism as a literary movement in a dialectical relationship with modernisation.[52] This movement parallels, reacts, and interacts with modernity while focusing on human consciousness and on the different ways the subject represents reality, which cast aside mimetic representations and simultaneously point to a crisis of the subject,[53] whose autonomy, rationality, and reliability are in doubt.[54] Indeed, modernism in the arts can be seen as a vehicle for a crisis mentality pointing towards a "bourgeois culture's growing dissatisfaction with itself."[55] The crisis of the bourgeois subject implies the awareness that the age of bourgeois humanism is at an end and is perhaps about to face an impending catastrophe.[56] Modernity has failed to deliver what it promised.[57] The crisis of the subject and the constant changes and fluctuations in reality turn doubt into a double-edged instrument: on the one side, it is an instrument of criticism unleashed against the modernity project; on the other, it allows the subject to apprehend the changing modern reality, at least temporarily.

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50 See Robert B. Pippin, *Modernism as a Philosophical Problem*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), 4: "Above all modernity is characterized by the view that human life after the political and intellectual revolutions of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries is fundamentally better than before, and most likely will, thanks to such revolutions, be better still."

51 See Astradur Eysteinsson, *The Concept of Modernism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992), especially chapter 1, "The Making of Modernist Paradigms," 8–49. See also Astradur Eysteinsson and Vivian Liska, "Approaching Modernism," in *Modernism*, ed. Astradur Eysteninsson and Vivian Liska (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2007), 1:1–8.

52 See Marshall Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity*, repr. ed. (London: Penguin, 1988), 16.

53 I am therefore leaving aside the aesthetic appraisal of modernism focused on "ahistorical formal authority"; see Eysteinsson, *The Concept of Modernism*, 12–24 and 26–30.

54 For a discussion of the concept of the modern subject and its discontents, see Pippin, *Modernism as a Philosophical Problem*, especially chapter 2, "Modernity and Modernism," 16–44.

55 Pippin, *Modernism as a Philosophical Problem*, 31.

56 This feeling, Auerbach argues, is already present in Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*, a novel which, incidentally, Agnon greatly admired. See Auerbach, *Mimesis*, 547.

57 See Pippin, *Modernism*, chapter 3, "Idealism and Modernity," 45–77.

During the Renaissance, sceptical arguments and strategies were used against the old Thomistic system of knowledge and values in order to give birth and shape to modernity. Between the late nineteenth century and the early twentieth century, the sensation of uncertainty and doubt percolated into the modernist literary movement: one need only think of Stefan Zweig's *The World of Yesterday*, where the author ceaselessly complains about the waning of the "Golden Age of Security" that followed the First World War.

Among the first scholars to focus on the issue of uncertainty and doubt in the works of twentieth-century writers, Erich Auerbach deserves a special mention, because in "The Brown Stocking," the last chapter of his much-celebrated study of the representation of reality in Western literature, he highlights many features of those texts that can also be traced in Agnon's works, as I will show below. The features that Auerbach sketched out were later identified and discussed by Douwe Fokkema, who approached the issue of modernism using the concept of group code or sociocode, understood as "the code designated by a group of writers often belonging to a particular generation, literary movement or current and acknowledged by their contemporary and later readers."[58] Erich Auerbach argued that the acceleration in the changes that had already begun in the sixteenth century meant that the writers of the twentieth century no longer had any reliable criteria that would allow them to organise reality or to describe a historical period or a character's life-span with any degree of reliability. Therefore, they focused on fragments of reality and on brief specific moments in their characters' lives, hoping "to report [them] with reasonable completeness." This implies a reduction of the plot; in other words, not very much happens in modernist novels. As Fokkema puts it: "With respect to the relation between text and author it is a Modernist convention to consider *the text as not being definite*."[59] The text is characterised by a tenuous plot or by the resort to "arbitrary intrigues—often borrowed from the available stock of myths," strategies that aim at expressing "provisionality, both at the level of the sentence and of the text."[60]

Action is secondary when compared with the relevance of a single fragment. At the same time, even the report of a single fragment remains temporary, since "there is always going on within us a process of formulation and interpretation whose subject matter is our own self."[61] The opposition between reality

58 Douwe Fokkema, *Literary History, Modernism and Postmodernism* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1983), 11.

59 Fokkema, *Literary History*, 15 (emphasis in original).

60 Fokkema, *Literary History*, 16.

61 Auerbach, *Mimesis*, 549.

in its totality and the fragment also implies the opposition between "'exterior' and 'interior' time,"[62] or, to put it more clearly, "an insignificant exterior occurrence releases ideas and chains of ideas which cut loose from the present of the exterior occurrence and range freely through the depths of time."[63] The external reality the author represents as a well-founded fact is not the main point, but only an occasion, and "the stress is placed entirely on what the occasion releases, things which are not seen directly but by reflection, which are not tied to the present of the framing occurrence which releases them."[64] In Fokkema's formulation, "the Modernist preference for hypothesis forbids any sort of law-like explanation of human behavior as was common in Realism."[65] This point concerns the relationship between the text and the surrounding reality that is henceforth based on epistemological doubt, and here Fokkema's words deserve to be quoted in full:

> In Modernism the relation between text and represented world is characterized by the convention of *epistemological doubt*. There is no pretension that the text indeed describes the world it aims to describe, not that the explanations it gives are more than approximation of truth. With regard to the organization of the text this implies a preference for the continuing flow of the stream-of-consciousness, which never aims at a definite result and even less at general validity.[66]

The points Auerbach and Fokkema made about reality underscore the modern subject's ability to be critical of it, yet they also introduce the other fundamental feature of modernism: the crisis of the subject. A subject who can no longer grasp or describe reality is logically a subject who has lost his ability to be autonomous and to found himself on reason. Accordingly, "the writer as a narrator of objective facts has almost completely vanished; almost everything stated appears by way of reflection in the consciousness of the dramatis personae."[67] This, of course, is a reference to the stream of consciousness. The facts are subjected to the character's personal point of view, temporary interpretation, and momentary feeling. The author cannot even guarantee that they are the true facts, since he/she looks at the characters "not with knowing

62 Auerbach, *Mimesis*, 538.
63 Auerbach, *Mimesis*, 540.
64 Auerbach, *Mimesis*, 541.
65 Fokkema, *Literary History*, 16.
66 Fokkema, *Literary History*, 16 (emphasis in original).
67 Auerbach, *Mimesis*, 534.

but with doubting and questioning eyes."[68] Therefore, the author represents himself/herself as "someone who doubts, wonders, hesitates as though the truth about her [or his] characters were not better known to her [or him] than it is to them or to the reader."[69] In Fokkema's formulation, the modernist writer "does not try to be complete and lacks the certainty that would make him attempt to discover the laws governing human existence. [...] He is an intellectual who never gives up thinking, even if he knows that the results of his deliberations can be only provisional."[70] Therefore, a literary text cannot convey the truth about the world: "The major convention of Modernism with regard to the composition of literary texts is the selection of hypothetical constructions expressing uncertainty and provisionality."[71]

Finally, Fokkema focuses on the relationship between text and code: "It is a Modernist convention to resort to *metalingual comment*, that is, to discuss the codes used, either in the text itself or on other occasions."[72] Here, he places great emphasis on Nietzsche's concept of *Sprachskepsis*, which "disclaimed the possibility of the adequate use of language."[73]

While shaping his literary persona, Agnon denied any connection to modernist authors[74] and tried to present himself "as a figure on the margins of [Jewish] tradition,"[75] which, he claimed, was his sole source of inspiration. In so doing, he played down the impact of European literature on his work, especially where modernism is concerned. Yet his modernism has been acknowledged by many scholars and he has thus been ranked "with the major modernists of this [twentieth] century."[76] His works have been connected to

68 Auerbach, *Mimesis*, 535.

69 Auerbach, *Mimesis*, 535.

70 Fokkema, *Literary History*, 13–14, and see 11–12 for a definition of sociocode.

71 Fokkema, *Literary History*, 15.

72 Fokkema, *Literary History*, 17.

73 Fokkema, *Literary History*, 18.

74 Agnon, quoted in Gershon Shaked, "After the Fall: Nostalgia and the Treatment of Authority in the Works of Kafka and Agnon, Two Habsburgian Writers," *Partial Answers: Journal of Literature and History of Ideas* 2, no. 1 (2004): 97.

75 Alan L. Mintz and Anne Golomb Hoffman, "Agnon as Modernist: The Contours of a Career," in Alan L. Mintz, *Translating Israel: Contemporary Hebrew Literature and its Reception in America* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2001), 84. This is consistent with Agnon's later statement that the Bible was his primary source of inspiration, since he learnt how to combine letters from it. See Shmuel Yosef Agnon, "Banquet Speech," in *Dictionary of Literary Biography Volume 329: Nobel Prize Laureates in Literature. Part 1: Agnon—Eucken* (Detroit: Thomson Gale, 2007), 18.

76 Hoffman, *Between Exile*, 1; see also Mintz and Hoffman, "Agnon as Modernist," where the authors suggest that Agnon's modernism also consists in his turning his own life and biography into a narrative construction, and Wisse, *The Modern Jewish Canon*, 164, where

modernism from various points of view. In the case of *A Guest for the Night*, the modernist influence is confirmed by the sense of death lingering in its pages[77] and by the recurrent motif of the crisis of masculine erotic desire being connected to the crisis of artistic creation.[78] Nitza Ben-Dov has pinpointed the connection between Agnon's modernism and his manipulation of Jewish sources to create a nuanced prose that expresses scepticism.[79]

Finally, if modernism is the expression of the awareness of crisis, then Gabriel Moked's interpretation undeniably situates Agnon in the literary landscape of modernist literature. According to him, Agnon's modernism is to be found in the suspension of his literary representation between the civic humanist dimension and the traditional religious foundation, along with the consciousness that both of them are being shattered.[80] The awareness of crisis, one of the features of modernism, be it the crisis of the traditional Jewish world or the crisis of Jewish modernity, entails a crisis of authority, casting doubt over the way in which reality is perceived and described and over the authoritativeness of the subject who describes it.

I would suggest that we consider Agnon's doubt to be literary, and above all philosophical,[81] and as such, it entails a method and a strategy. The main target of doubt is authority, and in *A Guest for the Night*, Agnon attempts if not to debunk it completely, then at least to strip it of its foundations and reliability, particularly in its religious form. He juxtaposes descriptions and interpretations of reality that cast shadows of doubt and uncertainty upon each other in a way that recalls a strategy drawn from the Pyrrhonian sceptical system:

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the author interprets *A Guest for the Night* against the background of European modernism, especially Thomas Mann and Franz Kafka, and argues that Agnon was the foremost Hebrew modernist during the 1930s.

77 Cohen, "Agnon's Modernity."

78 See Shachar Pinsker, *Literary Passports: The Making of Modernist Hebrew Fiction in Europe* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011), 226–36.

79 Nitza Ben Dov, *Agnon's Art of Indirection: Uncovering Latent Content in the Fiction of S.Y. Agnon* (Leiden: Brill, 1993), 5.

80 From this point of view, Moked counts Agnon among the ten greatest prose writers of the twentieth century and at the same time as the only one of them who was able to express the genius of the Hebrew language and the Jewish tradition: see Gabriel Moked, "Between 'Ido and Inam' and 'Forevermore'" [Hebrew], *ʿAkhshaw* 25–28 (1973): 77–93; quotations from the essay are taken from the reprint in Moked, *Šivḥei ʿAdiʾel ʿAmzeh* [The Praises of Adiel Amzeh: "Forevermore" and "Ido and Inam" by Sh.Y. Agnon] (Jerusalem: Schocken, 1989), 11–34, here 15.

81 Indeed, Bartana is only too right when he says that the philosophical side of Agnon's writing has not been widely appreciated in Hebrew literature (Bartana, "The Brenner School," 67).

"opposing to every proposition an equal proposition."[82] Furthermore, in my opinion, he goes far beyond the linguistic challenge described by Ben Dov, fathoming his own *Sprachskepsis* that entails a reflection on modern Hebrew and the literature produced in it. In fact, if the authority—and in some sense also the sanctity—of traditional texts is found wanting, then what is the value of the modern, secular written word in a Hebrew literary text? The doubt that Agnon expresses does not involve the possibility of using language to formulate a trustworthy description of reality so much as it involves the question of the status, and eventually the sanctity, of modern Hebrew language and literature.

Finally, the awareness of crisis that lingers throughout *A Guest for the Night* stems from the problem of evil that continually befalls the Jews at both a collective and an individual level. The characters of the Bach family I shall discuss below are a paradigm of this problem.

4 The Dialogue between the Protagonist-Narrator and Raphael

"Beyond the River Sambatyon" is chapter 57 of *A Guest for the Night*, and it is ideally placed in the second part of the book. In the first part, the protagonist-narrator strives to convince himself and to persuade both his fellow citizens and his readers that he belongs in Szibucz. In the second part, after becoming conscious of his belonging to the Land of Israel and explicitly formulating it, he can begin to make arrangements to return there and join his family. Nonetheless, he continues to study in the Beit Midrash, and on his way there one early spring day, he happens to walk past Daniel Bach's house and sees his son, young Raphael, lying in the sun. He stops to talk to the child and they start a discussion comparing the warmth of the sun in Szibucz and its warmth in the Land of Israel that takes up the protagonist-narrator's own remarks at the beginning of the novel: "I said to myself: these people are accustomed to the cold, but I, who have come from the Land of Israel—where one ray of the sun is stronger than the whole of the sun we see here—I cannot stand the cold, and surely I must make me a coat."[83]

Obviously, for him, the climate in Szibucz has become too cold to bear in comparison with the warmth of the Land of Israel. Raphael seems to assume so too:

82 Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, trans. Robert Gregg Bury (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1933), 1.6.12.

83 *Oreaḥ*, 49; *Guest*, 54.

> I asked him if he felt warm. "I am warm," the child replied, "are you warm too?" "It is the same sun," I said, "and just as it warms the one so it warms the other, if you are warm why should I not feel warm?" "Because you are from the Land of Israel," the child answered, "and the sun in the Land of Israel is twice as warm; I'm sure the whole sun here is not enough for you." "Men have a way of getting accustomed," said I. "I thought anyone who had been there would feel cold here," said Raphael.[84]

This brief, conventional conversation reveals the main subjects of the following discussion and their treatment. The reason for this appears to be that the protagonist-narrator seems to want to minimise the differences between the two places. Furthermore, his answer contradicts the real feelings he expresses shortly after he arrives in Szibucz, when he feels he needs a new coat because he cannot stand the cold. However, it is even more important to highlight that the beginning of the conversation anticipates its main subject: a comparison between two places, in this case, the Land of Israel and Szibucz. Raphael seems to raise some doubts about the actual possibility of becoming accustomed, as if the two places are essentially different. When the protagonist-narrator asks him why he thinks so, the child has no clear-cut explanation, and he therefore switches to another, though similar, subject:

> "Where is it more beautiful, there or there?" "What do you mean, Raphael, what do you mean by 'there or there'? Or perhaps you meant to ask about there or here, meaning in the Land of Israel or in Szibucz." Said Raphael, "Yesterday I read in a book about the River Sambatyon and the Ten Tribes and the Sons of Moses, and I ask where is it more beautiful, there or in the Land of Israel?"[85]

From these lines arises the real subject of the conversation: the proper location of utopia, with two possible options—the Land of Israel or the land beyond the River Sambatyon. As is well known, Agnon was committed to Zionism,[86] and still more to the Land of Israel. However, the entire corpus of his literary production deals with a ceaseless coming and going to and from a Land of Israel that is both heavenly and sometimes harshly earthly.

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84 *Oreaḥ*, 321–22; *Guest*, 372–73.

85 *Oreaḥ*, 322; *Guest*, 373.

86 For a synthetic overview of Agnon's commitment to Zionism, see Miron, *From Continuity*, 234–33, where the author underscores that Agnon considered Zionism "the only form of a tenable Jewish messianism."

This discussion is built on different perceptions of different spaces. Interestingly enough, the Sambatyon itself is not the utopia. The real utopia is the land beyond it, which is here understood as a place created and shaped by a "utopian imagination and imaginative geography";[87] as such, it is not "a geographical space,"[88] but the product of a hermeneutic effort. The land beyond the Sambatyon is a "mental space where figures of imaginative power play out a story that cannot be realized in the present."[89] This story has everything to do with the trauma of the loss of political independence and military force. The land beyond the Sambatyon is a utopia compared to the Diaspora, where the Jews had no political autonomy or military power and were actually incapable of protecting themselves; it is a utopian space endowed with political and military meaning. The Sambatyon is the *limes* separating the land where some chosen individuals live; namely, the Ten Tribes and the Sons of Moses, who were brought there by the hand of God. In order to reach it, the pious Jew must set forth on a *quête* that will test the steadfastness of his faith, like the *quête* for the Holy Grail.[90] For this reason, few elected souls have been chosen and allowed to reach it, and fewer still have been allowed to return from it. Among those who managed to return, Agnon mentions Rabbi Meir *Baʿal ha-Aqdamut* and Ḥayyim ben Moses ibn Attar, the author of the *Or ha-Ḥayyim* (*The Light of Life*).[91]

Conversely, the Land of Israel is a real geographical space that has a special status in the Jewish tradition. It is placed at the centre of the world and is the source of every spiritual happiness, and going there is a *miṣwah* for every Jew.[92] Because of their sins, the Israelites have been doomed to exile. When the Messiah comes, the exiles will be gathered there again. In the meantime, however, many Jewish pilgrims have journeyed and eventually settled there. However, it is always possible to come and go to and from the Land of Israel, as the protagonist-narrator himself has. Therefore, his answer rather speaks for itself:

87 Giuseppe Veltri, "The East in the Story of the Lost Tribes—Creation of Geographical and Political Utopias," in *Creation and Re-Creation in Jewish Thought—Festschrift in Honor of Joseph Dan*, ed. Rachel Elior and Peter Schäfer (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005,) 249, reprinted in Veltri, *Renaissance Philosophy in Jewish Garb* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 144–68.

88 Veltri, "The East in the Story of the Lost Tribes," 259.

89 Veltri, "The East in the Story of the Lost Tribes," 259.

90 However, see also the suggested comparison between the Sambatyon and the lost Excalibur in Ben-Dor Benite, *The Ten Lost Tribes: A World History*, 15.

91 Ḥayyim ben Moses ibn Attar (1696–1743), author of *Or ha-Ḥayyim* (Venice, 1742), a commentary on the Pentateuch.

92 See, for example, Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews*, 1:7 and annexed sources.

> "You are asking something that is clear of itself," I replied; "after all, the Ten Tribes and the Sons of Moses look forward all their lives to go up to the Land of Israel, and unless the Holy One, blessed be He, had not surrounded them with the River Sambatyon, wouldn't they hurry to the Land of Israel? But all week long the River Sambatyon races rapidly and casts up stones, so that no one can pass, and on the Sabbath, when it rests, they cannot cross, because they are very pious men and observe the Sabbath. And you ask where it is more beautiful? Certainly in the Land of Israel."[93]

This answer, as so often happens throughout the novel, is compliant with the Jewish tradition. Nonetheless, Raphael's objection casts doubt upon this "orthodox" answer: "I thought […] that because they are not under the yoke of the Gentiles and the servitude of the nations, it is more beautiful there."[94] Clearly, Raphael's answer displaces the discussion from the religious field to the political one. Immediately, the protagonist-narrator tries to bring it back to the religious field: "But they do not have the joy of the Land, for there is no joy of the Land but in the Land of Israel."[95] However, once again, Raphael returns to the political and military issue:

> [Raphael]: "Are they really not under the yoke of the Gentiles?" […] "And aren't the Gentiles jealous of them?"
> [Protagonist-narrator]: "Indeed they are jealous of them; that is why the Gentiles go to war against them."
> [Raphael]: "And what did they do?"
> [Protagonist-narrator]: "They fight back."
> [Raphael]: "Like here?"
> [Protagonist-narrator]: "What do you mean, like here?"
> [Raphael]: "Like what happened here in our town, when the Gentiles came and fought each other and killed each other."[96]

Faced with this argument, the protagonist-narrator cannot but correct the child by telling him that the Ten Tribes and the Sons of Moses are too holy and pure to shed blood, so they only have special staves made of magnetic stones

93 *Oreaḥ*, 322; *Guest*, 373.
94 *Oreaḥ*, 322; *Guest*, 373.
95 *Oreaḥ*, 322; *Guest*, 373.
96 *Oreaḥ*, 322; *Guest*, 373.

that allow them to draw away their enemies' weapons and cause them to flee. In so doing, he once again withdraws to the religious field.

Despite all the attempts made by the protagonist-narrator, Raphael's interest in the land beyond the Sambatyon does not stem from a strictly religious curiosity, but rather from the historical context of the period. After all the suffering that the Jewish community of Szibucz has had to endure, the child wonders whether it is better to live in the Land of Israel or in the land beyond the Sambatyon. To fully understand Raphael's point of view, one must keep in mind that he knows that his uncle Yeruḥam, his father's brother, was killed by an Arab in the Land of Israel, despite being innocent. The child seems to be tacitly hinting at a parallel between the innocent suffering in Szibucz and the death of his innocent uncle in the kibbutz. Therefore, the land beyond the Sambatyon becomes more attractive in his eyes.

At this point, the conversation is interrupted by the arrival of Daniel Bach, Raphael's father, who tells the protagonist-narrator about a letter he has just received from his father, Reb Shlomo Bach. He had formerly been a cantor in the Szibucz synagogue, but after his son's tragic death, he decided to move to the kibbutz of Ramat Raḥel, where Yeruḥam used to live, and has successfully adapted to the new environment and lifestyle there. Daniel Bach ironically summarises the contents of the letter:

> [Daniel]: "Well, he did not mention the quarrels in his congregation in Ramat Rahel, and he didn't write about the graves of the righteous men on which he prostrated himself."
> [Protagonist-narrator]: "Then what did he write about?"
> [Daniel]: "Now I know why they disparage the Land of Israel," said Daniel Bach. "If this is what happens to an old man who has spent all his life in study and prayer, what can you expect of all the young men who do not study and pray?"[97]

When it comes to the Zionist enterprise, and especially the Kibbutzim movement, we find that Reb Shlomo Bach and the protagonist-narrator share a similar point of view:

> There are pious men in this country who have built themselves Batei Midrashot, and they boast that when our holy Messiah reveals himself he will come first to their Beit Midrash. These young men, on the other hand, do not boast that the Messiah will come to them first; they do not

97 *Oreaḥ*, 323–24; *Guest*, 375.

> mention him, but most of their thoughts are devoted to going up to the Land of Israel and cultivating the soil. I do not know which are the more worthy of love: the pious in the Diaspora who wish to trouble the Messiah to come and visit them outside of the Land of Israel, or these young men who take the trouble to go up to the Land of Israel and prepare for him.[98]

The protagonist-narrator parallels, not without a certain irony, the quest for and expectation of sanctity that the religious Jews of the Diaspora share with the pioneers. However, none of them can satisfy him completely. Although he considers that the pioneers' mission is another way of preparing the path to the Messiah from a secular point of view, he still feels obliged to point out that there remains a basic difference between his belief and the approach of the pioneers:

> The very words we use have different meanings. For instance, when I say "Gordon" I mean our great poet, Yehuda Leib Gordon, while they mean Aaron David Gordon. My generation are men of thought, whose hands are short but whose thoughts are long, while they are men of deeds, who put doing before thinking. This Gordon of mine (that is, Yehudah Leib Gordon) was a man of thought, while their Gordon (that is, Aharon David Gordon) came along and translated thought into deeds; in other words, the one carried out what the other wrote.[99]

The protagonist-narrator does not have an authoritarian approach to the different points of view. He has no problem admitting that he does not know which vision, the religious one or that of the pioneers, is correct and legitimate. By acting thus, he almost seems to want to suspend judgment, since it will be impossible to say who is right and who is wrong until the Messiah comes. In the meantime, he points out the shared aspects of the two visions. Therefore, Daniel Bach's interruption does not really suspend the discussion as much as it provides the protagonist-narrator with some new arguments, since Reb Shlomo Bach has truly been able to build himself a new life in the Land of Israel and to find there the joy that only that land can bestow, as the protagonist-narrator tells Raphael. At the same time, it is impossible to forget the irony of Daniel Bach's words, whose foundation is to be found in the violent death endured by his brother Yeruḥam.

98 *Oreaḥ*, 99; *Guest*, 112.

99 *Oreaḥ*, 99–100; *Guest*, 112.

After Daniel Bach leaves Raphael and the protagonist-narrator, the conversation comes to an end. The last question Raphael asks is whether any child has ever reached the River Sambatyon. The protagonist-narrator answers by telling him the story of a young man from Jerusalem who leaves for the land beyond the Sambatyon the day after his marriage. He has magic shoes that allow him to cross the river and is permitted to join the Sons of Moses because he is a pious Jew. Some years later, his son attempts to join him and arrives at the river's shore. The father tries to throw him the magic shoes, but they fall into the river. Father and son must thus remain separate. The son returns to Jerusalem, where he acquires a deep knowledge of the Torah, and the two of them will be reunited only when the Messiah comes.[100]

The protagonist-narrator's story returns to the comparison between the land beyond the Sambatyon and the Land of Israel. In the first part of the story, the sanctity of the land beyond the Sambatyon seems to be able to captivate pious Jews and even to induce them to leave Jerusalem, as happens to the young bridegroom who leaves the holy city and his wife in order to go there. Yet in the second part of the story, the land beyond the Sambatyon begins to share some similarities with the Diaspora. Its sanctity induces the bridegroom to forget his family for thirteen long years:

> Once when he knelt during the thanksgiving prayer, his shoestring broke. After the prayer he remembered this, and, remembering this remembered all that had happened to him, and that it was already thirteen years and more since he had left his wife, and if his wife had borne a son the time had come for him to fulfill the commandments. But for fear of neglecting the Torah he banished these thoughts from his heart and returned to his teaching.[101]

Like the intrinsically unholy nature of the Diaspora, the sanctity of the land beyond the Sambatyon induces man to oblivion, as the protagonist-narrator states: "It is natural for a man to forget, for exile weakens the power of memory."[102]

Furthermore, there is a parallel between the story of the protagonist-narrator, who leaves the Land of Israel and his family in order to return to the Diaspora, and the story of the bridegroom, who does the same thing in order

100 On the source of this story, see Weiss, "The Ten Tribes," 6–7.

101 *Oreaḥ*, 325; *Guest*, 377.

102 *Oreaḥ*, 324; *Guest*, 376.

to go to the land beyond the Sambatyon.[103] Another intriguing parallel can be found between the attitude of the pious Jews of the Diaspora described by the protagonist-narrator, who continue to live there in order to obey the religious precept that forbids them to go to the Land of Israel before the arrival of the Messiah, and that of the bridegroom, the Ten Tribes, and *Benei Mošeh*, who are trapped in the land beyond the Sambatyon because of the *miṣwah* that obliges them to observe Shabbat. These parallels confirm the protagonist-narrator's answer: the Land of Israel is more beautiful than the land beyond the Sambatyon, because the latter, all its sanctity notwithstanding, bears many resemblances to the Diaspora.

5 The Voice of the Author: The Wondrous Ubiquitous Child

The authorial voice that comes to cast a shadow of doubt on the previous reconstruction can be heard by identifying and analysing the cross-references to the Jewish tradition and the usage Agnon makes of them. In this case, I shall focus on the wondrous powers of Raphael Bach and on the identification of the protagonist-narrator as a guest on the basis of Jer 14:8, "O Thou hope of Israel, the Saviour thereof in time of trouble, why shouldest Thou be as a stranger in the land, and as a wayfaring man that turneth aside to tarry for a night?"[104] I will argue that in Agnon's novel, the "Guest" is to be identified with God. I will then progress to the ultimate question of where sanctity is to be found.

When he conceived *A Guest for the Night*, Agnon gave Daniel Bach two daughters, one of whom was intended to be paralysed.[105] Some time after the composition of the manuscript, he changed his mind and replaced the paralysed daughter with Raphael Bach, an enigmatic character who presents some interpretative problems. Because of his illness, Raphael has been understood as a sort of "symbolic objective correlative of the physical and spiritual state of this generation";[106] in other words, he is a metaphor that adds to the situation of decay and despair that reigns in Szibucz. Another possible interpretation

103 On the connection Agnon makes between the Sambatyon legend and families breaking apart in *A Guest for the Night* and his other works, see Werses, *From Mendele to Hazaz*, 63–65.

104 On the intertextual relationship between Agnon's novel and the biblical pericope, see Halevi-Wise, "Agnon's Conversation with Jeremiah in *A Guest for the Night*."

105 Katz, *The Centrifugal Novel*, 43.

106 Katz, "Evolution and Development," 188.

goes in the direction of identifying Raphael as an allegory of the author[107] or as a transfigured embodiment of the mysterious Rabbi Amnon of Mainz, and in this sense, he brings a message of hope, foreshadowing the transformation of traditional Judaism into something else through the work of the pioneers in the Land of Israel.[108]

However, it seems to me that Raphael Bach deserves a more in-depth investigation, which requires us to return to the first encounter between him and the protagonist-narrator that takes place in the winter when he comes to visit Raphael's father. The following is the first impression that Raphael makes on the protagonist-narrator:

> At first glance he looked to me like a child; at a second glance like a young man; and at the third glance neither a child nor a young man, but a heap of skin and flesh in which the Creator has fixed two aged eyes. Or perhaps the order was reversed: at first glance Raphael looked like a heap of skin and flesh—and so forth; but I do not remember clearly, because of the things that happened that night. Raphael has already reached the age of bar mitzvah, but his limbs are still not straight and his bones are weak, so most of the days he lies in bed. Everyone looks after him and he is loved by all.[109]

Raphael Bach has the characteristics of both a child and an adult, as if he could be both at the same time: he is irretrievably ill, but at the same time he bears the name of Raphael, the healing angel. He contains opposites within himself—illness and health, youth and mature age—as the protagonist-narrator immediately perceives. Scholars of the history of religions are familiar with such "beings," which are considered a manifestation of *coincidentia oppositorum*, whose main features were defined by Mircea Eliade in 1949.[110] First of all, it goes

107 Cohen, "Agnon's Modernity," 667–68.

108 Arbell, "Messianism and Crisis," 200–1.

109 *Oreaḥ*, 131; *Guest*, 149–50.

110 Mircea Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion*, trans. Rosemary Sheed, repr. ed. (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1958), 419. Here, Eliade mentions Nicholas of Cusa as a source for this concept and phrase and uses it in the context of what he labels the "pre-systematic thought" that preceded the birth of philosophy: see Eliade, *Mefistofele e l'androgine*, trans. Enrico Pinto, repr. ed. (Rome: Edizioni Mediterranee, 1995), 73–74 and annexed sources. His pupil Mac L. Ricketts notes that Eliade was familiar with the work of Nicholas of Cusa as early as 1934/35, when he taught a seminar about *De docta ignorantia* at the University of Bucharest: see Bryan S. Rennie, *Reconstructing Eliade: Making Sense of Religion* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1996), 34. As Eliade acknowledged, *coincidentia oppositorum* played a pivotal point in his lifelong research, as he himself wrote: "The problem

beyond rational experience and understanding, and in fact, the protagonist-narrator does not understand Raphael's nature rationally: instead, he understands it intuitively as soon as he sees him. *Coincidentia oppositorum* reveals the actual structure of the divine understood as the mystery of the totality that contains all attributes in itself; it is therefore completely free and can be contradictory and paradoxical.[111] Raphael is a riddle that contains its own solution.[112]

Here, I shall focus on the specific riddle of his wondrous power of ubiquity, which he claims for himself during his first encounter with the protagonist-narrator:

> [Raphael]: "Now I know."
> [His mother]: "What do you know, my love?"
> [Raphael]: "Why all the places come to me."
> "What do you mean, all the places come to you?" Erela asked her brother.
> "They shift themselves and come to me," he replied. "And sometimes I go to them. It's not with my feet I go, I go to them with my self."[113]

Paradoxically, it is Raphael's illness that bestows these powers on him: all places come to him because his legs are weak and he cannot walk. Furthermore, he has no concept of what another place (*maqom aḥer*) can be: "What is somewhere else?" [His mother]: "A place that isn't here is somewhere else."[114] This dialogue epitomises the issue of ubiquity, turning it into a wondrous power, but it also epitomises the subject of the entire novel. *A Guest for the Night* is governed by the dialectics of being in one place, Szibucz, and aspiring to be in another, the Land of Israel, and vice versa. This subject does not only concern the protagonist-narrator and/or other characters. The major problem here is the location of sanctity.

As is well known, the rabbis attempted to detach the concept of sanctity from any material space in order to preserve the absolute transcendence of

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of the *coincidentia oppositorum* will fascinate me till the end of my life" (Eliade, quoted in Rennie, *Reconstructing Eliade*, 33). However, scholars and interpreters of Eliade's thought are still struggling to achieve an understanding of this term. Rennie gives an interesting reconstruction of the formation of the concept of *coincidentia oppositorum* in Eliade's thought and work and ultimately labels it an "ontological assumption" (*Reconstructing Eliade*, 40), since it describes sacred reality as it is.

111 See a later definition in Eliade, *Mefistofele e l'androgine*, 73–75.

112 See Rennie's definition of *coincidentia oppositorum* in Rennie, *Reconstructing Eliade*, 39.

113 *Oreaḥ*, 147; *Guest*, 167–68.

114 *Oreaḥ*, 146; *Guest*, 167.

God, but also to affirm the divine omnipresence in this world.[115] In *A Guest for the Night*, there is a ceaseless fluctuating oscillation between the material worldly dimension and the transcendent one that is most clearly expressed through its language. In the whole novel, the word *maqom* plays a pivotal role from the very first pages, when the protagonist-narrator is speaking with the inhabitants of Szibucz after the Kippur service:

> We are leaving the place because He whose place is on high has left us [*meniḥim anu et meqomenu, mipnei še-ha-maqom he-niḥanu we-eino roṣeh bi-menuḥatenu*].[116]

The sentence needs to be quoted in Hebrew because even the most elegant translation is doomed to fail to retain the association between the modern Hebrew word *maqom*, "place"—in this case, Szibucz—with God's name *Maqom*. As is well known, this name stems from *Gen. Rab.* 68:9 on Gen 28:11: "And he lighted upon the place, and tarried there all night." The biblical verse refers to Jacob's journey to Paddan-Aram, where he stops to sleep and dreams of a ladder leading up to the sky. When he wakes, he concludes: "Surely the LORD is in this place; and I knew it not" (Gen 28:16). One only has to put the title of the novel, with its reference to Jer 14:8, alongside these biblical passages and God's name *Maqom* in order to understand that here, Agnon is not using these references to answer the question of the location of sanctity, but rather in order to leave it open by showing that there is no clear-cut answer.

Furthermore, with his power of ubiquity and his ignorance of the concept of elsewhere, Raphael can also be interpreted as an allusion to the idea of divine omnipresence; more specifically, as a paradoxical metaphor for the *Šekhinah*. Conceived in rabbinic sources as a name of God that was intended to bridge the gulf between divine transcendence and the world, the *Šekhinah* is the manifest and hidden presence of God in the world that signifies that God is near to the Jewish people.[117] However, rabbinic interpretations differ where the influence of human conduct on the *Šekhinah* and the mercifulness that God exerts through her are concerned. According to one view, the sins of

115 *Gen. Rab.* 68:9.

116 *Oreaḥ*, 18; *Guest*, 17.

117 For a discussion of the rabbinic concept of the *Šekhinah*, see Ephraim E. Urbach, *The Sages: The World and Wisdom of the Rabbis of the Talmud*, trans. Israel Abrahams, 2nd enl. ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979), chapter 3, "The Shekhinah—The Presence of God in the World," 37–65 and annexed sources.

the Israelites caused the destruction of the Temple and the *Šekhinah*'s departure therefrom,[118] while their iniquities caused the *Šekhinah* to withdraw from Israel. If one looks back at the plot of *A Guest for the Night* with this interpretation in mind, it is possible to argue that the *Šekhinah* has abandoned Szibucz and its citizens because they have lost their faith and attend the Kippur service in the synagogue only as a matter of form. They have also abandoned the Beit Midrash and the study of the sacred texts. However, this explanation would at the same time be too simple and much too severe. In fact, the community is shaken, shocked, and in pain because of the sufferings they have experienced, and the protagonist-narrator—and through him, Agnon—cannot but be sympathetic and full of compassion. The inhabitants of Szibucz cannot simply be considered as sinners who deserve punishment. Therefore, Agnon seems to share Rabbi Akivah's more compassionate interpretation of the *Šekhinah* with the messianic implication that encourages Israel to endure the evil of the exile because the *Šekhinah* is with them and will support them until the Messiah comes and they are allowed to return to the Holy Land.[119] Furthermore, according to the school of Rabbi Ishmael, the *Šekhinah* supports the people of Israel whenever and wherever they are enslaved or in trouble.[120] Rabbi Ishmael does not provide an answer to collective and individual suffering, but, like Rabbi Akivah, he strives to provide some comfort. If the *Šekhinah* is with those who suffer, then she must necessarily be with the inhabitants of Szibucz. However, she is not to be found the synagogue, nor in the Beit Midrash, but rather in Daniel Bach's house, with Raphael, as it is written: "An invalid is different, because the Divine Presence is with him."[121] The *Šekhinah* is with Raphael and she suffers as he does.

Raphael epitomises the main issues at the core of *A Guest for the Night*: the problems of evil and innocent suffering, faith in God and His presence amid His people, and the issue of being in more than one place. Yet through him, Agnon does not provide a definite answer to these questions, but only some

118 See *b. Šabb.* 33a: "Through the crime of bloodshed the Temple was destroyed and the Shechinah departed from Israel."

119 Quoted with annexed sources in Urbach, *The Sages*, 54: "So too, it is found that wherever Israel went into exile, the *Shekhinah*, as it were, was exiled with them."

120 Quoted with annexed sources in Abraham Joshua Heschel, *Heavenly Torah as Refracted through the Generations*, ed. and trans. Gordon Tucker (New York: Continuum, 2005), 96: "You find that whenever Israel is enslaved, the *Shekhinah* is with them, as it says 'In all their troubles, God is troubled' […]. Thus, wherever Israel is exiled, the *Shekhinah* is with them."

121 *b. Šabb.* 12b.

possible solutions, leaving the readers and interpreters in doubt and uncertainty and at the same time inspiring them to continue to look for an answer.

6 Conclusion: Where Is Sanctity to Be Found?

In the end, where is sanctity to be found? And can this sanctity provide a satisfactory answer to the problem of evil that is befalling the Jews? They had been cruelly killed in the Diaspora, leading to serious doubt being cast on the possibility of the sanctity of Jewish life in the Diaspora ever being renewed. As for the Zionist enterprise, it still (in 1939) seemed to be an acceptable and satisfactory alternative, although there too, some Jews had already been murdered by the surrounding population. The utopia of the land beyond the Sambatyon seemed to be more attractive to the Jews because it appeared to be somewhere where they could successfully protect themselves from evil, but the story that the protagonist-narrator tells Raphael at the end of their conversation seems to suggest that the land beyond the Sambatyon is a problematic fairytale.

Agnon has constructed a tangle in which each element casts a shadow of doubt upon the others. This means that ultimately, this novel can be read and understood as an inquiry about the value of the written word, be it the sacred written word or the written word of the literary text. In order to clarify this issue, I need to return to the text, very close to the end of the novel, where the protagonist-narrator incidentally reveals his profession: "Unintentionally I have mentioned that I am a writer. Originally the word denoted the scribe, who wrote the words of the Torah. But since everyone who engages in the craft of writing is called a writer, I am not afraid of arrogance in calling myself a writer."[122]

Here, being a writer (*sofer*) has become a secular occupation, when it was once endowed with sanctity and implied the obligation of ritual purity. The ironic end of the narrator's statement reflects the gap between the sanctity of the word in the past and its secularisation in the present. While in the past, he goes on to explain, the ancient Hebrew poets' inspiration came from heaven, nowadays, a writer's only source of inspiration is writing (*ktav*):

> We are like a child who dips his pen in the ink and writes what his master dictates. So long as his master's writing lies before him, his writing is beautiful, but when his master's writing is taken away, or when he changes it, it is not beautiful. The Holy One, blessed be He, made a covenant with

122 *Oreaḥ*, 419; *Guest*, 482.

> all that has been created since the first six days that is should not change its function [...], and the forms of the letters and the writing of God on the Tablets were among the things that were created at the beginning.[123]

As Agnon highlighted in his book *Sefer Sofer we-Sippur*, the Jewish tradition states that God carved the upper and lower letters and through them created the upper and lower worlds, which stand one in front of the other and in correspondence with each other.[124] Thus, Hebrew letters played an active part in the creation and organisation of the upper and lower worlds: God lives in them and they convey and transmit the sanctity of the light of the *en sof* precisely through the Torah.[125] These letters, therefore, allow the writer some contact with the sphere of sanctity and allow him to perform the act of writing that becomes a redemptive act aiming at reparation—*tiqqun*—that is mediated by the sanctity of the written word and of the Hebrew letters that constitute it. Yet the text he produces with these letters is no longer sacred in itself, since the real source of inspiration ("what the master dictates") remains unsaid and wrapped in mystery. The sanctity of the Hebrew letters is asserted and at the same time, the status of the final result—the text—is called into question, as are the statuses of modern Hebrew literature and the author as a *sofer*. He can approach sanctity by embroidering his literary texts, but he cannot attain it, nor can he define it. Perhaps Agnon's main criticism is directed precisely against certainties, as Kafka wrote: "He who does not answer the questions has passed the test."[126]

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123 *Oreaḥ*, 420; *Guest*, 483.

124 Agnon, *Sefer Sofer we-Sippur*, 115.

125 See Agnon, *Sefer Sofer we-Sippur*, 118.

126 Franz Kafka, *Parables and Paradoxes in German and English*, new. ed. (New York: Schocken, 1961), 183.

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Jean Bodin's Universalism and the Twofold Foundations of Natural Religion

A New Reading of the Colloquium heptaplomeres

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Abstract

The *Colloquium* is a conversation between seven highly educated representatives of various religions and worldviews: a supporter of natural religion (Toralba), a Calvinist (Curtius), a Muslim (Octavius), a Roman Catholic (Coroneus), a Lutheran (Fridericus), a Jew (Salomon), and a pagan (Senamus). Bodin never signed this work and it was not published during his lifetime. The new concept of religion represented by Toralba emphasises the role of reason and natural law, independent of any ecclesiastical allegiance. Here, natural religion is not conceived, as it was earlier, as being preliminary to divine revelation, but rather as a free-standing position, always distinguished from—and at times opposed to—traditional religions. Toralba's universalism and the genealogies of natural religion that he traces distinguish his religion from Judaism even though he relies on a twofold foundation: the biblical history of primitive mankind and natural reason.

Keywords

Jean Bodin – *Colloquium heptaplomeres* – natural religion – tolerance – deism – the Mosaic distinction – Judaism – the religion of the Patriarchs

1 The Enigma of Bodin's Religious Beliefs

From the early modern period onwards, there was a significant philosophical trend of placing the historical religions, with their dogmas, rituals, and sources

of authority, in opposition to the ideal of a pure, simple, and natural religion which was fundamentally inclusive, in contrast to Christianity, Judaism, and Islam, which presented themselves as mutually hostile and exclusive. This ideal was nourished by classical reminiscences: primarily the Florentine Platonic concept of *concordia*, the Stoic concept of a religion of reason (associated in the first instance with Seneca and Pliny), and finally the appeal to *prisca theologia*, which allegedly preceded religious divisions and incorporated their true core.[1] However, at the end of the sixteenth century, during the sanguinary experience of the Wars of Religion, this trend towards natural religion was combined with the recognition of the irreducible plurality of faiths. In these circumstances, the dream of religious unity faded forever, along with the myth of demonstrating the dogmatic truth of a single faith over all the others. This insight regarding insurmountable religious pluralism underpinned the demand for toleration, laying the foundations for the distinction between religious choice—which falls under the province of individual liberty—on the one hand and the sovereignty of the state—which is required to remain neutral and indivisible in the face of theological conflicts—on the other.

It was in this constellation of ideas that the French jurist and political philosopher Jean Bodin (*c.*1530–1596)—whose *République* and political and legal activities had already contributed to the debate—wrote the *Colloquium heptaplomeres de rerum sublimium arcanis abditis* ("Colloquium of the Seven about Secrets of the Sublime"), though he did not publish it and it was instead entrusted to manuscript circulation. The significance of this work remains controversial and at times enigmatic in nature, as is often the case with dialogues in which the author does not appear, but instead conceals himself behind the characters. This ambiguity, as well as the absence of any explicit claim to authorship, has increased the difficulties of interpreting the real aim and meaning of the work.

The *Colloquium* is a conversation between seven highly educated representatives of various religions and worldviews: a supporter of natural religion (Toralba), a Calvinist (Curtius), a Muslim (Octavius), a Roman Catholic (Coroneus), a Lutheran (Fridericus), a Jew (Salomon), and a pagan (Senamus).[2] The dialogue takes place at Coroneus's home in Venice and it is strictly private,

1 See Ernst Feil, *Religio*, 4 vols. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1986–2007), esp. vols. 1 and 2; Jacqueline Lagrée, *La religion naturelle* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1991).

2 Other scholars consider Senamus to be a sceptic (see, e.g., Marion Leathers Kuntz, "Introduction," in Jean Bodin, *Colloquium of the Seven about Secrets of the Sublime*, ed. and trans. Marion Leathers Kuntz [Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1975], xxxviii; Quentin Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought. Volume 2: The Age of Reformation* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978], 246), or as a syncretist (Joseph Lecler, *Toleration and the Reformation*, trans. T.L. Westow [London: Longmans, 1960], 2:181),

albeit frank and free in its argument. In the first three books, the characters comment on numerous subjects relating to metaphysics, cosmology, angelology, demonology, the nature of the intellect, immortality, and resurrection. The Neoplatonic and religious inspiration, with its ideal of a harmonic world ruled by a purely spiritual God, predominates. It is in its three remaining books that the *Colloquium* deals with the matters for which it has long been considered a "forbidden" work: namely, the comparison made between religions in order to establish, if possible, "which is the true religion."

The older manuscripts of the *Colloquium* do not bear the author's name and there are no documents from Bodin's lifetime that clearly refer to its composition. Nevertheless, there has been a whole tradition dating from the beginning of the seventeenth century that attributes the text to him, even if there is a gap of thirty-one years between his death (1596) and the first dated testimony (1627), which is the inscription found in one of the oldest manuscripts that states that it was presented as a gift from Charles Guillemeau to the "libertine" doctor Guy Patin.[3]

The manuscript copies of the *Colloquium* immediately became the object of intensive research among the early modern élites. We no longer have the autograph of the text, which appears to have been permanently lost. In fact, the origin of the very first distribution of the work seems to have occurred in a dispute between Bodin's heirs, who brought the inheritance case before the courts, specifically before Henri de Mesmes (President of the Parlement of Paris, d. 1658).[4] The latter appears to have then taken the opportunity to make manuscript copies of the *Colloquium*, thereby apparently launching the text's initial dissemination among Parisian society.[5] Starting with this copy, the work began to be distributed more widely throughout Europe, although still in manuscript form. There are now more than one hundred copies of the text in European and American public libraries. There were several high-status figures who took an interest in this clandestine work, which could not be printed because of its highly subversive religious and philosophical content. Guy Patin, Jacques Auguste De Thou, Pierre and Jacques Du Puy,

as both traits feature in his arguments. However, overall, Senamus speaks as a representative of the ancient pagan religion.

3 MS Paris, BNF, Lat. 6566.

4 One of the oldest manuscript copies is MS Paris, BNF, Lat. 6564 ("ex Bibliotheca Memmii").

5 On the history of the tradition of the *Colloquium*, see François Berriot's introduction to his edition of the early seventeenth-century anonymous French translation in Jean Bodin, *Colloque entre sept scavans qui sont de differens sentimens, des secrets cachez des choses relevees*, ed. François Berriot with Katharine Davies, Jean Larmat, and Jacques Roger (Geneva: Droz, 1984), which should be complemented with the article by Noel Malcolm quoted below.

Hugo Grotius,[6] Jules Raymond Mazarin, Gabriel Naudé,[7] Marin Mersenne, and John Milton were among the first to read it, while Gottfried Leibniz later planned to prepare a "critical" edition, which failed to materialise, although he managed to annotate it, comparing several copies that he had at his disposal in Wolfenbüttel in the library of the Prince of Braunschweig-Lüneburg.[8] After an extended search, Queen Christina of Sweden[9] was finally able to obtain a copy of the dialogue (now Codex "Reginensis" in the Vatican Library), as did Prince Eugene of Savoy and his aide Georg Wilhelm Hohendorf (both copies of which are preserved in the Hofbibliothek in Vienna, now the Austrian National Library). Even Henry Oldenburg of the Royal Society secured a copy and tasked the leader of the Dutch Collegiants, Adam Boreel, with composing a refutation.[10] This refutation, entitled *Jesus Nazarenus legislator*, is preserved in volumes 12, 13, 14, and 15 of the Boyle Papers held at the Royal Society.[11]

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6 Grotius had wanted to buy a copy of the *Colloquium* since 1632, as the text contained the anti-Christian arguments that he wanted to counter in the new edition of *De veritate religionis christianae* that he was preparing. In a letter to Jean Descordes (Cordesius), who owned a manuscript copy of the *Colloquium*, Grotius identifies Bodin as the author. See Grotius, *Epistolae quotquot reperiri potuerunt* (Amsterdam, 1687), 106b, 127a. Grotius eventually managed to read the manuscript in 1634.

7 When Gabriel Naudé mentioned Bodin in his *Apologie pour tous les grands personnages qui ont esté faussement soupçonnez de magie* (Paris, 1625), he had not yet read the *Colloquium*; the work would later be included in his *Bibliographia politica* (Paris, 1633), 48: "Ioannes Bodinus composito sed nondum edito (atque vtinam usque edatur) de rerum sublimium arcanis ingenti volumine."

8 See MS Wolfenbüttel, Herzog August Bibliothek, Extr. 89.1. The title page reads: "Johannis Bodini / Colloquium Heptaplomeres / de / abditis rerum sublimium arcanis / cum / Variantibus Lectionibus / C C academiae Iuliae / seu Conringii, Thomasii, Leibnitii / Molani Kochii / et Scholiis / e Schedis / Polycarpi Leyseri, Poes. Prof. Publ. / et Ordinarii in Academia Helms. / M.DCCXXVII." On Leibniz's interest in the *Colloquium,* see Stefano di Bella, "*Harmonia ex contrariis.* Leibniz lettore dell'*Heptaplomeres* di Jean Bodin, tra cristianesimo, razionalismo e islam," *Rinascimento* 44 (2004): 409–40.

9 See Susanna Åkerman, "Christina Alexandra's Search for Clandestine Manuscripts," in *Jean Bodins Colloquium heptaplomeres*, ed. Günter Gawlick and Friedrich Niewöhner (Wiesbaden: Harrasowitz, 1996), 153–64.

10 Henry Oldenburg to Samuel Hartlib, Paris, 27 August 1659, in Oldenburg, *The Correspondence of Henry Oldenburg*, vol. 1, ed. and trans. Alfred Rupert Hall and Marie Boas Hall (London: Taylor and Francis, 1961), 307.

11 See Richard H. Popkin, "The Role of Jewish Anti-Christian Arguments in the Rise of Scepticism," in *New Perspectives on Renaissance Thought: Essays in the History of Science, Education, and Philosophy in Memory of Charles B. Schmitt*, ed. John Henry and Sarah Hutton (London: Duckworth, 1990), 5–6. See also Popkin, "Could Spinoza Have Known Bodin's *Colloquium heptaplomeres*?", *Philosophia* 16 (1986): 307–14; Popkin, "A Note on the Dispersion of Bodin's Dialogues in England, Holland and Germany," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 49 (1988): 157–60.

Almost all the seventeenth-century accounts are united in attributing the *Colloquium* to Bodin, and this ascription has recently been re-examined and confirmed through the philological arguments presented by Noel Malcolm.[12] In the *république des lettres*, a rumour spread quite rapidly throughout learned circles to the effect that its author was not in fact a Christian, but a crypto-Jew (as Patin strongly believed),[13] or of no religion at all (in Naudé's words, which were reported to Patin and recounted by Hackenberg, "neither Jew nor Christian nor Turk"). One of the first figures to spread the rumour that Bodin had "died a Jew, without mentioning Jesus Christ" was indeed a personal friend of his, Jacques Gillot, who reported it in a letter to Joseph Scaliger.[14] The assessment offered by Grotius, who was in contact with the same Parisian circles, is more balanced, and despite his emphasis on the fact that Bodin was familiar with Judaism "due to his contacts with the rabbis themselves," he does not confirm that he had any allegiance to it. Grotius also indicates that in the field of Jewish studies, Bodin was not as erudite as he wanted to appear; indeed, he often had to rely on inaccurate quotations.[15] At the end of the seventeenth century, however, Bodin's supposed predilection for the Jewish religion became almost an accepted belief among scholars; for this reason, he was violently condemned by Pierre-Daniel Huet, who uncovered "all of the poison of his Judaism" in the *Colloquium*, comparing Bodin to Spinoza and Hobbes for his impiety. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, all the elements relating to the question of Bodin's religious opinions and his more or less secret adherence to Judaism were discussed in a highly balanced manner by Pierre Bayle, and although Bayle did not manage to come to a conclusion on this delicate matter, he nevertheless did react to the overly eulogistic judgements offered by Naudé, whom he accused of "violent enthusiasm." It appears, however, that Bayle was not directly acquainted with the text of the *Colloquium*, but rather that he knew about it through the work of the Lutheran theologian Johann Diecmann.[16]

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12 Noel Malcolm, "Jean Bodin and the Authorship of the *Colloquium heptaplomeres*," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 69 (2006): 95–150.

13 According to Berriot ("Introduction," xxix), in 1662 and 1673, Herman Conring also referred to Bodin's alleged crypto-Judaism. A great deal of information about the early diffusion of the *Colloquium* is contained in the prefatory material to the manuscript copy in MS Wolfenbüttel, Herzog August Bibliothek, Helmstedt 924, fols. 2v–6v.

14 See Jacques Gillot in Joseph Juste Scaliger, *Epistres françoises des personnages illustres et doctes à Mons. Joseph Juste de la Scala* (Harderwijk, 1624), 438–40.

15 See n. 4 above.

16 See "Bodin," in Pierre Bayle, *Dictionnaire historique et critique*, 5th rev. ed. (Amsterdam, 1740), 1:591–93. This entry of the *Dictionary* collects as much information on Bodin's religious ideas as was available at the end of the seventeenth century.

In his doctoral thesis (*De naturalismo, tum maxime Jo. Bodini, ex opere ejus manuscripto anekdoto, de abditis rerum sublimium arcanis, schediasma inaugurale* [Lipsiae, 1684]),[17] Johann Diecmann presents long passages taken from book 4 of Bodin's text. Diecmann also associates Bodin with Hobbes and Spinoza, identifying all three as proponents of natural religion, which is neither divine nor revealed. Indeed, he sees Toralba as Bodin's spokesperson, reproaching him for what, in his eyes, are two other serious errors: denying the divine nature of Christ and failing to grasp the seriousness of Adam's fall. Diecmann, in fact, establishes the thesis of Bodin's radical unbelief, asserting that after shifting from Catholicism to Calvinism, he hesitated between Judaism and "naturalism" (in the sense of the sufficiency of natural religion), and that he ultimately died in religious indifference. The issue of Bodin's beliefs is thus evidently controversial, and the *Colloquium* turns out to be an important key to this matter, even if its meaning also requires an accurate interpretation. The complete text of the work was eventually published by Ludwig Noack in 1857, albeit in an uncritical form.[18]

What is certain is that Bodin, both in the *République* and in the *Colloquium*, rejected atheism, for both philosophical and political reasons. God, although different from the divinity of positive religions, is still the prime mover, alone infinite and eternal, governor of the world and judge who rewards mankind, even if the idea of infinite punishment is rejected for legal reasons (no finite sin deserves an infinite penalty). Besides being an error, atheism is also a danger, as it is disruptive to civil and social bonds. Moreover, unity of religion would be helpful to the unity of the state. Bodin, however, rejects the use of violence in this matter and thinks that the sovereign should accept the existence of different religions if intolerance is revealed to be more harmful to the peace of the Commonwealth than any policy of religious toleration.

As a matter of fact, Bodin officially stated that he was a Catholic and had occasional connections to the French Catholic political party (*la Ligue catholique*). Nevertheless, he was considered suspect by Roman theologians. In 1592, the Holy Office condemned the *République*, followed in 1594 by the *Demonomania*, while the *Methodus* appeared on the "Index librorum prohibitorum" in 1596.

17 Bayle reviewed this work in his periodical *Nouvelles de la République des Lettres* (June 1684), collected in vol. 1 of Pierre Bayle, *Œuvres diverses* (La Haye, 1727), 65–67.

18 Jean Bodin, *Colloquium heptaplomeres de rerum sublimium arcanis. E codicibus manuscriptis Bibliothecae Academicae Gissensis cum varia lectione aliorum apographorum nunc primum typis describendum curavit Ludovicus Noack*, ed. Ludwig Noack (Suerini Megaloburgensium, 1857; repr. Hildesheim and New York: Olms, 1970). This article will quote from this edition, abbreviated as B, and from the English translation by Marion Leathers Daniels Kuntz (see n. 2 above), abbreviated as K.

During the same period, the Jesuit Antonio Possevino published an extremely violent pamphlet (his *Judicium*) opposing Machiavelli, the Protestant Philippe Du Plessis-Mornay, and Bodin. He had not read the *Colloquium*, but he had carefully examined the whole of Bodin's published works, accusing the *République* in particular of promoting Protestant heresy and opening the way to atheism. This was a serious misunderstanding; in fact, Possevin opposed the modern and secular conception of sovereignty that Bodin had explicitly put forth against the popish pretentions of *potestas indirecta* over civil power.

Despite these attacks, Bodin emerged unscathed from an investigation ordered by the lieutenant of Laon at the request of the Catholic League, whose leaders had raised a complaint against him with the queen mother, Catherine de Medici. Nevertheless, during the unrest that occurred in the town, which had fallen into the hands of the Catholic League after the assassination of Henri de Guise, he accepted the new regime, without any apparent difficulty. In reality, Bodin was the typical *politique* and, when engaging in political discussions, with all the compromises necessary in the troubled period of the religious wars, he argued in support of the modern sovereignty of the state, a theory that he would first set out clearly in the *République*. His final years were almost exclusively dedicated to the production of new works, in particular the *Colloquium heptaplomeres*, which appears to have been composed around 1593,[19] and the *Universae naturae theatrum*, which was published in 1596. Bodin ended his life as a victim of the plague in Laon in 1596, after the Bourbon king Henry IV had succeeded to the throne.

2 A Turn in the History of Religious Conversations

What made Bodin's real religious beliefs especially suspect was the ideas developed in the *Colloquium heptaplomeres* and especially in books 4 to 6. The main issue to be debated in this second half of the work is clearly stated by Toralba: "What is the true religion?" The issue, he adds, is complicated "in such a variety of different laws and religions"; namely, in the situation of religious pluralism that characterises modernity (B 125/K 163).[20]

19 The reason for this date depends on the inscription placed at the end of many manuscript copies, "H. E. J. B. A. S. A. Æ. LXIII," which stands for "Haec ego Johannes Bodinus Andegavensis scripsi anno aetatis LXIII," although this reading is controversial. Noel Malcolm argues that the text was at least written after January 1590 (Malcolm, "Jean Bodin," 99).

20 For an overall interpretation of this work, see at least Gawlick and Niewöhner, *Bodins* Colloquium; Ralph Häfner, ed., *Bodinus Polymeres. Studien zu Jean Bodins Spätwerk*

In order to address this situation, Bodin takes up the traditional genre of religious conversation, while simultaneously breaking radically with it.[21] In comparison with those works that might be considered the leading examples of this tradition (such as the *Dialogue between a Philosopher, a Jew, and a Christian* by Peter Abelard [1079–1142] in the Christian world, or *The Kuzari* by Judah ha-Levi [1086–1041] in the Jewish world),[22] the perspective adopted by the *Colloquium* is considerably broader, following the fracturing of the Christian world caused by the Reformation. Christianity is no longer represented by a single figure, but by a plethora of faces; the pagan is reintroduced onto the stage of religious debate, having been excluded or marginalised from the preceding dialogues. Furthermore, the author of the *Colloquium* specifically refuses to make a choice between the rival options, unlike Abelard, who makes a firm decision in favour of Christianity, or the king of the Khazars, who prefers Judaism. Instead of the pure "philosopher" portrayed by Abelard, Bodin moreover introduces a new character, Toralba, who represents both philosophical reason and also a religion that is different from all of the others: "natural religion." This is the first major innovation in relation to the previous religious dialogues. This new concept of religion emphasises the

(Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1999); Andrea Suggi, *Sovranità e armonia. La tolleranza religiosa nel* Colloquium heptaplomeres *di Jean Bodin* (Rome: Storia e Letteratura, 2005).

21 As far as I know, there is no monograph that compares the authors of religious conversations in the *longue durée* from Abelard to Bodin. What is proposed in this section is only the main lines of a comparison with Bodin. For a very short overview that does not include Bodin, see Giovanni Casadio, "Historicizing and Translating Religion," in *The Oxford Handbook of the Study of Religion*, ed. Michael Stausberg and Steven Engler (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 34–51, esp. 39–41. However, there are some valuable contributions on specific authors, particularly medieval authors. Cf. Eusebio Colomer, *Nikolaus von Kues (1464) und Ramon Llull (1316): Ihre Begegnung mit den nichtchristlichen Religionen* (Trier: Paulinus-Verlag, 1995) and Matthias Lutz-Bachmann and Alexander Fidora, eds., *Juden, Christen und Muslime: Religionsdialoge im Mittelalter* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2004), with articles on Abelard, Llull, and Cues; Knut M. Stünkel, *Una sit religio: Religionsbegriffe und Begriffstopologien bei Cusanus, Llull und Maimonides* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2013).

22 Peter Abelard, *Collationes. Dialogus inter philosophum, Iudaeum et Christianum*, ed. and trans. John Marenbon and Giovanni Orlandi (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001); Judah Ha-Levi, *The Kuzari: In Defense of the Despised Faith*, trans. and annot. N. Daniel Korobkin (Jerusalem: Feldheim Publishers, 2009). On this work, see now Ehud Krinis, *Judah Halevi's Fideistic Scepticism in the* Kuzari (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2020). See also Friedrich Niewöhner, "Dialoge, die nicht stattgefunden haben: Judah ha-Levi und Peter Abailard," in *Die philosophische Aktualität der jüdischen Tradition*, ed. Werner Stegmaier (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2000), 225–48. More generally, see Bernard Lewis and Friedrich Niewöhner, eds., *Religionsgespräche im Mittelalter* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1992).

role of reason and natural law, independent of any ecclesiastical allegiance. Natural religion is not conceived, as before, as being preliminary to divine revelation (as in Aquinas's famous philosophical *praeambula fidei*), but rather as a free-standing position, always distinguished from, and at times opposed to traditional religions.

Another distinctive characteristic of the *Colloquium* is its refusal to embrace an "inclusive" model, according to which one of the established monotheisms would ultimately overcome, incorporate, or subordinate the others. In this, the *Colloquium* might be compared to the *Book of the Gentile and the Three Wise Men* by Ramon Llull (1235–1315), in which the choice made by the pagan, who is invited to choose from the three competing monotheisms, is not revealed, thus creating a degree of suspense, although the work continually expresses the hope of achieving a single shared faith.[23] By contrast, Bodin completely abandons this goal, not only declaring that the issue of the true religion is impossible to answer, but also giving up any hope of reconciliation among the various faiths. At the end of the *Colloquium*, the initial issue remains unanswered and the impossibility of deciding between so many different faiths is openly stated.

In the breadth of its religious horizons and its awareness of the dangers posed to civil peace by the conflict between religions, the *Colloquium* may be compared to Nicholas of Cusa's *De pace fidei*, which was drafted, not coincidentally, in 1453, the year of the Turkish conquest of Constantinople. Nineteen different characters confront one another in the discussion, including a Hindu, a Syrian, a Chaldean, a Scythian, a Persian, a Tartar, an Armenian, and so on. Even this work is infused with a universalist, or rationalist, spirit. Indeed, it is the Logos itself that adjudicates the discussion between the different religions, with an obvious reference to the philosophy of Christian Neoplatonism, of which the author was an adherent. *De pace fidei* constitutes a genuine example of the "inclusive" Christian monotheism that Bodin clearly wishes to avoid and which he no longer considers to be justified. The discussion between the different characters moderated by Nicholas of Cusa actually concludes by affirming "one orthodox faith,"[24] not only because "there is only one religion even in the

23 Ramon Llull, *Llibre del gentil e dels tres savis*, ed. Antoni Bonner (Palma de Mallorca: Patronat Ramón Llull, 1993). For a comparison with Bodin's *Colloquium*, see Dominique de Courcelles, "Pensée lullienne et *Colloquium heptaplomeres*," in Häfner, *Bodinus Polymeres*, 99–118.

24 Nicolaus Cusanus (De Cusa), *De pace fidei cum epistula ad Ioannem de Segobia*, ed. R. Klibansky and R. Bascour (London: Warburg Institute, 1956), 10.

midst of a variety of rituals"[25] (all religions being reducible to a single one), but also because the truth of this potentially universal religion would amount to the truth of Christianity. In *De pace fidei*, the possibility of "natural" religion is not determinant, or, more accurately, it is absorbed as a preliminary stage, as an "implicit" faith, into Christian truth.

Bodin explicitly declares this ideal of a dogmatic concord among religions to be unachievable. In the debate, he does not resort either to the double nature (philosophical and theological) of Logos, as in Nicolas of Cusa, or to the humanist and Renaissance idea of *prisca sapientia* involving a kind of ecumenicity or irenicism that conflated old philosophies and ancient religious wisdom (including Kabbalah, Arab mysticism, pagan hermeticism, Zoroastrianism, and so on) with Christianity into one perennial philosophy or religion, as Pico and Ficino attempted.[26] In Bodin's work, the dream of a possible religious unification clashes against the irreducible variety of different religions that are in competition and conflict with each other. Not even Toralba's "natural religion" can work as a common basis or common denominator for different historical faiths. The final chorus intoned by Coronaeus, which is "arranged not in common diatonics or chromatics, but in enharmonics with a certain, more divine modulation" (B 358/K 471), expresses the view that the only possible "harmony" is based on the acknowledgement of differences being not only necessary, but also good and pleasant. If there is "harmony," it is in the sense of a coexistence between different and irreducible religions that live peacefully in the same society, with each giving up any hope of converting the others or attempting any reunion. Even Toralba fails to convince the other characters of the primacy and sufficiency of natural religion.

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25 De Cusa, *De pace fidei*, 7. For the general topic of variety of rites in the context of debates on toleration, see John Christian Laursen, ed., *Religious Toleration. "The Variety of Rites" from Cyrus to Defoe* (St. Martin Press: New York: St. Martin Press, 1999), and for Cusanus in particular, see Cary J. Nederman's chapter in this work, "*Natio* and the 'Variety of Rites': Foundations of Religious Toleration in Nicholas of Cusa," 59–74.

26 Kuntz ("Introduction," xlvii–lvii) stresses the connections between the *Colloquium* and Florentine Platonism, which are obvious in the first half of the work in the discussions of metaphysics and natural philosophy. However, in the second half (the debate on religious issues), there is no hint towards the tradition of *prisca sapientia* or *perennis philosophia*. This tradition was permeated with Hermeticism, but Hermes Trismegistus is mentioned only three times in the *Colloquium*, and never in this connection. Ficino is never quoted, while Giovanni Pico is recalled for other topics: see B 92/K 119 (on animated stars); B 97/K 126 (on the world soul as the moon); B 217/K 282 (along with Giovan Francesco Pico, on demonology); and B 286/K 378 (on the Trinity). Strangely enough, Kuntz states that "the core of the *Colloquium* is also hermetic" ("Introduction," liv) and that "the references to Hermes and the Cabala in the *Colloquium* are too numerous to cite" (lv).

For the first time in European intellectual history, the existence of pluralism in religious matters is clearly stated to be inevitable, not an evil to be corrected. With the exception of atheism, which is entirely rejected, all the other religious positions are debated, but none of them can be patently demonstrated either to be true or to be rejected as false. The question posed by Toralba at the beginning of the religious debate ("What is the true religion?") remains unanswered. After a long and at times polemical exchange in which each man defends his own faith and criticises the others, the seven characters join together in considering the issue of religious "truth" unworthy of further efforts; they agree that it is better to seek for moral perfection than for dogmatic orthodoxy, and finally state mutual and peaceful toleration to be a supreme value. They respect one another as human beings and embrace each other in brotherly love, deciding to stop quarrelling about their respective beliefs. Moral perfection can be pursued independently of any particular religious allegiance, as this ideal is widely shared by the whole of humanity. In the public sphere, the aim of religious concord is superseded by the search for an ordinary civil peace, in which the followers of all religions can enjoy the same rights and practise their own beliefs and rituals in full freedom.

Before reaching these innovative conclusions, the long debate depicts the greatest variety of religious beliefs that could have been imagined in this period. The outcome of the multiple and often tight exchanges is that the opinions held by certain characters ultimately refute or neutralise those expressed by the others. What one speaker considers to be authentic, sacred, and indispensable, another views as superfluous, unfounded, and sometimes offensive, to the extent that the reader has the impression of being faced with an endless conflict in which each interlocutor, imprisoned by his own dogmatism, remains convinced of its exclusive truth, although he is unable to persuade the others of it. The situation appears to be especially difficult for Christianity, not only because it has been internally torn apart (there are continual polemics between the Catholic, the Lutheran, and the Calvinist), but also because the most difficult and controversial Christian dogmas (the Trinity, the incarnation, original sin, and the entire theology of redemption) are highly vulnerable to the criticisms of more inflexible monotheisms, such as those represented by Salomon (the Jew) and Octavius (the Muslim). A clear rehabilitation of free will, which is promoted by Salomon, Toralba, and other characters, highlights the author's humanist and legal formation. Various kinds of predestination proclaimed by Christian theologians, the pessimistic depiction of original sin with its severe consequences, and the narrow exclusivism preached by the churches clash with the principle of individual responsibility and with the humanist eulogy of human capabilities.

For these reasons, Judaism plays an important role in the debate that takes place in the *Colloquium* (which is what led contemporaries and some modern scholars to consider the author a crypto-Judaiser). Therefore, we will begin the analysis of the text with the arguments that are supported by Salomon and—often in agreement with him—by Toralba.

3 Judaism and Natural Religion

Bodin's *Heptaplomeres* thus subjected Christianity to a great deal of questioning, and this offensive questioning is one of the reasons why it had to remain unpublished. The other is that the two most "heterodox" characters (for the Christian culture of the time)—that is, Salomon the Jew and Toralba the supporter of "natural religion"—seem to come closer to the standards set for representing the "true" religion, which should be "the best and the oldest." This agreement is significant, but at the same time, it needs qualification, as the cleavage between the two different perspectives is no less significant than their convergence on many points. Moreover, Toralba's natural religion is not a kind of abstract deism, nor is Salomon's Judaism entirely accepted by his interlocutor.

The proximity between Toralba and Salomon was aptly stressed by Richard Popkin, and—in more depth—by Paul Rose. Both scholars, particularly the latter,[27] portrayed Bodin as a Judaiser, highlighting the close continuity between Salomon's Judaism and Toralba's natural religion and arguing for the tight complementarity of their approaches. To give only one obvious example, the Mosaic Decalogue is supposed to complete and renew the precepts of natural law. One should especially note the passages in which the Mosaic Law is presented (under the influence of Philo of Alexandria) as a recasting of the law of nature, rendered necessary by mankind's deafness to God's commandments

27 See Paul L. Rose, *Bodin and the Great God of Nature: The Moral and Religious Universe of a Judaiser* (Geneva: Droz, 1980). Cf. also Georg Roellenbleck, *Offenbarung: Natur und jüdische Ueberlieferung bei Jean Bodin* (Gütersloh: G Mohn, 1964), for whom the opinions of Salomon the Jew and Toralba are the most significant; Maryanne Cline Horowitz, "Bodin and Judaism," *Il pensiero politico* 30 (1997): 201–15; François Berriot, "Le monothéisme judaïsant et la religion naturelle. Jean Bodin," in François Berriot, *Athéismes et athéistes au XVI^e siècle en France* (Paris: Cerf, 1984), 2:775–97; Shlomo Pines, "The Jewish Religion after the Destruction of the Temple and State: The Views of Bodin and Spinoza," in *Studies in Jewish Religion and Intellectual History*, ed. Siegfried Stein and Raphael Roewe (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1979); Gianni Paganini, "Da Jean Bodin a John Selden: Il modello noachide della Repubblica delle Lettere," in *Les premiers siècles de la République européenne des lettres*, ed. Marc Fumaroli (Paris: Alain Baudry, 2005), 197–234.

or by their hastening into sin (B 147/K 191). Both Salomon and Toralba agree on this point (B 172/K 226).

Drawing conclusions from this and similar points, Rose states that Bodin was a crypto-Judaiser who over the years gradually intensified his commitment to Judaism. Furthermore, Horowitz remarked that the Marrano pattern (the behaviour of a Jew who had officially converted to Christianity, but who continued to practise his own faith in private) could easily apply to Bodin and underpin his idea of tolerance.[28] In fact, the necessity of dissimulation, the danger of debating about religion in public, and numerous considerations about the persecution of the Jews are extensively dealt with in the *Colloquium* and unquestionably fit within the particular pattern of a hidden Judaiser. Moreover, Rose points out that Salomon, and Toralba with him, are the instigators of several attacks on the Christian religion: for example, the violent anti-Trinitarian and anti-Christological polemic is clearly supported by Jewish motifs. Hence, the contributions made by the character of Salomon are accorded a prominent position and a truly exceptional degree of space in comparison with the other characters, with perhaps Toralba as the only exception. Rose correctly underlined the fact that in Bodin's culture, there was a greater continuity between natural and revealed law, between God and nature, than what we now imagine to be the case after the rupture represented by the Enlightenment.

Nevertheless, even Rose is obliged to concede that not even Judaism constitutes the "true religion" sought in the *Colloquium* and that Bodin's philo-Semitic inclinations would have led him not to Judaism *stricto sensu*, but "to a *vera religio* that combined natural religion and prophetic revelation, a religion both natural and revealed, the true religion of the great God of nature."[29] As we shall see, the relationship and interplay between Salomon and Toralba amount to something more and different from covert Judaism, and this is another major novelty in comparison with the Marrano figure of a crypto-Judaiser. Even if they agree on many points of the Hebrew religion (for example, monotheism, the Decalogue, free will, and so on) and take sides together against many Christian dogmas, Salomon's and Toralba's viewpoints on the dynamic and perspective of Judaism remain largely different. Their "ideal" genealogies only partly overlap, driving in diverging directions.

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28 Cf. Maryanne Cline Horowitz, "Bodin's Religion Reconsidered: The Marrano as Role Model," in *Proceedings of the Western Society for French History* 11 (1984): 36–46.

29 See Rose, *Bodin and the Great God*, 148, where he also states: "Its civil character therefore, precluded Judaism as much as Catholicism from being that essentially pure *vera religio* sought after by Bodin."

4 The Twofold Foundation of Natural Religion

In order to understand Toralba's position and its complex relationship to that of Salomon, it must first be stressed that "natural religion" rests on a twofold foundation that is both rational and biblical. Along with the pagan Senamus, Toralba states that true religion should be both "optima" and "antiquissima" (B 133/K 173). Since the *Methodus* (first edition 1566), Bodin had rejected the thesis of the eternity of the world and had instead claimed that it had been created by God. Therefore, assisted by Salomon, Toralba outlines a sort of natural history of religion that is factually identical with the religion of Adam (or Abel) and its descendants up to Noah. Toralba takes the book of Genesis to be a historical document about the very origins of humanity. This religion of the ancestors and patriarchs is revealed to be a true "religio naturae," which is "optima" and at the same time "simplicissima." It is obviously antecedent to the Mosaic Law and the election of a particular people, such as Israel, even if Salomon, following in the footsteps of Abraham ibn Ezra, attempts to present the Decalogue as a "summary" (*epitome*) and renewal of natural law:

> Abraham Aben Esra considered this decalogue to be the epitome of natural law. Since the latter seemed to be obliterated and violated by the great sins and crimes if men, the best and greatest God, having pity on the ruin of man, renewed the laws and prohibitions of nature with solemn covenant in the greatest assemblies of His people and incised on some stones tablets with the clang of trumpets, with thunder, lightning and flames striking on Mount Horeb even to the midst of the heaven. (B 147/K 191)

Even if the history of his natural religion is confirmed by the historical witness of the Bible, in Toralba's view, the religion of nature and reason is both antecedent to and independent from the Mosaic revelation. The former was inscribed by God into the human mind before being engraved on tablets. The essence of natural religion consists of monotheism and a rejection of idolatry, along with pure and simple adoration of God as the eternal creator and keeper of the universe. This is one of Toralba's most concise professions of faith:

> Thence it is certain that the best and most ancient religion of all was implanted in the human minds with right reason by eternal God, and this religion proposes the one eternal God, who is most alien to every contact of bodies, is the founder and preserver of all things; and since He is the best and the highest, supreme worship is due to Him. (B 142/K 185)

In Toralba's account, natural religion is based as much on the appeal to reason as on a universalist reading of the origins of humanity. Wishing to disassociate himself from the overly suspect and controversial arguments, such as miracles, prophecies, and oracles, on which every religion, including false religions, relies, Toralba focuses on two parallel lines of argument: one based on reason and the other pointing out the antiquity of its origins. In this, he agrees with Salomon that one should pursue the quest for the most ancient religion back to its very beginning, which is represented by humanity's biblical ancestors. From Adam or Abel until Noah and Abraham, Toralba says, an extremely pure—and at the same time very simple and authentic—form of religion was practised, consisting of the adoration of a single immaterial deity and in practice entirely reduced to following "the pure worship of God and laws of nature" (B 142/K 185). Here, there arises a first important contrast with Salomon. According to Toralba, it is difficult to understand what the purpose of "the rituals and the ceremonies of Moses" (B 143/K 186) might be, as the content of the "covenant" stipulated with Moses and engraved on tablets is nothing but "the very law of nature" (B 147/K 192), with the sole exception of the fourth precept concerning the observance of the Sabbath, which can only be dictated by positive law. There is no need to resort to revelation in order to conceive of God as a unique and spiritual entity, rejecting any form of idolatry, and of natural law as being sufficient to prescribe what is commanded in the second part of the Decalogue.

In sum, both natural religion and natural law spring from the dictate of reason, and Toralba describes these dictates as innate and spontaneous notions, neither learnt nor acquired, but engraved by God himself in human understanding (B 147/K 192). This conviction is not weakened, but rather endorsed by the history of the biblical patriarchs, who lived genuinely and in accordance with this "natural law." Once again, Toralba, at the end of an extended Christological discussion whose thrust is to deny that Christ was the Messiah, emphasises the fact that natural law rests on a twofold foundation, consisting of "right reason" which is depicted as the best, most stable, and most ancient thing imaginable and as the means by which "the supreme law of nature [is] planted in men's minds by immortal God" on the one hand and the example of those who "lived by that law and religion of nature," such as "Abel, Seth, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob" on the other. "I see"—Toralba says—"that no religion is better or more ancient than this" (B 257/K 337). Indeed, Toralba frequently eulogises "reason" as a "divine light, innate to the mind of each man," which "sees, feels, and judges that which is right, that which is wrong, that

which is true, that which is false" (B 173/K 359). At the same time, he does not neglect the "historical" confirmation that can be found in the examples of the first human generations, as the book of Genesis describes them.

Toralba returns to this dual rational and biblical foundation in his final contribution to the dialogue, when, after listing the numerous controversies rending the great religions, he contrastingly presents strong arguments for the authority, uniformity, and antiquity of natural religion. This pure and original religion was "imprinted by the immortal God in the minds of all" and was also supported by the "heroes most dear to God" ("Deo carissimi heroes"). Next, there follows, once again, the genealogy of the ancestors and patriarchs already mentioned: Abel, Enoch, Lot, Seth, Noah, Job, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (B 351–352/K 462). In comparison with this natural religion, in Toralba's opinion, the Mosaic Law no longer acts as the privileged channel of religious experience. In fact, Moses's legislation incorporates many ritual and political features whose relevance is exclusively limited to the people of Israel, and Toralba does not think that these meticulous prescriptions should involve any privileged status. Therefore, Toralba believes that natural religion is sufficient to obtain salvation. Indeed, he sides with a doctrine that Christian theologians of all denominations would have considered to be evidence of a shameful Pelagianism (B 172/K 225). Against the Pauline quotation offered by Curtius, who contrasts law with the grace given by Jesus Christ (B 311/K 410), both the Jew and the Muslim argue over the benefits deriving from obedience to a law guaranteed by God (respectively, that of Moses and the Koran), while Toralba, along with Senamus, moves considerably further away from any confessional assumption, suggesting that neither revealed law nor faith in Christ are necessary for salvation. Toralba particularly emphasises the excellent virtues of the ancient philosophers and denies that they could have been condemned to hell (B 320/K 421). This is the clearest statement of the "secular" and humanist thesis inspired by late Renaissance philosophy.

In response to the idea that natural law and religion would be sufficient to be saved, without the necessity of observing "Moses' rites and ceremonies" (what Diecmann would call Bodin's "naturalism"), Salomon is led to distinguish between the "moral," "ritual," and "political" aspects of the Mosaic Law. As Giuseppe Veltri has demonstrated, this kind of tripartition dates back at least to Aquinas, who, drawing on Deut 7:11, distinguished between "moral precepts," "ceremonial precepts," and "judicial precepts," these latter relating to determinations of the justice to be maintained among men. Joseph Albo, who was involved in the so-called Disputation of Tortosa, quoted the opinion of a "Christian scholar" regarding the same partition. Jean Bodin, dividing the "divine law" into three branches ("lex moralis, secunda ritualis, tertia

politica"), apparently depended on the same tradition.[30] In the *Colloquium*, Salomon claims that the first aspect, morals, should be chosen in preference to the others. In turn, the moral law may be divided into one part that is devoted to divine worship (the first four commandments) and another that describes mutual obligations between men (the remaining six commandments). The *lex politica* contains the prescriptions that order common, everyday life, while the *lex ritualis* is mainly concerned with ceremonies and sacrifices. Still according to Salomon, the role played by sacrifices should be significantly devalued in favour of the observance of morality. The Jew thus retraces a view that goes back to the teaching of the prophets, in whose opinion a pure heart is more pleasing to God than the smoke of sacrificed animals (B 142–45/K 186–88).

At the end of this part of the debate, a question arises: Was this "purified" and, so to say, "enlightened" version of the Jewish religion enough to persuade Toralba that Judaism could be the best expression, or the best development, of the true original religion?

5 The Decalogue and Natural Law

This point is crucial, as the distinction Salomon draws only partially resolves the difficulty raised by Toralba and Senamus regarding the necessity of a specific regulation, such as the Mosaic Law, besides the law of nature. Regarding monotheism, even the Muslim Octavius is able, for his part, to offer strong reasons for arguing that his religion is as uncompromising as Judaism—and undoubtedly more rigorous than Christianity—regarding the profession of divine unity. He also responds to the customary accusations interpreting Islam as a sensual religion, due to its overly physical conception of paradise, and instead advances a spiritual reading that is essentially comprised of the worship of a single God. Therefore, Salomon is not the only character who could claim proximity to pure and original monotheism.

All of this provides Toralba with the opportunity to make a further clarification in support of natural law, which this time he sets against all the revealed religions, including Mosaic revelation:

> If true religion is contained in the pure worship of eternal God, I believe the law of nature is sufficient for man's salvation. We see that the oldest leaders and parents of the human race had no other religion. They left

30 Giuseppe Veltri, *Alienated Wisdom: Enquiry into Jewish Philosophy and Scepticism*, Studies and Texts in Scepticism 3 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018), 70–74.

> the memory of the golden age to posterity, not taught, but wrought, not instituted, but imbued by nature herself. [...] Since these things are so, why do Jews, Christians, Saracens, and Pagans need so many rites and superstitions? Indeed I think that this religion is the oldest and the best of all. (B 172–73/K 225–26)

In support of his thesis, Toralba quotes Cicero regarding the doctrine of living according to nature and Paul referring to nations that, being free from law, live legally in accordance with nature herself (Rom 2:12–15). The meditative silence that follows these binding declarations is broken only by Salomon, who, a little surprisingly, announces that he agrees with Toralba, despite this polemical attack: "My belief, Toralba, is entirely in agreement with yours, namely that all things necessary for salvation are contained fully in the laws of Nature, according to which Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Job, Isaac and Jacob lived" (B 172/K 226).

The agreement, however, is only partial, and it is more apparent than substantial. Recalling Maimonides's doctrine, Salomon again steps in to defend Hebrew rituals (and in particular that of circumcision), not because they are intrinsically necessary for salvation, but because they reinforce the identity of the Hebrew people, preventing them from merging with the idolaters. Salomon also argues for the necessity of rites by giving the example of Roman history, which is permeated with ceremonies of a simultaneously civil and religious nature. As he says, "I am persuaded that no religion can exist completely without rites and ceremonies" (B 173/K 226). Toralba's argument that one should be content with a stripped-down religion is rejected by the suggestion that this kind of religion would be too "heroic" to reach a large audience. The Sabbath festival itself is claimed to have been directly established by God, and this ought to constitute sufficient reason for its sanctity not to be questioned. Seeking out the reasons would be vain curiosity and would drive men towards unbelief, as Salomon says. Other characters step into the debate to argue for the practical necessity of rites, and Toralba himself ultimately seems to take an intermediate position, rejecting both extremes: "Those who press the people with a multitude of rites turn religion into superstition: however, those who completely remove all rites overturn all religions from the roots" (B 174/K 228).

Despite their mutual appreciation of the moral law contained in the Decalogue and the compromise they reach regarding rites, one major issue is still at stake between Salomon and Toralba: What is the relationship between the universality of natural law and the particularity of a positive religion such as Judaism? The latter involves political allegiance alongside the idea of a unique people that has been elected by God and segregated from the other

peoples. This crucial question is raised by Toralba, who takes advantage of another biblical example to question Jewish exclusivism. He evokes the example of Job (one of his preferred "heroes"), whom he does not regard as a Jew but as an "Arab," predating Moses, and accordingly treats him as a representative of the "natural religion." Job did not have to wait for the coming of Moses, Christ, or Muhammad in order to behave correctly towards men or God. It was enough to him to follow the law of nature. After Salomon has justified the law of Moses as a renewal of the law of nature and Octavius and Curtius have advanced similar claims for Muhammad and Christ, Toralba, by contrast, emphasises the cleavage between natural and revealed law. His vindication of natural religion sounds like an attack on revealed religions, and Job, the Arab (according to a traditional interpretation of his book), features as the best follower of "the law of nature, the law of Abel":

> If true religion is natural religion, and this is settled by positive proofs, as not only Octavius but also Salomon himself confesses, what is the need for Jupiter, Christ, Mohammed, mortal and fictile gods? Who of all the theologians can unfold the majesty, power, goodness, wisdom, and the remarkable judgment of God, and finally His greatest concern for all things better or more accurately than Job? Who likewise entwined more secrets of natural and divine things in allegory than he? Who of mortal men has worshipped eternal God more purely? Nevertheless, that Arab who was more ancient than Moses lived by no other law than the law of nature, the law of Abel. Still God, the fairest judge of integrity and piety, praised Job's justice, religion and purity more than any other mortal's. Job neither hoped nor ever thought that Christ, who was born two thousand years afterward would come—much less Mohammed. (B 192/K 251)[31]

Fridericus objects that by relying on the authority of a "divine" book such as Job, Toralba is "distancing himself from the great majority of philosophers." In other words, he is deriving his argument from the authority of Scripture rather than that of reason. Toralba replies that while he does not disapprove of the respect shown for sacred books, he does not assent to them because of "the authority of the text," but due to their intrinsic content. Confronted with the "Epicureans who regard the Holy Scriptures to be fables," he judges it necessary to reason using "clear arguments," in such a way that "in every case one thing proceeds with another, cause with cause and reason with reason" (B 193/K 252). This is an apology for reason even when it is applied to the

31 Job was from the land of Uz, which was somewhere in Edom or Arabia.

Bible, which is not surprising, because in the *Colloquium*, the humanist philosophical and philological method is thoroughly applied to the Holy Scriptures and especially to the New Testament, questioning the authenticity of several important passages.

Pointing out Job's case and stressing its non-Jewish nature is thus another means of widening the distance between Toralba and the other characters, including Salomon, after the latter has made every effort to reconcile Judaism with natural religion. A gap still remains between the particularity of the former and the universality of the latter. Even if this gap can partly be filled by reinterpreting the Decalogue as a renewal of natural law (which is Salomon's strategy), a major break divides the general frameworks in which Toralba and Salomon contextualise their ideas. These frameworks take the form of distinct genealogies that only partly overlap. This aspect, which has been barely considered by scholars, if at all, can afford a key to the "enigma" of the *Colloquium*, as far as this concerns the real meaning of Bodin's religious ideas.

6 "Heroes" and Genealogies of Religion

For all his supposed antiquity, predating Moses, and for all his Arab origins, Job's case is already emblematic of Toralba's efforts to autonomise natural religion from revealed religion. However, looking at the content of the exchanges, one has the impression that Toralba's position is unsettled, wavering between an alliance with Salomon and the vindication of an autonomous natural law. If one instead looks at the genealogies on which the two characters rely in order to reinforce their respective positions, some peculiarities are striking in their significance. As the first book of the Bible is a common reference for both Toralba and Salomon, they both participate in describing the first stretch of this history, whereas there are significant variations in what follows. Therefore, it is worth comparing these lists and drawing some clues.

The first time that Toralba lists the sequence of men who believed in the true monotheistic faith, he mentions Adam, his son Abel, then Seth, Enoch, and Methuselah, all the way up to Noah, claiming that "this religion is not only the oldest but also the best of all," thus fitting both the requirements of "true" religion (B 141/K 183). Salomon, while agreeing with him, immediately adds Abraham and Moses to the list (B 142/K 184). Abraham and his descendants Isaac and Jacob also feature in Toralba's subsequent genealogies (B 142/K 185; B 257/K 337; B 352/K 462), while Moses is always missing from these. Furthermore, in a couple of cases, Plato, Socrates, and other illustrious pagans, such as Themistocles, Pericles, the Fabii, the Scipios, and the Catos, are

mentioned for their distinctions in philosophy or virtues (B 142/K 185; B 305/K 403). For Toralba, all of these are "the heroes dearest to God" (B 257/K 337).[32]

Both Salomon and Toralba omit Ismael from their genealogies, and this exclusion is amply debated in the *Colloquium*, particularly by Salomon, Coroneus, and Octavius. The issue regards the identity of the true heirs of Abraham and his covenant. It is well known, as a matter of fact, that rabbinic Judaism, Christianity, and Islam each claimed the biblical Abraham in order to emphasise the validity of their respective religious expressions against the claims of others (see B 195–97/K 255–57). In turn, the biblical Abraham was "Christianised," "Islamised," and "Judaised" as a monotheist and religious founder. Abraham is conceived as the common father of the so-called "Abrahamic religions" that recognise him as their archetype. As Adam Silverstein puts it, "to Christians Abraham is the epitome of faith in God, to Muslims he exemplifies submission to God, and to Jews he fully lives out God's commandments."[33] This prototypical figure could also originate claims for exclusive representation, inviting counterclaims that naturally developed into tense relationships of contention and strife. Therefore, it is not surprising that the Muslim Octavius, reacting to Ismael's exclusion from Salomon's list, vindicates "the origin of Abraham from whom Mohammed the Ismaelite derived his race" (B 203/K 265). Similar claims to Abrahamic origins are put forward by the Christian characters (Coroneus, Curtius, and Fridericus), but the issue is openly addressed by Solomon, who affirms his exclusively Jewish descendance as "the Hebrews alone have always cherished the same law and religion," whereas Christians and Muslims are split into several churches, sects, and heresies, which for him is the sign of a major break with the Abrahamic genealogy (B 195/K 255).

Toralba does not partake in this dispute, even though he includes Abraham in the genealogy of natural religion, which means that he does not want to authorise any particular affiliation. While Salomon draws a close connection between Moses and Abraham, Toralba's exclusion of Moses from his lists means that he emphasises the universality of natural religion (from Abel up to Noah and Abraham). Therefore, he separates those patriarchs who lived by natural law on the one hand from the "Mosaic distinction" (to quote the famous categorisation used by Jan Assmann) on the other. As a matter of

32 For another passage in which Toralba puts forward a more traditional genealogy (from Abel to Isaac and Jacob), see B 352/K 462. For Salomon's lists, see B 172/K 226; B 308/K 407. Salomon always links Abraham to Moses; see B 77–78/K 98–99; B 141–42/K 183–84.

33 Reuven Firestone, "Abraham and Authenticity," in *The Oxford Handbook of Abrahamic Religions*, ed Adam Silverstein, Guy G. Stroumsa, and Moshe Blidstein (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 19.

fact, despite various points of agreement, there is a tension in the *Colloquium* between the progression from Abel to Noah, which affects the whole of mankind, and the trajectory starting with Moses, regarding one single people, with the imposition of a specific "law" that is heavily loaded with rites and political prescriptions. The Decalogue is set exactly in the middle of these two trajectories, and this explains why it can be read in different ways: either as a new promulgation of the universal and natural law, with the sole exception of the fourth commandment, or as a specific revelation given to one people in particular. Toralba sides with the former reading rather than the latter. He holds the first book of the Bible to be a document depicting the origins of the whole of humanity, a biblical parallel of the classical "golden age," as he calls it.[34] He is not concerned, however, with the "national" history of the people of Israel; therefore, he focuses on the exemplary lesson provided by the patriarchs, who preceded the Mosaic Law and the constitution of the Israelite religion as a "national" religion. What counts for Toralba is that the whole of mankind is the recipient of the original covenants, firstly with Noah and then with Abraham.

Through this reference to the Abel–Noah–Abraham progression, sharply distinguished from the Mosaic follow-up, Toralba is able to give historical and biblical substance to the otherwise rather abstract concepts of natural reason and natural religion, without simply shifting towards the Mosaic route advocated *in toto* by Salomon. In this subtle and precarious equilibrium can be found all the fascination and even ambiguity of this work that links the biblical source with the universality of reason. Referring to the Decalogue is a straightforward way of epitomising the contents of natural law, even if Toralba's genealogies warn that Noah's law of nations and Abraham's monotheistic promise are very different from the particular legislation of Moses, which concerns a single people instead of the entirety of humanity.

Indeed, of the three covenants described in the Old Testament—the Noachian, the Abrahamic, and the Mosaic—the author of the *Colloquium* recalls the first, interprets the second as a universal promise that seals humanity's "heroic age," and narrows the significance of the third to the history and policy of the Jewish people. The Mosaic Law can reinforce the dictate of reason

34 See B 190/K 249. "Therefore, it is my opinion that those first parents of the golden age, whom we have mentioned earlier, Abel, Enoch and Job without the law of Moses had without Christ secured most purely that true enjoyment of divine pleasure by the law of nature." Salomon says he agrees, but immediately afterwards recalls that the law of nature "had been so defiled by the shameful crimes of men that it seemed to be completely obliterated," and that it therefore needed to be "renewed" by Moses.

with divine commandments on the one hand, but on the other, it turns out to be superfluous and disadvantageous, overloading natural law with several ceremonial and juridical prescriptions. In this, it can only hold for a particular people.[35] The Mosaic pattern, Octavius remarks, was also adopted by Muhammad, who merged the pure law of nature with a political constitution, thus imitating the role of the Jewish lawgiver (B 191/K 249).

7 Conclusion: Bodin's Universalism

The *Colloquium* is considered both one of the fundamental texts of religious tolerance in the modern age and the prototype of the deism that would later assert itself in the eighteenth century. The analysis that we have conducted of the work allows us to better specify or qualify this second statement.

Although the term "deism" was already in use in the sixteenth century, especially in polemics against free thinkers and the enemies of orthodoxy,[36] it never occurs in the *Colloquium*. In fact, Toralba instead uses the phrase "law of nature and natural religion" (B 143/K 186). Nonetheless, the *Colloquium* exerted a notable influence on the "new" Enlightenment deism, as evidenced by the fact that although it was unpublished, the text also circulated widely in manuscript in the eighteenth century and was indeed one of the clandestine philosophical texts with the most surviving copies (about one hundred handwritten copies, more than half of which date back to the eighteenth century).[37]

The main legacy that the *Colloquium*'s *religio naturalis* transmitted to deism consists in the contrast between the universality of natural (or rational) religion on the one hand and the historical, cultural, and political particularity

35 See Frédéric Gabriel, "D'une alliance, l'autre: La relecture de l'ancienne Loi sous la nouvelle dans l'exégèse du décalogue (XVI^{e}–XVII^{e} s.)," *Revue de l'histoire des religions* 299 (2012): 227–55. Cf. Maryanne Cline Horowitz, *Seeds of Virtue and Knowledge* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998).

36 It seems that the first author to use the word "deist" was Pierre Viret, a Protestant reformer from Lausanne, in his *Instruction chrestienne en la doctrine de la loy et de l'Evangile* (Geneva, 1564), vol. 2, unnumbered pages 7–9 of the dedicatory epistle. See Christophe J. Betts, *Early Deism in France: From the So-Called "Déistes" of Lyon (1564) to Voltaire's "Lettres philosophiques" (1734)* (The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1984), 6ff.

37 On this historical phenomenon, see Gianni Paganini, Margaret C. Jacob, and John C. Laursen, eds., *Clandestine Philosophy: New Studies on Subversive Manuscripts in Early Modern Europe, 1620–1823* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2020). For a discussion of Bodin's *Colloquium* see Gianni Paganini, *Introduzione alle filosofie clandestine* (Rome: Laterza, 2008).

of positive religions and their sacred texts on the other. It already affirms the idea that a religion must be universal in order to be true or "optima"; therefore, it should be based on reason or nature, unlike "particular" religions, which are grounded in traditions, texts, and authorities limited to one people or one church. Later, at the end of the seventeenth century, the idea was established that particularity in religion is not only a limit, but also a scandal, for it would be unworthy of God to have chosen means that were exclusive and restricted to one particular culture or people in order to make Himself known instead of appealing to reason, which is common to all humanity. It is already clear, through the character of Toralba, that Bodin's preferences lean towards the universal and natural religion rather than towards the positive religions. In Toralba's view, no religion whose point of view is not universal can be true, as religious truth can be reached by reason alone without any particular revelation.

However, it would be a mistake to consider the *Colloquium* simply as an anticipation of the fully developed systems of deism, or natural religion, of the eighteenth century, as some scholars have tended to do.[38] There are in fact important differences, and the first of these is what we have called "the twofold foundation of natural religion," an area where Bodin's depiction differs from those offered by Enlightenment authors. The natural religion of the *Colloquium* is based *both* on natural reason (in this it is "optima") *and* on the history of humanity from its beginnings (in this it is "very old"), as attested by the biblical account that goes from Adam (or Abel) to Noah and Abraham; that is, from the first man to the first patriarch. True religion must be both "optima" and "antiquissima." Thus, reason and biblical history confirm each other. In eighteenth-century deism, in contrast, the biblical foundation, which Bodin assumes to be a "historical" document, would be criticised precisely for its mythical rather than historical character, and therefore gradually eliminated. By contrast, the historical source is essential to Toralba's argument, even if it needs to be reworked and supplemented by reason. In this, Bodin remains a man of his century. His religious universalism is neither the result of mere secularisation nor an anticipation of the Enlightenment idea of progress. For his model of natural religion, Toralba looks back to humanity's origins, when all people were gathered around pure reason and natural religion rather than divided into various dogmatic allegiances and churches. This approach is the result of a conception of history in which nature and reason are associated with the assumption that the best (monotheism and pure worship) was at the

38 See, for instance, Betts, *Early Deism*, 20.

beginning.[39] This idea amply corresponds to the notion of a "golden age" in which the biblical narrative and humanist culture overlap thanks to the filter of natural reason that God implanted in man.[40]

It could be objected that in a universalistic perspective such as the one that we have indicated above, the biblico-historical foundation would be incompatible with the rational one, as the first is particular (limited to a specific textual culture such as Judaism) while the second is universal. In reality, for Bodin, there was no contradiction, in the sense that he considered the biblical account of humanity's origins to have universal value, regarding the whole of mankind and not the people of Israel alone. The story of Genesis (in the double sense: events and the story of events) is, according to Bodin, universal, and for this reason, being "very ancient," it embraces the entire human race. It is also for this same reason that Toralba constantly opposes the history from Adam to Abraham with that which instead begins with Moses; the latter appears to him to be limited to a single people and overloaded with political meaning. Although the Mosaic narrative contains beliefs (such as monotheism) and precepts (such as the Decalogue) which are also found in whole or in part in natural religion, it nevertheless does not have the same universal validity. Furthermore, it is weighed down by ceremonial and political prescriptions that further restrict its value.

Ultimately, through Toralba's interventions and his (partial) convergences with Salomon, a universalistic interpretation of the Jewish tradition (excluding Moses) is inaugurated in the *Colloquium*, which comes together with the rational foundation (*recta ratio*) in formulating the idea of natural religion in not only theoretical, but also "historical" terms. While the biblical support differentiates Bodin's natural religion from the more abstract forms of subsequent deism, the cleavage between the very origins of humanity and the Mosaic developments lends a more universal meaning to the Jewish contributions that feature in its argument.

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39 It is interesting to remark that in a previous work (first published in 1562), Bodin referred to the "golden age" only in classical terms in order to refute this idea along with that of the "four monarchies" (Bodin, *Methodus ad facilem historiarum cognitionem*, ed. and trans. Sara Miglietti [Pisa: Edizioni della Normale, 2013], 620ff.). On page 742 of the same work, Bodin lists Moses as the first of "universalis historiae scriptores": "historiam universi mundi complectitur annorum II. M. CCCCL."

40 On Bodin's conception of history, see Marie Dominique Couzinet, *Histoire et méthode à la Renaissance: Une lecture de la* Methodus ad facilem historiarum cognitionem *de Jean Bodin* (Paris: Vrin, 1996).

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Nancy's Pleasure in Kant's Agitation

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Abstract

In the *Discourse of the Syncope: Logodaedalus* and "Why Are There Several Arts, Not Just One?", Jean-Luc Nancy engages with the work of Immanuel Kant in order to launch an aesthetic inquiry into the quandries of representation and the creation of worlds. In Kant's nervous experience of the sublime and mental ailments, Nancy finds the somatic feeling of an ill philosopher whose agitation is a mode of creation without law, an abnormal creator of infinite unproductive and aporetic relations set in-between syncopated heterogeneous finites which are contingent upon the suspension of judgment and non-knowledge. Here, the unruly traits of agitation expose the eventful cacophony found in the sceptic's suspension of judgment, unsettling the margins of art, the work of creation, and the portrait of Kant.

Keywords

aesthetics – agitation – syncope – suspension – art – sublime – genius – creation

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> I am unable to read *the Critique of Pure Reason* without feeling the most violent agitation.
>
> ERNST HORNEFFER, *Platonism and Our Time*, 1920

• • •

> In a work [of art] [...] this fact, that it *is* a work, is precisely what is unusual. The event [*Ereignis*] of its being created does not simply reverberate through the work; rather, the work casts before itself the eventful fact that the work is as this work [...]. The more essentially

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> this shock comes into the Open, the more unsettling and unique the work becomes.
>
> HEIDEGGER, *The Origin of the Work of Art*, 1935–1936

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> Philosophy is a pleasure (as much as it is an illness), or there is some pleasure in philosophy.
>
> JEAN LUC NANCY, *Discourse of the Syncope: Logodaedalus*, 1976

• • •

> The artwork is this absolutely paradoxical "being being" as Heidegger would say [*Introduction to Metaphysics*] which an-nihil-ates being in order to bring being itself light of day, to let it shine and sparkle.
>
> PHILIPPE LACOUE-LABARTHE, *Sublime Truth*, 1991

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1 Introduction[1]

Jean-Luc Nancy returns to Immanuel Kant's agitation on at least two occasions. The first is found in the early *Discourse of the Syncope: Logodaedalus* (1976; henceforth abbreviated as *DS*), while the second is found in the opening essay to *The Muses* (1994), "Why Are There Several Arts, Not Just One? (Conversation on the Plurality of Worlds)."[2] In both, Nancy engages with the mystery of creation and the heterogeneity of worlds by offering an ontology of

1 I would like to thank the Maimonides Centre for Advanced Studies—Jewish Scepticism at the University of Hamburg for providing the foundation for this research. My sincere gratitude to Prof. Giuseppe Veltri, Racheli Haliva, Stephan Schmid, Bill Rebiger, and the research fellows at the centre for their responses to oral presentations of some of these ideas. This research was also supported by the Israel Science Foundation (grant *1730/18).

2 Jean-Luc Nancy, *Discourse of the Syncope: Logodaedalus* (1976), trans. Saul Anton (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2008); Nancy, "Why Are There Several Arts, Not Just One? (Conversation on the Plurality of Worlds)," in Nancy, *The Muses*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996), 1–40.

exposition and its relation to the philosophy of presentation.[3] In the *Discourse of the Syncope*, he deconstructs the Kantian economy of philosophising to find the mad creator-philosopher of uncertainties, while "Why Are There Several Arts?" concerns the problem of creation as a manner or mode without foundation, law, sense (*logos*), or signification. For Nancy, creation adheres to the singular-plural event that is contingent on suspension and agitation, the only modes allowing appearances without rule or knowledge. Art provides a presentation that relates to nothing but itself; an occurrence of existence that is suspended by interrupting and appending the hold of mastery.

Nancy writes in the aftermath of eidetic presentation, posing the question: "What is non-eidetic presentation?" In the words of his friend Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, "It is this question of presentation [...] which (re)appeared in Kant for the first time since the beginning of philosophy. This is precisely the question which rumbles beneath his transcendental aesthetic, a rumbling which disturbs philosophical discourse when it confronts the problem of art."[4] Nancy concentrates on this rumbling and sets it inside self-reflection as a disturbance that not only belongs to the aesthetic experience of the sublime, but rather becomes an active force of creation. "The world takes place as art, as works of art," writes Nancy; it is the coming-into-presence of presentation. Art and creation are the becoming of the self, always agitated, posed in-between presentation and the unrepresentable. This quasi-transcendental proposition portrays Kant as the genius philosopher of uncertainties sketching his own cognitive activity as a creator of art. Philosophy and art thus share a sickness that is both a natural disposition and an aesthetic exposition. In particular, the physical deformities of the philosopher-creator, his ill mind, and the pleasure of the sublime are knotted together to exhibit the conditions for artistic and philosophical creation that pull transcendental deduction down into the *flesh* of philosophy.

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3 Nancy's concern with art responds to Martin Heidegger's *The Origin of the Work of Art* (*Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes* [1935–1936, 1950]), where Heidegger poses the problem of the origin and ontological nature of a thing. While Heidegger states at the outset that "the origin of something is the source of its nature," he maintains that we cannot rationalise the "origin," but that we can only un-conceal—that is, expose—its nature through art. For him, art brings forth the clearing of the self-concealing in the *Ereignis* (the hidden given form). While this note is significant for our understanding of Nancy's endeavour, I will not concentrate on this route. See Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," in Heidegger, *Off the Beaten Track*, ed. and trans. Julian Young and Kenneth Haynes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 1–56.

4 Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, "Sublime Truth (Part 1)," trans. David Kuchta, *Cultural Critique* 18 (Spring 1991): 27.

Nancy's agitation returns to Kant's idea of the suspension of judgment in the insufficient and unleashed production of imagination, in the aesthetic of the sublime and the pathologies of the ailments of the mind. In the *Discourse of the Syncope*, he calls this state a "syncope," a passing-out, a loss of consciousness or black-out. Saul Anton refers to the colloquial meaning of the French *avoir une syncope* as "to have a heart attack," hence hinging on a failure of logic and grammar, but also on the corporeality of consciousness that is felt when losing a heartbeat, straying from the cadence of rule.[5] The violence of the syncope follows the unsettled condition of agitation as a mode of creation without law, an unproductive and aporetic relation that undoes itself indefinitely. In Nancy, it does so in-finitely, in-between syncopated heterogeneous finites, as it pulls down "the moment of the Kantian sublime [...] always present, at work *in* aesthetic 'immanence' itself."[6] By this in-between mode, or transimmanent operation, Nancy introduces a new way of reading the Kantian philosophy of aesthetics. His deconstruction of Kant alludes to Anthony Cascardi's claim that the method of deconstruction is more sceptical than scepticism since it affirms "radical doubt (madness)" as a detachment from reason.[7] Madness becomes the radical other, or the unruled condition in which non-knowledge operates (aporetically, we will return to this). The doubtful reign of reason considered within the aesthetic of the sublime and pathological hypochondria is contingent upon the uncertainties found in the delimiting construal of the faculties whose agitated relations condition the production of pleasure and the self, unable to produce genuine knowledge.[8] Nancy's focus is twofold. First, he focuses on the role of imagination in the production of images in the sublime and in the ill mind of the creator, alluding to the latter as either the philosopher, the artist, or anyone performing within the excessive and pathological

5 Saul Anton, "Translator's Introduction: Kant in Stereo," in Nancy, *Discourse of the Syncope*, xvii.

6 Nancy, *DS*, 36 (emphasis in original).

7 A.J. Cascardi, "Skepticism and Deconstruction," *Philosophy and Literature* 8 (1984): 11.

8 Nancy's deconstruction of Kant's aesthetic resonates with Robert Bernasconi's comment on Derrida that we should "think of Derrida as occupying a place like that held by skepticism," while Ewa Ziarek and Joshua Kates maintain that deconstruction proceeds in a manner parallel to scepticism. See Bernasconi, "Skepticism in the Face of Philosophy," in *Re-Reading Levinas*, ed. Robert Bernasconi and Simon Critchley (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 158; Ziarek, *The Rhetoric of Failure: Deconstruction of Skepticism, Reinvention of Modernism* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1996), 88; Kates, *Fielding Derrida: Philosophy, Literary Criticism, History, and the Work of Deconstruction* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), 15.

conditions of pleasure and cognitive disorder. Second, he focuses on Kant the genius-writer-creator of philosophy as an author of language without style in order to display him as the undecided thinker who offers a doubtful end to the stronghold of reason and truth. Hence, we see a double movement of scepticism in the work of deconstruction, shaking the premises of reason and its in-finite conclusions.

In what follows, I will concentrate on the performance of agitation in Nancy in order to trace its roots in Kant's system of pleasure. I will begin with the transcendental aesthetic of the mind and conclude with the ill mind of the philosopher and his physical malaise. In order to sketch out this trajectory, we will first see the connection between the principles of pleasure and creation, a connection that reveals Kant as a *Logodaedalic* figure, the exhibitor of the operation of the mind's gratification and physical pleasure. In both states, we find the performance of agitation, which we will follow in the working of the sublime; specifically, in the inadequate ability of the power of imagination, the shortcoming of reason, and the failure of judgment. We will then see how the autodemonstration of cognition is related to self-pleasure: it is the exposition of the inoperative faculties that exhibit the aggregated powers of the mind through their motion; that is, through the mind's self-relational activity. By concentrating on this exposition, we will see how it is contingent upon its own agitated division, maintained by the separation and suspension of the faculties, reason, and judgment. Here, agitation is not only related to suspension, but also to weakness of mastery, to the rumbling of the faculties, and to the outburst of disruption, which yields a vertiginous mind, a dizzy mind, an ill mind, and even laughter; a mind that hangs in the air, without law, cause, or aim. And yet, it strives towards signification, a dynamic concept for Nancy, which will be clarified in its oscillation between the ungrounded and the unknown. On the one hand, signification operates without criteria while working through non-knowledge, a kind of sceptical suspension of signification. On the other, we will look at signification, not from its ungrounding condition, but from its endless end, where the movement towards a signification to come forms a creation without end. From this point in the text, Nancy's portrait of Kant, the *Logodaedalus* of uncertainties, the genius-philosopher, will resonate as a sublime artist. His mind exposed in self-reflection reveals him to be abnormal and thus a creative artist. His mind is split by an impeded imagination which is short of reaching understanding on the one hand and excessive in its unattainable operation on the other. His mind is ill; *Logodaedalus* is sick. Nancy ends his discussion of Kant by reverberating the operation of the sublime against the philosopher's physical malaise and the pathology of his hypochondriac state. While this is Kant's portrait, it is also a manner of creation; a manner of art.

2 Pleasure: A Creative Principle

Nancy returns to Kant's feeling of pleasure as a critical exposition of appearances and the categorial conditions of the system of the mind in order to differentiate and at the same time relate it to the pleasure of the body and its self-sense of vitalism. "At this place in the text," he writes in the final chapter of the *Discourse of the Syncope* entitled "Logodaedalus"—the name he uses to refer to Kant in the period when he was seeking pleasure between the exhibition of his philosophy, its *Darstellung*, and his old infirm body on his last days—

> it is a matter of distinguishing between pleasure (*Vergnügen*), always physical, and that-which-pleases-reason (*gefallen*). But it is a matter of distinguishing them in order to better relate one to the other: pleasure and gratification (let us thus call them) are related in philosophy and elsewhere: since it happens that "gratification (even if its cause happens to lie in ideas) seems always to consist in a feeling that a person's life is being furthered generally." Philosophy is a pleasure (as much as it is an illness), or there is some pleasure in philosophy: in effect, states the introduction, there is a pleasure that is proper to knowledge, an archaic pleasure, today barely noticed, yet indispensable. Cognitive activity would be unimaginable without the impulse of this pleasure, without its agitation—though it escapes, in cognition, the order of understanding properly speaking.[9]

According to Nancy, the thin strands delineating the feeling of pleasure and displeasure as a creative principle belong to the production of undecidability by the passed-out philosopher who

> displaces, transforms, and reinitiates *all* the theoretical and practical questions that can be linked to philosophical discourse; or [...] this question of the *flesh* of philosophy, of the flesh and bone of philosophy, in effect, of philosophical incarnation—this question of the philosopher, therefore, it bears repeating, belongs to Kant.[10]

The turn to the philosopher's flesh marks a departure from Kant in the creative act. The artwork, or the working of art as an act of creation, interchanges with

9 Nancy, *DS*, 133. The citation from Kant is taken from Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Judgment*, trans. Werner S. Pluhar (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1987), 201 (henceforth abbreviated as *CJ*).

10 Nancy, *DS*, 12 (emphasis in original).

philosophising as both expose presentation in the medium of sense which for Nancy holds the double meaning of sense as sensual sense and the sense of the world.[11] Hence, art is the transcendence of immanence as such, which does not and cannot go beyond itself. "A 'transimmanence,'" writes Nancy, "Art exposes this."[12] Creation is always the creation of a world that is dislocated alongside itself by virtue of a fundamental agitation brought about by lack or excess. In the intense and even dangerous appearances of pleasure (physical) and gratification (reason), he submits to Kant's discourse of excess linking that found in the aesthetic of the sublime with the pathological unwarranted ailment of the mind, in particular that of the Kantian hypochondria (and we will return to this). As both the sublime and mental disorders stem from the investigation of the mind, Nancy's remark about cognitive activity being contingent on displeasure and the agitated escape from cognition returns to Kant's model of the mind; specifically, the nature of mental agitation under the excessive idea of the sublime. Within these agitated conditions, the peculiar, intermediate faculty of imagination plays a key role as a medium of relation between human sensation and ideas, with the art of the genius featuring prominently as the expressive force of their unceasing affinity.[13]

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11 "Sense" is a central term for Nancy, and it may refer to meaning (contingent on communicable relations), the sensual senses, or signification (a sense of direction, being-toward a clarity to come, which should be differentiated from signifyingness, which refers to the excess of sense beyond signification). See François Raffoul and Gregory Recco's translators' notes in Nancy, *The Gravity of Thought* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1997), 89 n. 1, and Jeffrey S. Librett's translator's notes in Nancy, *The Sense of the World* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 172–73 n. 11. In *The Creation of the World or Globalization*, Nancy ties the activity of making sense to world-forming (*mondialisation*), which is the creation of a world. It is an auto-creative sense, a world making sense of itself by itself "never inscribed in a representation, and nonetheless always at work and in circulation in the forms that are being invented" (52). Nancy returns to Kant, positing his world-forming with the latter's "formative power" of nature, and yet he does not maintain his clear differentiation between the sensible and the intelligible. Such indeterminacy maintains the sense of creation as an enigma (which Nancy will call a mystery); see Nancy, *The Creation of the World or Globalization*, trans. François Raffoul and David Pettigrew (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2007), 52, 64. For an elaborate survey of sense and spatiality, see Ian James, *The Fragmentary Demand: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Jean Luc Nancy* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006), 89–113. For sense as linguistic meaning in the context of aesthetic experience, see Charles Shepherdson, "Aesthetic 'Sense' in Kant and Nancy," *New Literary History* 48 (2017): 197–221.

12 Nancy, *The Muses*, 34–35.

13 We can already find this nexus in Renaissance thinkers, such as Marsilio Ficino's treatise "Five Questions Concerning the Mind" (1476) and in Pico della Mirandola's "Oration on the Dignity of Man" (1486). However, for them, the work of imagination as a relation between

3 On the Art of Imagination and Ruptured Reason

In order to answer the question "What is art?", Nancy marks its limit as being inscribed in the analytic of the sublime. Although we cannot know what art is, we can feel it coming into form from the imagination's inadequation and inability to grip the infinitely boundless (*mathematical sublime*) and might or power (*dynamical sublime*). The imagination's distinctive trait is "a movement of the mind" whose subjective purposiveness is referred either to the faculty of cognition or to the faculty of desire. And yet this movement, which marks a split embedded in the imagination's incapacity, is found in Kant's phrase "die Bewegung des Gemüts," which is alternately translated as "a movement" or "an agitation of the mind."[14] It is a discordant vibration splitting the mind while marking its delimited faculties, the very conditions that make knowledge and existence possible:[15]

> [The] limit or this border (*Grenze*) imposed on art is the limit inscribed at the highest moment of the analysis of aesthetic judgment, that is, in the analytic of the sublime. The judgment of the sublime exhibits, as it were, a chasm between art and reason. In it, we can only feel the inadequation between "the infinite in common reason's judgment," which is capable of thinking "a progressively increasing numerical series," and our inability "to *grasp* the infinite given in its entirety as a whole" ([Kant] *CJ*, 111). The sublime consists in a radical inadequation between the aesthetic and the mathematical; thus, it reproduces and constrains the very position of philosophy. Critique is the analysis—vertiginous, syncopated—of the sublime fracture of Reason.[16]

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the sensuous and ideas forms a perfect unity. See Ernst Cassirer, Paul Oskar Kristeller, and John Herman Randall, Jr., eds., *The Renaissance Philosophy of Man: Petrarca, Valla, Ficino, Pico, Pomponazzi, Vives* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948), 208, 263.

14 Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, ed. Karl Vorländer, 10th ed. (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1990), §54, 193; J.H. Bernard translates "die Bewegung des Gemüts" as "movement of the mind" (see Kant, *The Critique of Judgment*, trans. J.H. Bernard, 2nd rev. ed. [London: Macmillan, 1914], 227), while in Werner S. Pluhar, we find "what agitates the mind" (see Kant, *The Critique of Judgment*, trans. Werner S. Pluhar [Indianapolis: Hackett, 1987], 206).

15 On the imagination's role in the self-thought of the transcendental mind, see Stuart Dalton, "Bodies of Experience and Bodies of Thought: Freud and Kant on Excessively Intense Ideas," *Angeliki: Journal of the Theoretical Humanities* 4, no. 3 (1999): 95–96.

16 Nancy, *DS*, 60–61 (emphasis in original).

Nancy alludes to an affinity between philosophy and art. While the philosophy of the sublime marks the limits of art, it is affected, even pressured, by its forceful production to such a degree that the work of the *Critique* itself interchanges with the work of art, the activity of creation which forms within the fracture of reason. In-between the chasm of art and reason, we find the inadequate and failed imagination stirring the production of unruled images without cause or signification. It is this *modus operandi* that Nancy seeks as a manner, a mode, or a fashion of creation, and thus art.

The logic of the imagination's failed production merits some consideration. For rationalists such as Christian Wolff, the imagination's association with sensibility was an obstacle to clear and distinct thought. This led to various attempts to investigate the logic of imagination and the senses with regard to understanding, a task that is never complete due to the unstable, unhinged, and unpredictable inventiveness of the intermediate faculty. Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten extended the horizon of philosophy by inaugurating aesthetics as an independent discipline (*epistêmê aisthetikê* as the science of what is sensed and imagined).[17] Sense-perception as a mode of knowing was to be included in rationalism as an uncharted field. "It can be objected to our science," he wrote in his *Aesthetica* (1750),

> that this is beneath the dignity of philosophers, and that deliverances of the senses, fancies, fables, and stirrings of the passions are below the philosophical horizon. I answer: A philosopher is a man among men. Indeed he does not think alien to himself so great a portion of human knowledge.[18]

Kant's exploration of imagination stemmed from this background as he maintained its intermediate position amid sensibility and understanding, as well as its employment in artistic production.[19] In his early writings *Dreams of a Spirit Seer* (1766) and his inaugural dissertation *On the Forms and Principles of the Sensible and the Intelligible World* (1770), imagination exerts a bad influence

17 Alexander Baumgarten, *Reflections on Poetry: Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten's Meditationes philosophicae de nonnullis ad poema pertinentibus*, trans. Karl Aschenbrenner and William B. Holther (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1954), 86–87.

18 Alexander Baumgarten, *Aesthetica*, in *A History of Esthetics*, ed. Katherine Everett Gilbert and Helmut Kuhn, rev. ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1954), 290. See also Richard Shusterman, "Somaesthetics: A Disciplinary Proposal," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Criticism* 57 (1999): 300.

19 Paul Guyer, *Values of Beauty: Historical Essays in Aesthetics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 3–6.

by inventing illusions. In the Blomberg logic lectures (1770s), imagination features as an obstacle to knowledge. Unlike understanding and reason, which are objective, imagination differs as an intrusion of subjective judgment that does not agree with the former faculties. It provokes error by producing ghosts and confuses subjective images with objective images while not according with the laws of nature. Kant concludes with the fallacy of imagination, asserting that "if we remove from man his imagination, his sensible wit, the judgment of the understanding will always be true."[20] An example of the intricate operation of the imprudent imagination is found in his late anthropological observations of the ailments of the mind, where its deficiency leads to mental derangement akin to dementia and hypochondria "owing to the falsely inventive power of imagination, self-made representations [that] are regarded as perceptions."[21] These excessive inventions are gathered into the more structural formation of the schematising role of imagination in logic and metaphysics, as well as in genius and taste, which Kant intends to underlie the three critiques. In *CPR* and *CJ*, imagination is situated between sensibility and understanding, and yet it is beyond both and also beyond itself. Kant distinguishes between sense (*Sinn*) and imagination, the latter comprising "intuition without the presence of an object";[22] this non-presence of the object of imagination may allude either to a lost presence or to a presence to come. The first is empirical or recollective/reproductive, "a faculty of the derived representation (*exhibito derivativa*)," while the second is productive or poetic, "a faculty of the original representation of the object (*exhibitio originaria*)."[23] It is this latter type of productive imagination that Kant was to elaborate in his discourses on aesthetics and mental illness, which would later be of interest to Nancy's thought on the work of art as a creative act.

4 Sublime, Cognition and Self-Pleasure

For Nancy, Kant's undefinable manner of the sublime exposes the work of art not as a set or stable object, but as a mode or manner at work. Sublime experience, for Kant, consists of two types of "agitations of the mind": the

20 Immanuel Kant, "The Blomberg Logic," in Kant, *Lectures on Logic*, trans. J. Michael Young (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 79–80.

21 Immanuel Kant, "Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View (1798)," trans. Robert B. Louden, in *Anthropology, History, and Education*, ed. Günter Zöller and Robert B. Louden (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 320.

22 Kant, *Anthropology*, 265.

23 Kant, *Anthropology*, 278.

mathematically sublime and the dynamically sublime. Unlike the beautiful, which maintains an agreeable relationship between the imagination and understanding, the sublime is an excessive feeling that corresponds to the excessive demand reason places on the imagination, hence causing it to fail to represent the infinite in its totality:

> For while taste for the beautiful presupposes and sustains the mind in *restful* contemplation, the feeling of the sublime carries with it, as its character, a mental *agitation* connected with our judging of the object. But (since we like the sublime) this agitation is to be judged subjectively purposive, and so the imagination will refer this agitation either to the *cognitive power* or to the *power of desire*, but in both cases the purposiveness of the given presentation will be judged only with regards to these *powers* (without any purpose or interest). The first kind of agitation is a *mathematical*, the second a *dynamical*, attunement of the mind. And so we attribute both these kinds of agitation to the object, and hence present the object as sublime in these two ways.[24]

The feeling of mental agitation which differentiates the sublime from the beautiful exposes a failure in judgment in regard to the faculties of cognition and desire. When reason demands that the imagination provide it with a representation of the infinite in its totality, the imagination is incapable of fulfilling the requirement as it is bound to finite representation. Moreover, if the imagination has found a potential solution for representing the infinite in time, then reason demands an immediate totality that also fails in this trajectory. This failure is the imagination's ongoing attempt to reach infinity until it "reaches its maximum, and as it strives to expand that maximum it sinks back into itself,"[25] hence confronting its own limits and by doing so, confronting the limits of the related faculties as well. Kant's formula of the sublime as "what even to be able to think proves that the mind has a power surpassing any standard of sense"[26] sums up the wondrous concept of comprehending the incomprehensible by predictably exposing the delimitation of the powers of the human mind.

The exposition of the aggregated faculties is the activity of cognition itself—the exposition of cognition's relationship to itself; that is, representation's relation to self insofar as it is a connection or a relation to self of the connection of representation—demands the possibility of experience and the motion of

24 Kant, *CJ*, 101 (emphasis in original).
25 Kant, *CJ*, 109.
26 Kant, *CJ*, 106.

the mind. This unexplainable movement can only take place as feeling.[27] Outside signifying and useful perception, we find the heterogeneous nature of the mind. "What makes this possible," Kant writes, "is that the subject's own inability uncovers in him the consciousness of the unlimited ability which is also his, and that the mind can judge this ability aesthetically only by that inability."[28] Hence, this philosophical scheme for exposing cognition is contingent on the relations of the faculties, which are not self-consistent. For Kant, uncovering the mind's construal is a performative exhibition, a principle which will become central to Nancy—the principle of exposition. Kant described the principle of exhibition as an unpurposive effort: "This effort as well as the feeling that the imagination [as it synthesises empirical nature] is unable to attain to that idea, is itself an exhibition, of the subjective purposiveness of our mind."[29] The intermediate role of imagination in exhibiting the mind is characteristic of the Nancean exposition of the agitated relation of the faculties, which are patent, open, and expanded in an undecidability of discrete modes.[30]

The exposition of the mind is tied to the principle of pleasure, which for Nancy is a differential principle that is at once a connective relation and a split. Pleasure, he infers from the *Critique of Judgment*, "is the exhibition for itself of an active principle" that maintains the critical separation "at the heart of the system, organising it. Or, more exactly, the heart of the system, what joins it up and makes it work [*jouer*], what allows it to be in agreement with itself and with the internal finality that makes it a true system, is itself the feeling of pleasure and displeasure."[31] Hence, pleasure has the destination of the structure of a relation to self. In order to characterise this relation, Nancy turns to the experience of agitation as a performative demonstration, splitting the aggregated faculties while arousing in aesthetic feeling; that is, the feeling of pleasure and displeasure (pain). Such a feeling is stirred amidst the playful heterogeneity of the limits and autonomy of the faculties of imagination, the cognition of the object (understanding), freedom (reason), and ends (reflective judgment). In "Kant's System of Pleasure," Nancy stresses the determination of the powers of the mind and their transcendental operations in the two critiques, theoretical philosophy and practical philosophy. They demand their shared division in capacity and domain. This division dictates a

27 Jean-Luc Nancy, "Kant's System of Pleasure," *Pli* 8 (1999): 158–59.

28 Kant, *CJ*, 116.

29 Kant, *CJ*, 128.

30 Nancy, *The Muses*, 34.

31 Nancy, "Kant's System of Pleasure," 160–61.

plurality that conditions the systematicity towards the unity of pure reason. The faculty of judgment introduces the possibility of the first two powers while maintaining their shared restriction. Nancy is interested in this third faculty as it is not a power, but a feeling devoid of a legislation of ends; yet it is responsible for thinking experience not only of an object, but "that of the 'necessity of the whole' of nature in the diversity and 'considerable heterogeneity' of its formations."[32] However, the necessity of the whole does not stipulate a totality, but a connection, a relation that posits the division of the delimited faculties in suspension.[33]

For Nancy, suspension is the autodemonstration of failure. This is where agitation happens, or the happening of agitation. It is the failure of the mind to composite self-mastery within the relation to self or the relation of the auto-presentation of the nature of the mind, and the force of separation, the isolation and intensification of a part of a unity of signification and representation.[34] The force of separation yields suspension as the unbridgeable gap between signification and the structure of sense as it disengages a concept and the activity of conceptualisation from sense. Suspension as a black-out, or a syncope, is central to Kantian reason, which ungrasps itself, or is ungrasped, while for Nancy, the very condition of this inability marks the patency of relation and the expanded heterogeneity.

Suspension of judgment, rule, or legislation rests at the heart of the sublime, a syncope which loses a beat in the operative cadence of the reasoning mind. The sublime's impact on the mind consists of "agitation" as a marvel at the mind's ability to experience this agitation.[35] Nancy follows Kant's suspension to emphasise that the agitated mind is a mode of incomprehensible suspension "when one loses one's 'presence of mind'—a kind of syncope."[36]

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32 Nancy is referring here to Kant's distinction between aesthetic and cognitive judgments. The first does not involve a concept or cause; rather, "it involves merely the relation of the presentational powers to each other, insofar as they are determined by a presentation." Kant defines this relation as a feeling of pleasure which determines whether an object is beautiful. Unlike the powers of understanding and reason, the feeling stirring the judgment of taste is devoid of concept and is therefore a purposeless subjective purposiveness, which is the feeling of the mere form of purposiveness, the form of givenness of presentation (Kant, *CJ*, 221). In other words, the very consciousness of the formal purposiveness is a contemplation and exposure of the formal play of the cognitive powers (Kant, *CJ*, 224). This subjective activity quickens the cognitive powers while the mind is passive (Kant, *CJ*, 68). See Nancy, "Kant's System of Pleasure," 150.

33 Nancy, *DS*, 13.

34 Nancy, *The Muses*, 22.

35 Gur Hirshberg, "Burke, Kant and the Sublime," *Philosophy Now* (1994), https://philosophynow.org/issues/11/Burke_Kant_and_the_Sublime.

36 Nancy, *DS*, 125.

> In presenting the sublime in nature the mind feels *agitated*, while in an aesthetic judgment about the beautiful in nature it is in *restful* contemplation. This agitation (above all at its inception) can be compared with the vibration, i.e., with the rapid alternation of repulsion from, and attraction to, one and the same object. If a [thing] is excessive for the imagination (and the imagination is driven to [such excess] as it apprehends [the thing] in intuition), then [the thing] is, as it were, an abyss in which the imagination is afraid to lose itself. [...] The judgment itself, however, always remains only aesthetic here. For it is not based on a determinate concept of the object, and presents merely the subjective play of the mental powers themselves (imagination and reason) as harmonious by virtue of their contrast [...] conflict, namely, to a feeling that we have a pure and independent reason, of a power of estimating magnitude, whose superiority cannot be made intuitable by any other than the inadequacy of that power which in exhibiting magnitudes (of sensible objects) is itself unbounded.[37]

The imagination's fear of losing itself rests on its failure as an intermediary on the way to attaining knowledge. Yet in the excessive experience of the sublime, it performs *à même* the abyssal failure to form a thought of an object in knowledge. Since knowledge and self-knowledge are not attainable, we can only feel our mind. Nancy knots the two registers, knowing and feeling, through the impediment of the adequate activity of the mind. The breakdown of this operative activity is not left aside, but is embraced as the aporetic force stirring the activity of cognitive exposition. In this state of exposition, when the mind exposes itself, we find the double vibrating movement of the faculties: first, they are agitated, each by their own incompetency, and second, their discordant relations with one another vibrate in-between their delimited spheres. In light of reason's desire for self-knowledge, for forming her own unified image, we find the outburst of an incompetent dissonance. It agitates and vibrates like an outburst of laughter.

Nancy emphasises that in order for the mind to think itself in this outburst, "in order to think its own laughter (which it *needs* so it can live, so it can feel itself), thinking passes through the thought of its nonknowing [...] through the thought of nothing—through the trembling of a nonrepresentation and a nonrepresentation."[38] For Nancy, laughter is sublime. In "Wild Laughter in the Throat of Death," he stresses that in laughter, we come to the infinite

37 Kant, *CJ*, 115 (emphasis in original).
38 Nancy, *DS*, 136 (emphasis in original).

joy of desire going into the absolute excess of sublime beauty. And, as in the experience of the sublime, laughter is contingent on the agitated work of imagination, which yields dizziness and vibration to the mind.[39]

The breakdown of imagination marks an abyss in a "system [that] syncopates itself over the void of Darstellung—and the syncope cannot be explained."[40] Yet the agitated imagination is required in order to feel its own vibration as self-feeling. The sublime union of thought and unthought is a union which is not one unified body of knowledge, but the body and soul of the philosopher's *flesh*:

> Laughter is able to guarantee the condition of possibility of gratification (consciousness *for* reason) only by a loss in pleasure, by the syncope *of* pleasure itself. This trembling or this agitation does not exactly allow itself to be identified with the continuous and progressive oscillation of a discourse machine: rather, it uninsures itself—and laughter communicates (?) [*sic*] with literature. (If autoeroticism is constitutive of or figures metaphysical autology, it would be necessary to say that the *auto* simultaneously breaks itself off and starts off again in Kantian laughter.[41]

5 Scepticism and the Condition of [Non]knowledge

In asserting that "thinking passes through the thought of its nonknowing," Nancy touches the heart of the sceptic, or Kant's undecidability.[42] Kant's systemised critique had a different telos: in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, he declared that he was demonstrating the conditions for the possibility of knowledge, "how *subjective conditions of thought* could have *objective validity*, i.e., how they could yield conditions for the possibility of all cognition of objects."[43] He argued that we can identify *a priori* schemata indicating that the entire sensible world necessarily conforms to certain laws. He calls this "immanent

39 For Nancy, laughter is an aesthetic pleasure. Torn by desire for its own image, the mind bursts out laughing. The aesthetic experience of the mind and art share the outburst of laughter as a suspension of judgment, devoid of a presentation or representation of its reasons or its imaginary image. See Nancy, "Wild Laughter in the Throat of Death," *MLN* 102 (September 1987): 721–36.

40 Nancy, *DS*, 136.

41 Nancy, *DS,* 135 (emphasis in original).

42 Nancy, *DS*, 136.

43 Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, ed. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999) 145 (henceforth abbreviated as *CPR*; emphasis in original).

metaphysics" or "the metaphysics of experience," because it deals with the principles that are inherent to human experience. Whereas the faculty of cognising cannot get beyond the boundaries of possible experience, the faculties as such are necessary for conditioning experience "because only by means of them can any experiential object whatsoever be thought at all."[44]

> The *a priori* conditions of a possible experience in general are at the same time conditions of the possibility of objects of experience. Now I maintain that the *categories* [...] are nothing but *the conditions of thought in a possible experience* [...]. [A]nd without such unity [...] no thoroughgoing and universal and hence necessary unity of consciousness would be encountered in the manifold of perceptions. But then these perceptions would also not belong to any experience, and hence would be without an object; they would be nothing but a blind play of representations—i.e., they would be less even than a dream.[45]

Questioning the intelligibility of experience, Katerina Deligiorgi shows how the debate about reason within critical philosophy is an extension of the reflective examination of the conditions of validity for our use of rationality.[46] In *Two Varieties of Skepticism*, James Conant asserts two kinds of scepticism: the first he calls "Cartesian scepticism" and the second "Kantian scepticism." The first is centred on the question of knowledge (dreaming vs. actuality); the second focuses on the conditions of the possibility of knowledge. The Kantian sceptic, Conant argues, wants to arrive at the ground of the possibility of knowledge. This possibility illuminates the challenge of how experience can be possible? Conant follows Stanley Cavell's claim: "I do not [...] confine the term [scepticism] to philosophers who wind up denying that we can ever know; I apply it to any view which takes the existence of the world to be a problem of knowledge."[47] The kind of scepticism offered here reverberates in Cavell's denial of the truthful validity of our criteria, an argument he develops into what he calls a "truth" in scepticism; "namely, that the human creature's basis in the world as a whole, its relation to the world as such, is not that of

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44 Kant, *CPR*, 148.

45 Kant, *CPR*, 161–62 (emphasis in original).

46 Katerina Deligiorgi, *Kant and the Culture of Enlightenment* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2005), 56.

47 James Conant, "Two Varieties of Skepticism," in *Rethinking Epistemology, Volume 2*, ed. Günter Abel and James Conant (Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2012), 3 n. 5. See also Stanley Cavell, *The Claim of Reason: Wittgenstein, Skepticism, Morality, and Tragedy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 46.

knowing, anyway not what we think of as knowing," that is, "where knowing construes itself as being certain."[48] Cavell focuses on a relationship that is a diversion from the epistemic assessment of certainty and the traditional concept of knowledge as being founded on a fixed and impersonal structure of reason. This relationship is now the activity of not-knowing, not in the sense of leading to knowledge, but in a sense that is closer to Kant's aesthetic which introduces the purposeless subjective relations sketched in the ungraspable aesthetic experience of the sublime. While the relation of not-knowing may allude to a kind of ultimate unintelligibility, it differs by an ambition "to keep philosophy open to the threat or temptation of skepticism."[49] He suggests criteria as a shared construal of unhinged relations; that is, our criteria. Without authority and devoid of ground, the philosopher and the sceptic share the singular-plural agreement which "no philosophical explanation can explain."[50] This is where Nancy meets Cavell in asserting that the construal of the subject is contingent upon her perpetual inability to attain knowledge.

Cavell's theory of not-knowing stresses that we cannot know any theory of knowledge or mind as there is no explanation for why we are attuned or not. For this reason, Nancy persistently distinguishes theoretical and practical cognition from aesthetic feeling. The latter relates not to the object, but to the subject, since representation relates only to itself and to me, and this relation is not of the order of knowing, but of feeling.[51] We cannot know. Once we are aware of the contingency of relations in the activity of not-knowing, we are in the realm of the sceptic. Here, scepticism arises where there are no rules for the application of the powers of the mind.

Cavell suggests that criteria mediate the relation between concepts and the world like transcendental schemata in Kant's system. Hence, without such ground—or, as we have seen in Kant, when the schematising machine of the imagination is dysfunctional—it becomes clear that the imagination operates like a doubting machine, unnerving the whole system without purpose or pregiven telos.[52] Cavell's scepticism transgresses the bounds of signification by dislocating words from their habitual and coherent context in order to expose

48 Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, 241, 245.

49 Stanley Cavell, *In Quest of the Ordinary: Lines of Skepticism and Romanticism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 35.

50 Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, 32.

51 Nancy, "Kant's System of Pleasure," 150–51.

52 Michael Williams explains Cavell's sceptical stance as an illusion that only seems to make sense: see Williams, *Unnatural Doubts: Epistemological Realism and the Basis of Scepticism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), 16.

their meaningless discreteness.[53] David Macarthur stresses that Cavell's sceptic does not have a thesis because he speaks nonsense, which under the rule of clear signification cannot be demonstrated or refuted as true or false.[54] If the Kantian architecture of the mind echoes its linguistic demonstration, then we can further suggest an affinity between the disruption of words in coherent sentences and the dislocation of the mind. Whether non-knowledge is produced by transgressing the unity of the delimitated faculties or without other criteria, the inoperative relations contingent on loss (of either words or functional faculties) cast doubt over attaining signification. Nancy's manner is to differentiate between signification and sense, and yet they are contingent on each other. While signification comes up short in relation to the object, or once the object is exposed through articulation by an authoritative power, it is already dislocated and destructed as an ideal unity. In this destruction, we find a disintegration and dissolution of the multiplicity of sense. The two concepts, signification and sense, are contingent on one another, as sense requires the ongoing destruction of clear signification which maintains its suspension for reasoning judgment. This is where Nancy meets Cavell and Kant, pursuing a *modus operandi* of suspension and non-knowledge. Nancy and Cavell's shared formation, or the coming-into-presence of in-formation, returns to Kant's disintegrated reasoning producing pleasure/displeasure without law or knowledge. However, Cavell speaks a sceptic's mode of non-knowledge in the register of signification, while Nancy couples signification with sense in order to sketch the ongoing (*non fini*) shortcomings of the first as the opening of sense.

6 The Infinite Gesture of Signification

In "Art Today," Nancy elaborates on the concept of art as an act devoid of signification. He states: "Art is always contemporary because it always belongs to a creation of forms"; it makes us feel "a certain formation of the contemporary

53 David Macarthur relates this move to David Hume's "intense reflection," claiming that the recording of intensive feeling cannot be produced or invented by reasoning, hence it becomes a mechanism that captures how belief "renders realities […] more present to us than fictions, causes them to weigh more in the thought, and gives them superior influence on the passions and imagination." See Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature, Volume 1*, ed. David Fate Norton and Mary J. Norton (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 2.3.7, 66; Macarthur, "Cavell on Skepticism and the Importance of Not-Knowing," *Conversations: The Journal of Cavellian Studies* 2 (2014): 5. See also Patricia Kitcher, "Revisiting Kant's Epistemology: Skepticism, Apriority, and Psychologism," *Noûs* 29 (1995): 295–305.

54 Macarthur, "Cavell on Skepticism and the Importance of Not-Knowing," 5.

world, a certain shaping, a certain perception of self in the world."[55] In fact, for Nancy, "world" means a totality of "significabilities," a term he ascribes to Heidegger, as the world is a totality of the possibility of signification. It is the movement towards signification, without its fixation and without ground or criteria. "Art disengages the senses from signification," writes Nancy, "or rather, it disengages the world from signification [...]. The sense of the world as suspension of signification."[56] The problem of signification, or meaning, hinges between two senses: sensory perception and universal communication. From Kant, Nancy borrows disinterestedness (utility), purposiveness (ethical and scientific purpose), and detachment (impersonal) as modes of suspension in *The Muses* and of syncopation in the *Discourse of the Syncope*.[57]

Nancy's observations of Michelangelo's *Pietà Rondanini* following his visit to the Ospedale Spagnolo (Spanish Hospital) in the Sforza Castle in Milan on 22 March 2006 may shed some light on the issue at hand. Michelangelo began carving the marble formation in 1552, and his work on it continued until the last days of his life in February 1564. The elongated mannerist figures of Christ and Mary are unfinished, and Ivana Vranic suggests that this is a work in process to be experienced through movement around the sculpture, without the ideal perspective of a unified and complete image.[58] This incoherency fits well with Erwin Panofsky's theory about the final phase of the works of masters, which argues that they "go off incomprehensibly on their own."[59] Art, Michelangelo maintained, represents a spiritual contest with the self, an eternal state of incompletion and unfulfillment, and sculpture is the aesthetic metaphor of the human condition.[60] In coming into form, the artist's gesture

55 Jean-Luc Nancy, "Art Today," *Journal of Visual Culture* 9 (2010): 92.

56 Nancy, *The Muses*, 22.

57 Charles Shepherdson asserts Heidegger's influence in Nancy's elaboration of Kant's disengagement of utility, writing: "As Martin Heidegger argues in *Being and Time*, when the tool malfunctions, no longer appearing useful or ready to hand, it suspends our everyday modes of being-in-the-world and the entire context of meaning that orients our activities in the world, only to bring us back to the world as such, and to our own being as being-in-the-world." See Shepherdson, "Aesthetic 'Sense' in Kant and Nancy," 200.

58 Ivana Vranic, *Visibility of Sculpted Matter and Form: Michelangelo's* Rondanini Pietà *and the Ontological Nature of Sculpture* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2010).

59 Erwin Panofsky, lecture on Titian, 27 September 1963, given at the Institute of Fine Arts at NYU, quoted in Leo Steinberg, *Michelangelo's Last Paintings: The Conversion of St. Paul and the Crucifixion of St. Peter in the Cappella Paolina, Vatican Palace* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), 19.

60 Elizabeth Gilmore Holt, ed., *A Documentary History of Art, Volume II. Michelangelo and the Mannerists: The Baroque and the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Doubleday, 1958), 15–16; Jean-Pierre Barricelli, "Michelangelo's Finito: In the Self, the Later Sonnets, and the Last Pietà," *New Literary History* 24 (1993): 601–2.

does not know, and his gesture is left deliberately open, *non finito*.[61] Nancy relates to the infinite gesture of the artist as "it causes a form to arise in which there is put into play … what? A certain possibility of signifying," which he ties to forming "a possibility of world."[62] He uses the French *mondialisation* to penetrate the creation of the world as a movement towards signification, of making sense, of creation.[63] Hence, each time, art opens the possibility of a world-to-itself, to its possibility as a world, and it poses the question of the formation of forms, of creation, without end and without preliminary schemas. It is an unsettling activity of opening towards an unknown possibility, "especially by opening the mind."[64] In what follows, I will tend to the problem of creation without criteria and its relationship to the heterogeneous nature of the genius's mental faculties. As we shall soon see, the question of the formation of forms gives an account to the self in its form-less state and speaks to Kant's agitation: that of the work of the imagination in the pleasure of the mind and that of its sickness.

7 The Mind of the Genius-Philosopher Exhibiting Itself

In *The Critique of Judgment*, Kant unties the work of imagination from understanding and reason as it serves the inventive genius in reflective judgment "for producing that for which no definitive rule can be given."[65] In Kant's free (agitated) imagination, Nancy finds the trembling philosopher who carves out the

61 André Chastel, *Art et humanisme à Florence au temps de Laurent le Magnifique: Études sur la Renaissance et l'humanisme platonicien* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1961). Linda Murray refers to Auguste Rodin, who argued that Michelangelo left his sculptures unfinished for aesthetic reasons; see Murray, *Michelangelo: His Life, Work, and Times* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1984), 84. Henry Moore maintained that in a finished state, the *Pietà* "would have lost its point": see Moore, *Henry Moore on Sculpture*, ed. Philip James (New York: Viking Press, 1967), 183. Finally, see Ruskin's view that the purpose of sculpture was not to carve form from stone, but to affix an effect on marble without realising the form: see John Ruskin, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (London: Dent, 1907), 311.

62 Nancy, "Art Today," 93.

63 A differentiation between "mondialisation" and "globalisation" should be noted, as they have two different meanings. The first is a world-forming towards a sense to come, while the second is a totality of significabilities; see Nancy, *The Creation of the World or Globalization*, 41, 49. The structure of sense oscillates between the never-attained signifier of a proper and present signified and the infinite quest of the passage and formation of sense which de-signifies and tears the relation to signification into shreds; see Nancy, *The Sense of the World*, 1–11, 27–28, 76–80.

64 Nancy, "Art Today," 94.

65 Kant, *CJ*, 185; *CPR*, 148, 166.

law of the categories; his laughter is that of a *Logodaedaleus*, his forceful enthusiasm is a pathological state of obsession akin to a sublime fit, he is a genius of pathological sense. This is Nancy's Kant, a *Logodaedaleus* of uncertainties and a philosopher of delimitation and agitation. Delimitation seems to be contingent on agitation, which exposes the determination and distribution of the strict limits of the powers of the mind. In "Kant's System of Pleasure," Nancy writes:

> This delimitation [...] takes on all its importance: the transcendental operation demands that principle consideration be given to the powers (= faculties) as such, that is to say, both their capacities (*puissances*) and to the domains of their legitimacy, therefore to their circumscription, and therefore their reciprocal division, and so precisely the powers must be considered in the plural. This plurality gives unity to pure reason, is the condition of its systematicity.[66]

The delimitation of understanding (cognition of an object) and reason (freedom) is what allows theoretical philosophy and practical philosophy to knot "the system of rational knowledge by concepts." However, knotting demands time, and the connecting power which keeps watch over delimitation is the power of judgment. It does not impose the law of cognition or the imperative law, but "has simply to supplement the absence of a legislation of ends [...]. It is therefore responsible for thinking 'experience as a system in terms of empirical laws' [...] of the object [...] of the 'necessity of the whole' of nature in the diversity and 'considerable heterogeneity' of its formations."[67] Here, Nancy opens up a space of freedom by displaying nature in its totality as givenness. He follows Kant closely, maintaining that nature is not merely formal laws that conform to understanding, but rather that it "is free from all restrictions [imposed] by our legislative cognitive power."[68] Such freedom cannot adhere to the powers of understanding and reason, and therefore it demands a third faculty, which is not a power, but a subjective relation to representation and a feeling of pleasure and displeasure. This subjective feeling in the third critique maintains not only the relation to representation, but also its separation from the law of cognition. Devoid of law or *a priori* principle, the feeling of pleasure and displeasure produces "no system, but only an *aggregate*" of the faculties,

66 Nancy, "Kant's System of Pleasure," 149–51.
67 Nancy, "Kant's System of Pleasure," 150.
68 Kant, *CJ*, 399.

according to Kant.[69] It is this feeling of the incommensurable aggregate, or the heterogeneity of the mind, that is restricted to the aesthetic play of mental powers and "the feeling that we have a pure and independent reason, or a power of estimating magnitude, whose superiority cannot be made intuitable by any other than the inadequacy of that power which in exhibiting magnitudes (of sensible objects) is itself unbounded."[70]

The activity of the mind maintains agitation as the unrestful energetic movement devoid of understanding or concept. We must return again to Nancy's formulation: "Cognitive activity would be unimaginable without the impulse of this pleasure, without its agitation—though it escapes, in cognition, the order of understanding properly speaking."[71] Exposing the faculties and workings of the mind means their ex-position as the conditions of an aporetic movement. They are posed outside themselves in separation and delimitation, and pleasure is the active principle exhibiting itself.

8 The Abnormal Genius Is an Active Creator

For Kant, *Logodaedalus* marks the folly of those charlatans who "quibble over words" as opposed to the systematic work of the critical philosopher, the author of the systematic critique of the faculty of reason.[72] The formation of formal metaphysics into the systematic representation of language requires exactitude and caution for two reasons: the first is caution regarding speculation, dogmatism, and irregularities, the second is a distinction he makes between his own work and that of the popular scholarship of his day. While Kant uses the term only twice (*Metaphysics of Morals* and *Nachlass*), Nancy elaborates the problem of presentation as a critique of Kant's metaphysics. He posits Kant as both the good logodaedalic writer-philosopher who "in opposition to charlatans [...] composes his words from the elements themselves of purity" and a "*logodaedalus*, a maker of pompous or brilliant words, a maker of Witzes and veils."[73] This type of creator is the abnormal philosopher-genius of uncertainties, who, as if reflecting on Kant's own portrait, composes philosophy between

69 Kant, *CJ*, 395 (emphasis in original).

70 Kant, *CJ*, 116.

71 Nancy, *DS*, 133.

72 Immanuel Kant, *Metaphysical Elements of Justice: The Complete Text of the Metaphysics of Morals Part I, trans. John Ladd, 2nd ed.* (*Indianapolis: Hackett, 1999*), 3–6. See James, *The Fragmentary Demand*, 25–26; Anton, "Kant in Stereo," xiv.

73 Nancy, *DS*, 87.

presentation as exposition (*Darstellung*) and poetry (*Dichtung*). Suspended in-between, the genius is always relating to an aesthetic moment of the originary artist regarded as the highest possible achievement of the human mind. Nancy inscribes the syncope as a place of distinction between philosophical presentation (*Darstellung*) and Poesy; that is, literature (*Dichtung*), a split between form and matter, the trembling activity of philosophising (articulating and presenting) the limits of thought and the totality of the system. "The syncope imposes the distinction between philosophical presentation, *Darstellung*, and *Dichtung*, what one might translate as Poesy, or even 'invention,' what Phillip Lacoue-Labarthe has rendered in French as 'oeuvre d'art.'"[74]

Considering Kant as a genius-philosopher illuminates his opus as a work of art, a move which Kant would try to avoid not only to escape speculation, but also to differentiate himself and his philosophical project from his contemporaries. Nancy, on the other hand, pulls the Kantian genius back in order to illuminate the eighteenth-century milieu from which he stemmed, stressing the knot of *philosophe* and *homme de lettres* as the former was carving the progress of reason while often being occupied by the poet. Herbert Dieckmann shows how already in seventeenth-century England, Shaftesbury had written of the demand for the ethico-aesthetic education of man as a foundation for the philosopher-artist.[75] Further, the Enlightenment untied the positive valuation of the theory of art and the rule of taste. The artwork was no longer judged, but was now corresponding to the free play of imagination and understanding without criteria. Under this unruly condition, the authority of reason gave way to an undefined feeling. In France, Abbé du Bos had liberated aesthetics from the neo-classical canon. Art was not some general form attuned to steady proportions, but a multiplicity of single forms corresponding to specific impressions. Du Bos, a teacher of Denis Diderot, differentiated the faculties of emotion, imagination, and invention, assigning the latter the essence of the genius creating without rules. His new proposition for aesthetic judgment was founded on personal experience and immediate observation of impression. While it was Du Bos who raised the inquiry into the condition and means of the genius, it was Kant who delineated its structure. Yet it is important to note that Du Bos attempted to explain the working of the extraordinary

74 Anton, "Kant in Stereo," xiv–xv.

75 Anthony Ashley Shaftesbury, "The Moralists, a Philosophical Rhapsody, Being a Recital of Certain Conversations on Natural and Moral Subjects," in *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times*, ed. Lawrence E. Klein (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 323–40. See also Paul W. Bruno, *Kant's Concept of Genius: Its Origin and Function in the Third Critique* (New York: Continuum, 2010), 15–18.

mind through the physiology of the whole body.[76] Diderot later focused on the genius's mind; in particular, the extreme and violent emotions such as enthusiasm and the faculty of imagination. Seized by enthusiasm, the genius is caught in an excessive, even sublime state of obsession that is pathological.[77] The Dideroean genius was an abnormal monster whose faculties of reason and senses are unhinged and unbalanced. Such abnormality may be generated by physiological conditions, mental diseases, or strong passions.[78] The latter are eccentric feelings that—together with inner tensions—lead to the height of art. If enthusiasm is transformed into a pathological state, then for Diderot, feeling is transformed into *sensibilité*; a state of pleasure that eliminates reason. The overwhelmed mind, flooded by irrational elements, bears negative feelings that expose the nature of the genius's faculties and hence the limits of critical reason itself.[79]

While Diderot's aesthetic philosophy demonstrates the effect of emotion on the faculties of the mind as a personal experience that elevates cognition, he never pursued a systematic explanation of the mechanism by which the faculties work. However, he did differentiate aesthetic discourse from critical philosophy: "The genius creates beauties," he wrote in the *Salons*, "criticism sees its flaws. One needs the imagination, the other judgment. [...] The idea of 'method' is born when there are no longer geniuses."[80] With this background in mind, Kant wished to avoid being called a genius. In *CJ*, Kant defines genius as "the talent (natural endowment) that gives the rule to art"[81] under four conditions: first, as a talent for producing something original without determinate rule; second, the products of the genius are models for others to use; third, the genius cannot describe such production scientifically; and fourth, nature prescribes the rule of art through the genius.[82] Posed in the aesthetic order, he adds that the genius's mental powers are understanding and free imagination.

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76 Jean Baptiste du Bos, *Critical Reflections on Poetry, Painting and Music: With an Enquiry into the Rise and Progress of the Theatrical Entertainment of the Ancients*, trans. Thomas Nugent, 5th rev. ed. (London, 1748), 1.2. 11, 14–17, V3. See Herbert Dieckmann, "Diderot's Conception of Genius," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 2 (1941): 161–62.

77 In the *Letter Concerning Enthusiasm*, Shaftesbury links enthusiasm with mental disease. See Denis Diderot, *Œuvres complètes comprenant ce qui a été publié à diverses époques et tous les manuscrits inédits conserves à la Bibliothèque de l'Ermitage: Revues sur les éditions originales*, ed. Jules Assézat and Maurice Tourneux, 20 vols. (Paris, 1875–1877), vol. 14 (1876), 322/3.

78 Diderot, *Œuvres*, vol. 1 (1875), 127; vol. 19 (1876), 87.

79 Diderot, *Œuvres*, vol. 18 (1876), 367; vol. 2 (1875), 24.

80 Diderot, *Œuvres*, vol. 11 (1876), 132.

81 Kant, *CJ*, 174.

82 Kant, *CJ*, 175–76.

From this portrait of the genius, Nancy infers that Kant's opus construing the conditions of *a priori* aesthetics and metaphysics is a work of art.[83] Why so? Because Kant is the poet, the *Dichter*, who produces models of invisible things without rule and thus unveils the *Darsteller*, who in turn faints due to his own impossibility. He is the producer of schemes "personified in the ideal of the philosopher" who inscribes the working of his mind. Hence Nancy's return to Kant's formulation that the philosopher "can be nothing less than *sublime*: the sublime corresponds in effect to 'a presentation' of 'our reason [which] demands absolute totality as a real idea.'"[84] The double opposition between the methodic *Darstellung* and the presentation of manner of *Dichtung* comes into contact via the artistic genius who presents the ideas of reason and their mechanic production. If Kant avoided calling himself a genius, it was because he wanted to see himself as the inscriber of the architecture of the mind, not its inventor. "Genius," he wrote in his anthropological notes, proceeds "in accordance with an idea. The power of judgment and taste determine the limits of genius, hence without these genius borders on madness. In the art of poetry genius has its true field, because to poetize (*dichten*) is to create."[85] While Kant differentiates creation from philosophy, Nancy ties the two together by saying that genius marks the production of the indeterminable in philosophy where *Darstellung* and *Dichtung* cross. At this juncture, which Nancy playfully calls *Dardichtung*, the philosopher is suspended between understanding and imagination: unable to couple with reason, he loses measure and proportion. Devoid of scheme and method, the genius is able to present the sublime inadequation, the only mode for such a presentation. Hence for Nancy, "the philosopher is a genius (and thus an artist): this is also (almost) readily legible in Kant. But what is also legible, inevitably, is the unnerving proximity of genius and abnormality."[86] The authority of the genius is that of the artist of uncertainties. Nancy unravels Kant's philosophy as the portrait of the genius concealed within his displeasure and thus exposes the inquiry of creation to the principle of heterogeneity contingent upon instability.

One of the strong connections between *The Discourse of the Syncope* and the question of "Why Are There Several Arts?" rests in perception and creation. The dialectical difference between the arts and techniques, between critical poetry and philosophy, maintains an active principle of not-knowing,

83 Nancy, *DS*, 42.

84 Nancy, *DS*, 99; Kant, *CJ*, 106.

85 Immanuel Kant, *Notes and Fragments*, ed. Paul Guyer (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 504.

86 Nancy, *DS*, 121.

which recounts Kant's productive imagination in the theory of the sublime, as another name, form, and *modus operandi* casting Kant the philosopher as the philosopher of uncertainties and as such as the one upon whom Nancy develops his principle of plurality contingent upon the principle of displeasure. The system requires an architectonic formation of thought, a pure structural presentation of itself, as the blueprint of reason. This demand for a grammatical manner devoid of personal style produces the Nancean syncope, suspended between philosophical thought and lingual form, at once a split and a relation of method and manner (*le mode* and *la mode*). The focus on manner, or the way of doing—the manner of methodology and bringing into form, or the activity of forming—is always related to an aesthetic moment of non-knowledge. In "Why Are There Several Arts?", Nancy poses the question of creation against the background of the uncertain relations between the manner of the arts and the methods of techniques. Is creation—creation by the genius and the experience of the participant, the one who takes part—produced by techniques and/or by the arts? Although we cannot stray to the question of technique, it is important to note that Nancy argues for an in-between state of production, between two modes, "in which each of the two poles wants to know nothing about the other."[87]

9 The Sick Genius

If the mind feels itself only in a state of failure, then Nancy deduces that the failing mind of the genius sways to the frailties of the head as a mode of genuine production. In the experience of the sublime, we found an uncontrolled lapse of imagination which is a cognitive deficiency of the restful harmonious relations under reason's violent demand to grasp infinity in its totality. Lack and excess of the imagination are two recurring conditions for Nancy's exposition of the mind, and they become pathological in the production of sense. The praxis of sense, or the making of sense, is contingent upon the collapse of the subject or her withdrawal from clear signification.[88] "The genius, or the philosopher, inevitably arises out of the pathological."[89] Hence, it becomes

87 Nancy, *The Muses*, 6–7.

88 Simon Critchley elaborates on this *modus operandi* through a reading of Nancy's concept of "being-with" in *Being Singular Plural* and its correspondence with Martin Heidegger's "Mitsein" in *Being and Time*. See Critchley, "With Being-With? Notes on Jean-Luc Nancy's Rewriting of *Being and Time*," *Phänomenologische Forschungen, Neue Folge* 3 (1998): 198–200.

89 Nancy, *DS*, 123.

clear why Nancy creates uncanny chiasms of gratifications rooted in ideas and a philosophy of illness. While Kant tries to differentiate the two by recounting mental disorder in his early *Observations on the Beautiful and the Sublime* (1764) and the late writings of worldly observations in the pragmatic *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* (1798) and *The Conflict of the Faculties* (1798), he differentiated such comments from his transcendental aesthetic found in the three critiques. It can be said that his concern with the ailments of the mind manifests a chronological history which frames his writings about the structures of human cognition and morals; that is, we can distinguish his early and late writings concerned with the ailments of the mind as framing a periphery around the heart of his mid-career writings. And while the heart of his philosophy, the three critiques, attempts to disparage empirical enquiry, the early and late essays pose the empirical enquiry as to whether the ailments of the mind—particularly expressed in hypochondria—are a mental phantasm or a physical malaise. It is the pathology of this periphery that Nancy will knot for his own ends.

Oscillating between the delusions of the imagination and the body's maladies, hypochondria is rooted in excessive imagination, for it "becomes the cause of imagining physical disease: the patient is aware that it is imaginary, but every now and then he cannot refrain from regarding it as something real."[90] Furthermore, imaginary disease stems from particular bodily deformations.[91] In the Kantian taxonomy of mental disorders, hypochondria is considered a mental illness under the defects of the cognitive faculty. It is an illness of the mind that borders on madness, "except it is not that serious."[92] Hence, it is a borderline disease where the deficiency of productive imagination does not adhere to the mind's self-mastery. If this lapse, or syncope, becomes habitual—and Nancy will demand its recurrence in the creative act—then Kant would argue that we are no longer in the realm of aesthetic, but in that of the mental derangement of the imagination. Produced by the inventive imagination, which cannot be disciplined in the play of thoughts, hypochondria is a self-devised illness which echoes the circuits of reflective judgment proceeding from the particular (yet without a universal telos) in order to produce its spontaneous activity of inventive formation and judgment; without conceptual synthesis, without the control of understanding, without law. Hypochondria

90 Kant, *Anthropology*, 318.

91 Immanuel Kant, "The Conflict of the Faculties (1798)," trans. Mary J. Gregor and Robert Anchor in Kant, *Religion and Rational Theology*, ed. Allen W. Wood and George Di Giovanni (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 318 (henceforth abbreviated as CF).

92 Kant, *Anthropology*, 72.

shares with the sublime the working of an unhinged imagination, but they also share what Nancy calls the *flesh* of the philosopher, which is "undecidably the life *and* the theory of the philosopher."[93]

Nancy carves this thin line into a full trajectory which destabilises the end of Kant's thought, while at the same time illuminating Kant as the inventive thinker carving his philosophy in syncopated relations of uncertainty, the only mode of the genius-creator. "The genius, or the philosopher," he writes, alluding to Kant, but also to Socrates, "inevitably arises out of the pathological"; in fact, "Logodaedalus is sick."[94] The abnormality of the philosopher-creator is found in Kant's own natural disposition described in his last book, *The Conflict of the Faculties* (1798): "I myself have a natural disposition to hypochondria because of my flat and narrow chest, which leaves little room for the movement of the heart and lungs, and in my earlier years this disposition made me almost weary of life."[95] Moreover, philosophising is syncopated between unperceivable totality and analytic concepts, and therefore, "the inevitable illness of the philosopher is due precisely to philosophical exposition."[96] As seen above, Kant alluded to his own hypochondria as stemming from his bodily deformation; however, the philosopher of uncertainties also admits that his philosophical practice was a source of his delimitation:

> It is different with the mathematician, who can hold his concepts or their substitutes (symbols of quantity or number) before him in intuition and assure himself that, as far as he has gone, everything is correct. But the worker in the field of philosophy, especially pure philosophy (logic and metaphysics), must hold his object hanging in midair before him, and must always describe and examine it, not merely part by part, but within the totality of a system as well (the system of pure reason). Hence it is not surprising if metaphysicians are incapacitated sooner than scholars in other fields or in applied philosophy.[97]

The unsound production of illness oddly parallels the uncertain production of philosophy as a creative act. Alternatively, perhaps this oddity marks the abnormality of the philosopher-artist, or the artist-philosopher: "The philosopher must play the artist," Nancy declares.[98] The art of the philosopher

93 Nancy, *DS*, 124 (emphasis in original).
94 Nancy, *DS*, 123.
95 Kant, *CF*, 189.
96 Nancy, *DS*, 125.
97 Kant, *CF*, 325.
98 Nancy, *DS*, 83.

is exposing the manner of production "through displacement and inadequation of its thought, insofar as this thought, this critical thought, chose itself to be the thought of its own delimitation and thus its own exposition."[99] The exposition of the mental topography replaces knowledge as a performative act of articulation. Paul de Man made this claim when he regarded the third critique's *raison d'être* as being composed not of demonstrative arguments, but of the juxtaposition of performative linguistic structures and a cognitive system.[100] The agitated state of the sick artist is characterised by shock, rupture, estrangement, suspension of mastery, signification, and knowledge. These are detectible features of the sublime.[101]

Kant's pathology impairs his ability to maintain clarity of thinking itself. His incurable weakness is a debilitation of both his physical and his mental dispositions. Rebecca Comay stages his hypochondria as the adamant struggle between "skepticism and dogmatism that fuels his entire critical project. It demonstrates how doubt itself can be in one and the same respect both excessive and insufficient."[102] If the Kantian project was intended to restore our trust in reason, the idea of the weak relations unhinging the mastery of reason returns to the inoperative work of productive imagination, which in this ill state "can set another kind of heightened vital feeling against the limitations that affect the body alone."[103] Vitalism, health, or existence are not possible as objects of cognition; they are attained by feelings, not in the restful state of the beautiful, but in the agitated feeling that maintains a life force in constant movement. In the sublime, the subjective movement of the imagination does violence to the inner sense.[104] The sense of agitation in the mind, or in the body, is a vibration that stems from the failing authority of our common human reason. We are in the realm of meta-scepticism, the worry that we cannot attain stable rational self-knowledge, knowledge of ourselves just insofar as we are the purposive agents of our own cognition; however, removed from knowledge, we are in the register of feeling, where the unruly imagination

99 Nancy, *DS*, 115.

100 Paul de Man, "Phenomenality and Materiality in Kant," in *The Textual Sublime and Its Differences*, ed. Hugh J. Silverman and Gary E. Aylesworth (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1990), 96–97.

101 I follow Lacoue-Labarthe's detection of Heidegger's vocabulary of the unconcealment of truth in "The Origin of the Work of Art" (1935–1937); see Lacoue-Labarthe, "Sublime Truth," 213.

102 Rebecca Comay, "Hypochondria and Its Discontents, or, the Geriatric Sublime," *Crisis and Critique* 3, no. 2 (2016): 48.

103 Kant, *CF*, 189.

104 Kant, *CJ*, 116.

produces a force, an agitated vibration that attains the feeling of vitalism, of being alive.

Nancy joins Paul de Man's and François Lyotard's discourse on the sublime. David Sedley shows how the contemporary debate reverberating in the background of Nancy's thought about the sublime revolves around two positions: one may argue that for Kant, the sublime provided a way out of Hume's contingent truths of empiricism, while the deconstructive diagnosis of the sublime in Man, Lyotard, Lacoue-Labarthe, and Nancy returns to Kant and carves the way into it.[105] If Kant's transcendental philosophy indicates something beyond mere cognition and thus anchoring epistemology and ethics, Nancy finds in the sublime an agitation of the sceptic who finds in the defeat of understanding a syncope of non-knowledge as a spacing, a mode, a manner of creation, and the feeling of existence. The agitated syncope is a disjointed form of proximities that are articulated in terms of touch. "There is proximity," he writes in *Being Singular Plural* (1996), "but only to the extent that extreme closeness emphasizes the distancing it opens up. All of being is in touch with all of being, but the law of touching is separation."[106] As singular plural beings, we are excessively exposed to, and in touch with, one another. If Kant sought to use the dilemma of the inconsistency of objective qualities and subjective affects as a way to recognise an *a priori* structure in ourselves, Nancy articulates a similar chasm without allowing recognition. Feeling is not cognising,

105 Paul de Man saw *CJ*'s sublime as a series of inconsistencies that maintain fragmented concepts: "The exchange from part to whole generates wholes that turn out to be only parts" (Man, "Phenomenality and Materiality in Kant," 95). One of the problems raised in his critique that will recur in Nancy is the contention that philosophical arguments are determined by linguistic structures that are not within the author's control (Man, 105; Nancy, *DS*, 7). For Jean-François Lyotard, the sublime attests to indeterminacy: "With the advent of the aesthetics of the sublime, the stake of art in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was to be the witness to the fact that there is indeterminacy" (Lyotard, "The Sublime and the Avant-Garde," in Lyotard, *The Inhuman: Reflections on Time*, trans. Geoffrey Bennington and Rachel Bowlby [Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1991], 101). On Montaigne's scepticism as a forerunner of the deconstructivists, see David L. Sedley, "Sublimity and Skepticism in Montaigne," *PMLA* 113 (1998): 1079–80. See also Kojin Karatani on Kant's "pronounced parallax" between empiricism and rationalism in Karatani, *Transcritique on Kant and Marx*, trans. Sabu Kohso (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2003), 44–53.

106 Nancy, *Being Singular Plural*, 5. For Nancy, proximity marks being exposed right on the limit, to think right on the limit (*à même*). This relational limit takes place in exposure, not to a transcendent sphere, but in transimmanence. Proximity thus designates the relation of being next to one another in the exposition of the heterogeneity of the mind (*Discourse of the Syncope* and *Kant's System of Pleasure*), of the arts (*Several Arts*), and of being (*The Inoperative Community* and *Being Singular Plural*).

and the moment of the mind's sublime revelation is a blind spot where one can only feel the heterogeneity of the mind, the plural principle of the singular syncope. Devoid of representational relations to the world, world-forming and world-creation are posed in the excessive sharing between singular plural beings. "The world takes place as art, as works of art" writes Nancy; it is the coming-into-presence of a somatic, quasi-transcendental presentation. "That presentation [that] touches itself, which is also to say that we are touched (we also speak of being *moved* [*émus*], but this latter emotion is suspension of the *émoi*, or agitation)."[107]

Does Nancy's portrayal of Kant—as a logodaedalic philosopher, a genius-creator, whose "mind is hurried out of itself," as Burke says, the mad philosopher whose ambition to construct a system delineated without concept—collapses his lifelong project maintaining the "transcendental" in contrast with "empirical" knowledge in a moment of pleasure?[108] Or perhaps, if we tune to Nancy's proposition that *philosophy is a pleasure* (*as much as it is an illness*)*, or there is some pleasure in philosophy*, we might see how the agitated philosopher carves artistic passages exposing the originary circle of the heterogeneity of the origin and the origin of heterogeneity through the principle of pleasure.[109]

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107 Nancy, *The Muses*, 35 (emphasis in original).

108 Edmund Burke, *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (Montrose, 1803), 64.

109 Nancy, *The Muses*, 15.

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Not by Socrates, but by the Splendour of Israel

Philosophy and Kabbalah in Abraham Miguel Cardozo's Early Thought

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Abstract

This article examines Abraham Miguel Cardozo's analysis of philosophy and Kabbalah as two systems of knowledge and the limits of their knowability. Cardozo argues that Kabbalah is a more precise and exalted system of knowledge since it is based on knowledge directly received from the God of Israel rather than from human figures, such as Socrates, Plato, or Aristotle. According to Cardozo, philosophy cannot correctly comprehend the highest planes of being and consequently conflates the First Cause and the God of Israel. Moreover, philosophy claims to know the First Cause, which Cardozo deems to be absolutely unknowable. However, upon closer examination, Cardozo's position on unknowability is very close to that of Maimonides. Based on this position, he shows that the First Cause cannot be known even through revelation and Kabbalah. Therefore, Cardozo criticises both systems of knowledge: he criticises philosophy through Kabbalah, and Kabbalah through philosophy.

Keywords

Abraham Miguel Cardozo – Maimonides – philosophy – Kabbalah – knowability – intellectual history – apophatic theology – mysticism

1 Introduction[1]

In this article, I will examine Abraham Miguel Cardozo's (1626–1706)[2] attitude towards the limits of knowledge in philosophy and Kabbalah and how he compares them as two "systems of wisdom," paying special attention to the possible Maimonidean roots of his thought. The second part of this article will focus on a related question and will explore the optical metaphors that Cardozo uses to illustrate his ideas about the limits of the human intellect.

Before beginning, I would like to note that it is easier to write about things that are correct and well-defined, about clear-cut influences and exact quotes. When it comes to hidden influences, half-forgotten and half-misunderstood things rendered through a series of semi-transparent layers of other influences, the task of reconstructing connections between texts, ideas, and authors becomes much more complex. This is precisely my task: this article is about a person who probably misunderstood and half-forgot a mistranslated passage of Maimonides's *The Guide of the Perplexed.*

Abraham Miguel Cardozo was one of the most important theologians of the early Sabbatian movement. His ideas were highly original, which cost him dearly: he engaged in constant polemics with the main prophet of Shabbetai

1 This article was written with the generous intellectual and material support of the Maimonides Centre for Advanced Studies at the University of Hamburg, where I was a junior research fellow from 2019 to 2020. It would not have been possible without the guidance of my adviser Michah Gottlieb. I am very thankful to Patrick B. Koch, Ilaria Briata, and Amalia Stulin for their most helpful suggestions and to two anonymous reviewers who have also helped me to greatly improve the quality of this article.

2 For his biography, see Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *From Spanish Court to Italian Ghetto. Isaac Cardoso: A Study in Seventeenth-Century Marranism and Jewish Apologetics* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1971), 233–35ff; Gershom Scholem, *Sabbetai Sevi–The Mystical Messiah*, 2nd ed. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1975), 645–47; and David Halperin in Abraham Miguel Cardozo, *Selected Writings*, trans. David J. Halperin (New York: Paulist Press, 2001), 5–108. All scholars are agreed that Cardozo was born in 1627 following Yerushalmi's and Yosha's reasoning. Yerushalmi writes that this date "is furnished by an epistle written by Miguel in 1669. There he states that in 1649 he was twenty-two years old": see Yerushalmi, *From Spanish Court to Italian Ghetto*, 69 n. 39; for a more expanded discussion, see Nissim Yosha, "Philosophical Elements in the Theology of Abraham Miguel Cardozo" [Hebrew] (MA thesis, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1985), 68–69 n. 26. If Cardozo was twenty-one or twenty-two in 1648/49, he could also have been born in the second half of 1626. From *Deruš Moshe Rabenu* (New York, JTS, Ms. ENA 1653, pages 206–15; each work in this manuscript has its own pagination), it appears that Cardozo was born in 1626. There, on 7a–b, Cardozo offers several complex gematria computations that should give אלף תרכ"ו as *Qeẓ ha-Ari* and proceeds to the computation of *Qeẓ ha-Ro'ši*, Cardozo's divine nickname, which also gives 1626. For *Ro'ši* as Cardozo's divine nickname, see Bruce Rosenstock, "Abraham Miguel Cardoso's Messianism: A Reappraisal," *AJS Review* 23 (1998): 69.

Ṣevi (1626–1676),[3] Nathan of Gaza (1643–1680).[4] After Ṣevi's death, Cardozo, embittered by his demise and his failure to reveal the secret of the divinity, proclaimed himself as a Mašiaḥ ben Efraim.[5] He was strongly against mass Jewish conversions to Islam and he became a staunch opponent of Samuel Primo (ca. 1635–1708),[6] Ṣevi's former secretary. The consequences of this conflict were drastic for Cardozo and led him to another exile.[7]

During his long life, Cardozo wrote above fifty kabbalistic treatises, most of which are unpublished. A large share of his works deals with the complex relationship between the God of Israel and the philosophical First Cause. Cardozo admonishes his contemporaries for having forgotten who the God of Israel is, claiming that following Maimonides and other medieval Jewish philosophers, they have identified God with the nameless and unknowable First Cause.[8]

3 Shabbetai Ṣevi was one of the most important figures of early modern Jewish history and it is impossible to provide a full bibliography of him. To this day, the most important book on him was written by Gershom Scholem: see Scholem, *Sabbetai Ṣevi*, esp. 687–814, and also the bibliography enclosed therein, 933ff. See also a recently published anthology on this figure and the movement that he sparked: Pawel Maciejko, ed., *Sabbatian Heresy: Writings on Mysticism, Messianism, and the Origins of Jewish Modernity* (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2017).

4 As in the previous case, there is increasing scholarship on this figure. Scholem perceived him to be the main force behind the Sabbatian movement; see Scholem, *Sabbetai Ṣevi*, 267–326. See also Avraham Elqayam, "To Know Messiah: The Dialectics of Sexual Discourse in the Messianic Thought of Nathan of Gaza" [Hebrew], *Tarbiz* 65 (1996): 637–70; Elqayam, "The Absent Messiah: Messiah Son of Joseph in the Thought of Nathan of Gaza, Sabbatai Sevi, and Abraham Miguel Cardozo" [Hebrew], *Daat: A Journal of Jewish Philosophy & Kabbalah* 38 (1997): 33–82. For some aspects of Cardozo's polemics with him about time and space, see Nissim Yosha, "Time and Space—A Theological-Philosophical Controversy between Miguel Cardoso and Nathan of Gaza" [Hebrew], *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 12 (1996): 259–84.

5 Cardozo wrote extensively about his messiahship in various texts, but most notably in *Qodeš Yiśrael la-YHWH*, which was published by Gershom Scholem in "Two New Theological Texts by Abraham Cardozo" [Hebrew], *Sefunot: Studies and Sources on the History of the Jewish Communities in the East* 3/4 (1960): 253–70. See Halperin's translation (as *Israel, Holiness to the Lord*) and commentary in Cardozo, *Selected Writings*, 255–72, esp. 263. See also Rosenstock, "Reappraisal," 69.

6 Primo wrote "royal edicts" at Sabbetai's behest: see Scholem, *Sabbetai Ṣevi*, 511 and 608, and see 511 n. 100 for his being Sabbetai's secretary in and after Gallipoli. Zalman Shazar also published a series of articles about him: see Shazar, "The Messiah's Scribe (On Samuel Primo)" [Hebrew], *Ha-shiloah* 29 (1913): 36–47; Shazar, "Sabbatai Sevi's Servant" [Hebrew], *Tarbiz* 5 (1934): 350–57. See also D. Gershon Lewental, "Primo, Samuel," in *Encyclopedia of Jews in the Islamic World*, ed. Norman A. Stillman (Brill Online, 2010), https://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopedia-of-jews-in-the-islamic-world/primo-samuel-SIM_0017810.

7 Halperin in Cardozo, *Selected Writings*, xxxi.

8 The relationship between the First Cause and the God of Israel is Cardozo's main theological question, and the scope of this article does not allow me to elucidate it fully. There is

I will focus on how Cardozo compares philosophy and Kabbalah in his two treatises written before 1682:[9] *Deruš ha-ʿIqqarim* and *Deruš ha-ʿIllot* (*Treatise on Principles* and *Treatise on Causes*).[10] However, I will analyse only one specific connection between Cardozo and Maimonides, since Cardozo's treatment of the relationship between philosophy and Kabbalah is far more complex.

Nissim Yosha devoted a 2009 article to the connection between these two Jewish thinkers,[11] which shows that Cardozo took problems and ideas from Maimonides, but treated them differently, sometimes even giving them the opposite treatment.[12] Specifically, Cardozo rejected Maimonides's identification

considerable literature on this topic. Carlo Bernheimer dismissed his theology as "dualist and absurd": see Bernheimer, "Some New Contributions to Abraham Cardoso's Biography," *Jewish Quarterly Review*, n.s. 18 (1927): 102. Gershom Scholem wrote about Cardozo's reversed gnosis and was criticised by Nissim Yosha: see Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, repr. ed (New York: Schocken, 1995), 321–25; Yosha, "Philosophical Elements," 49. Despite his Catholic upbringing and his somewhat scholastic style, Cardozo was a very inconsistent author who often voiced different opinions, and therefore his legacy should be always studied with caution as he would express quite different opinions in different works.

9 Scholarship has yet to provide the dating for Cardozo's texts. My research shows that *Deruš ha-ʿIqqarim* (hereafter *DIq*) is an early text, since it is mentioned in Cardozo's early work *Abraham's Morn* as a treatise that he is going to write (see Jerusalem, National Library of Israel [henceforth NLI], Ms. Heb. 7405=28 [NLI microfilm F4790], *Boqer de-Avraham,* 37b). The terminology that Cardozo uses suggests that *Deruš ha-ʿIllot* (hereafter *DIl*) was written later than *DIq*, which exhibits terminological similarities to *Abraham's Morn*. Moreover, this claim is corroborated by *DIl's* mention of *Abraham's Morn* and *Deruš Ḥokhmat Avraham Avinu* (see below).

10 Both these works are unpublished. *Deruš ha-ʿIqqarim* is available in four manuscripts: 1) New York, JTS, Ms. ENA 1653, available in the NLI as microfilm F10775; 2) Jerusalem, Schocken Foundation Ms. No. 17725, available in the NLI as microfilm F45403; 3) Budapest, Magyar tudomanyos academia, Ms. Kaufmann A 231, hebr. 159, available in the NLI as Fiche 73; and 4) Jerusalem NLI, Ms. Heb. 8°2049, now lost as a manuscript and microfilm (A68), though a scan is available online at https://web.nli.org.il/sites/NLI/Hebrew/digitallibrary/pages/viewer.aspx?presentorid=MANUSCRIPTS&docid=PNX_MANUSCRIPTS990025349690205171–1. When working with *Deruš ha-ʿIqqarim*, I have used the second manuscript as a default, since my studies of all four versions found in these manuscripts have revealed that this manuscript contains the fullest version of the text and is in the best condition. *Deruš ha-ʿIllot* is available in one manuscript, New York, JTS, Ms. ENA 1653 (the same manuscript that contains *Deruš ha-ʿIqqarim*).

11 Nissim Yosha, "Maimonides as Exponent and Opponent in Abraham Miguel Cardoso's Tractates" [Hebrew], *Daat: A Journal of Jewish Philosophy & Kabbalah* 64/66 (2009): 235–53.

12 Yosha, "Maimonides as Exponent and Opponent," 243, 252.

of the God of Israel and the God of the Philosophers while agreeing with his negative theology.[13]

Maimonides questions the human intellect's capacity to know God as the Prime Mover and to grasp the entities that are called the *separate intellects.*[14] The medieval Jewish and Arabic philosophy which follows Aristotle[15] holds these entities responsible for the celestial movements. Cardozo does not explicitly discuss them in these two treatises, yet he states that philosophy cannot know other supernal entities, called the *sefirot* and the *ʿillot*, due to human limitations. Despite the difference between the *sefirot* and the *ʿillot* on the one hand and the separate intellects on the other, they share many similarities, even functioning as synonyms in some kabbalistic systems.[16] Cardozo's

13 Yosha, 249–51. I will deal with this assessment later in this article, since I believe that Cardozo employed a different type of negative theology.

14 The separate intellects (*śekhalim nivdalim* or *śekhalim nifradim*) are an Aristotelian concept (see next note), which according to medieval Arabic and scholastic teaching are responsible for the revolution of the celestial spheres by virtue of their understanding. The full history of this term lies far beyond the scope of this article. Cardozo may have been influenced not only by Maimonides and later zoharic strata, but also by scholastic discussions. His exposure to the second scholasticism was probably oral and its precise extent is yet to be assessed. See Nissim Yosha, "The Neoscholastic Terminology of Miguel Cardoso's Doctrine of Divinity" [Hebrew], *Proceedings of the Eleventh World Congress of Jewish Studies. Division C: Thought and Literature, Volume 2: Jewish Thought, Kabbalah and Hasidism* (1993): 77–84. For the question of the knowability of the separate substances in Thomas Aquinas, see Héctor Zagal Arreguín, "The Separate Substances and Aquinas' *Intellectus Agens*," *Revista Portuguesa de Filosofia* 64, no. 1 (2008): 359–77. Like Cardozo, Aquinas elaborates on the natural light argument (which can be traced back to Aristotle) in order to explain how the intellect works (362), and he includes an enigmatic passage that describes the causal connection between the *intellectus agens* and the separate intellects, while claiming that the main Aristotelean work, *Metaphysics* 12, is incomplete (370–71).

15 See Aristotle, *Metaph.* 12.7, 1072a19–b3 and b13–24; for analysis, see Theokritos Kouremenos, *Heavenly Stuff: The Constitution of the Celestial Objects and the Theory of Homocentric Spheres in Aristotle's Cosmology* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2010), esp. 41–42.

16 The story of the kabbalistic appropriation of the separate intellects is not yet written, and there are numerous instances when Kabbalists use and explain these entities as they please and even identify them with the *sefirot.* For the first identification by Yoḥanan Allemano, see Nissim Yosha, "Philosophical Foundations in the Theology of Abraham Miguel Cardozo" [Hebrew] (MA thesis, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1985), 64 n. 16 and references therein. See Elliot R. Wolfson, "The Doctrine of Sefirot in the Prophetic Kabbalah of Abraham Abulafia (Part II)," *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 3 (1996): 47–84, esp. 48 n. 111, and see the articles referenced there: Sara O. Heller Wilensky, "Isaac ibn Laṭif—Philosopher or Kabbalist?", in *Jewish Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, ed. Alexander Altmann (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013), 185–224, esp. 212–14. For more on Abulafia's identification between the *sefirot* and the *śekhalim nifradim,* see Moshe Idel, "The Sefirot above the Sefirot" [Hebrew], *Tarbiz* 51 (1982): 262. For other examples, see

discussion of the unknowability of the *ʿillot* and the *sefirot* is very similar to Maimonides's discussion of the separate intellects and his treatment of them may have been influenced by the discussion in the *Guide*, a connection that will be examined in what follows.

Michah Gottlieb has followed a recent critique of Gershom Scholem, who makes a sharp distinction between philosophy and mysticism. For instance, Scholem claims that "the philosopher can only proceed with his proper task after having successfully converted the concrete realities of Judaism into a bundle of abstractions," while "the mystic refrains from destroying the living texture of religious narrative."[17] In his article dedicated to Halevi and Maimonides, Gottlieb,[18] following Elliot Wolfson,[19] proposes another division: he typifies mysticism as "revelatory" and "apophatic" (although Wolfson uses different terminology, drawing a distinction between "cognitive" and "introvertive").[20] Relying on this distinction, Gottlieb considers Maimonides's own mystical inclinations, and instead of contrasting "mysticism" and "philosophy," he offers a more nuanced comparison between Halevi's revelatory mysticism and Maimonides's apophatic mysticism. I propose to complicate this scheme further with an example of a system that may be called "apophatic revelation," which is found in Cardozo's early works.

2 Two Wisdoms: Kabbalah and Philosophy

Cardozo concludes his *Treatise on Causes* with a passage that compares Kabbalah and philosophy as two "wisdoms" that share a similar structure as

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Joseph Gikatilla, *Sefer ha-Niqqud* (Krakow, 1648), 3b (who identifies the separate intellects with the highest angels and argues with "the philosophers" that they are material, despite their matter being "intellectual" [*śikhli*]; later in the text (5b), he identifies the same angels with the *sefirot* and *nequdot*), and Moshe Cordovero, *Pardes Rimonim*, 6.6 (with a reference to Maimonides). A more direct identification can be found in Abraham Abulafia, *Sefer Imre Šefer*, ed. Amnon Gros (Jerusalem: Aharon Barzeni and Son, 1999), 142. Other sources seem to place the separate intellects somewhere below the *sefirot*: for instance, *Sefer Maʿarekhet ha-Elohut* (Ferrara, 1558), chapter 10, where the separate intellects are identified with the planets. The same ideas are also found in Ḥayim Viṭal, *ʿEṣ Ḥayyim*.

17 Scholem, *Major Trends*, 26, and see 25–28 for the whole discussion.

18 Michah Gottlieb, "Mysticism and Philosophy," in *The Cambridge History of Jewish Philosophy, Volume 1: From Antiquity through the Seventeenth Century*, ed. Steven Nadler and T.M. Rudavsky (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 121–22.

19 Elliot R. Wolfson, *Through a Speculum That Shines: Vision and Imagination in Medieval Jewish Mysticism*, rev. ed. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), 59–67.

20 Gottlieb, "Mysticism and Philosophy," 122–24.

systems of knowledge. This structure is a uniform epistemic approach that allows scholars to obtain correct knowledge through a system of proofs and demonstrations. However, Cardozo disagrees that these two systems have similar value and scope. By comparing them, he inserts himself into a long tradition of Jewish scholars who tried to compare Kabbalah (in a broad sense) with philosophy.[21]

Cardozo writes:

> And now you can see with your critical [*qašim*] eyes the things in *Abraham's Morn* and *The Wisdom of Abraham Our Father.*[22] And in this treatise, all these [problems] will be resolved, with God's help. Take this principle in your hands: that the true wisdom [*ḥokhmat emet*] is called "the Wisdom of Kabbalah." And so it is. And the reason is that every wisdom works through proofs [*re'ayot*] until it finds a demonstration [*mofet*]. And philosophy conceives and announces to its adherents the existence of the necessary existent [*meṣi'ut meḥuyav ha-meṣi'ut*] in many clear proofs. And with all that, it is not the true wisdom, because philosophy attributes the power of creation to the First Cause and cannot attribute this power to anyone else, and [philosophy] attributes charity, judgement, and loving-kindness to it [= the First Cause], and [philosophy] denies the existence of the qualities and the *sefirot.* And there

21 For Halevi's comparison (also in favour of the Jewish mystical tradition), see Gottlieb, "Mysticism and Philosophy," 126–36; for the Renaissance, see Hava Tirosh-Rothschild, "Sefirot as the Essence of God in the Writings of David Messer Leon," *AJS Review* 7/8 (1982): 409–11, esp. n. 1. See also Uri Gershovich's analysis of Salomon Maimon's comparison and synthesis between Kabbalah and philosophy in Gershovich, "Kabbalah and Philosophy in the Early Works of Salomon Maimon" [Russian], *RUDN Journal of Philosophy* 24 (2020): 342–61.

22 Here, Cardozo is speaking about *Deruš Boqer de-Avraham* (*Abraham's Morn*), which is available in several manuscripts (for instance, Berlin State Library, Ms. Or. Oct. 940; Jerusalem, NLI, Ms. Heb. 7405=28; Russian State Library, Ms. Guenzburg 660, all of which are available as microfilms from the NLI website numbered F2022, F4790, and F27989 respectively). This work is one of his earliest. *Deruš Ḥokhmat Avraham Avinu* (*Wisdom of Abraham Our Father*), which was written at a later stage of his life, is available in two manuscripts: one in the Schocken Institute, Ms. Jer Schoc 17725 (Kab 95), available online from the NLI as microfilm F45403, the other in the same manuscript as *DIl*, which is analysed in this article. Both are unpublished, but the former has received more scholarly attention and is occasionally quoted by Halperin, Wolfson, and Rosenstock. The latter is mentioned in Bernheimer, "Some New Contributions," 109, and is also occasionally used by Yosha (see *Philosophical Foundations*, 102). Elqayam draws on the available material in his article on the concept of the Messiah son of Ephraim (Elqayam, "The Absent Messiah," 63–64, 74). It was copied in spring 1684 (see Ms. Jer Schoc 17725, 44a), though I believe that it was written somewhat earlier.

> are many things like that which are not true. Also, it is the case that Kabbalah[23] is not necessary in order to know that there is a creator and a created, because this is clear to the mind just as it is clear to an eye that there is a tree that has been planted in the earth. And the eye does not understand [*makir*] the hidden root in the same way that the reason does not understand that there is the Cause Above All Causes, and this is the first actor, from which everything proceeds. [...] And the Cause Above All Causes cannot be known through demonstration and by the power of the intellect, and that is why Kabbalah is needed and necessary in order to know it and to deal with it, and that is why it is called "the Wisdom of Kabbalah." And only this is a true wisdom, and it is given neither by Socrates, nor by Plato, nor by Aristotle, but by the Splendour of Israel, who reveals the deep matters from the darkness [Job 12:22], and they are three *'illot*.[24]

Comparing philosophy and Kabbalah, Cardozo decides in favour of the latter. For Cardozo, philosophy and Kabbalah are comparable because they are both "wisdoms" that rest on the same epistemic procedure: using proofs (*re'ayot*), they arrive at demonstrations (*moftim*).[25] However, there are three major points of difference between them. First, Cardozo asserts that philosophy claims to know more about the First Cause than it can adequately ascertain. Second, Kabbalah is greater than philosophy because it has a nobler source: it was not revealed by Socrates and his disciples, but by the Splendour of Israel; that is, the biblical God. Finally, Kabbalah studies the *sefirot* and the *'illot,* while philosophy stays silent on these matters since it is blind to their existence.

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23 Cardozo uses the term *Qabbalah* which can be translated as "Kabbalah" or alternatively as "tradition" (as, for instance, in Halevi's *Kuzari*). Both translations are somewhat correct, yet taking into consideration the immediate context of the passage in hand and Cardozo's overall agenda, which presents Kabbalah as the only source of true knowledge, I have opted for the narrower term.

24 *DII*, 9b–10a. Here and later in the text, the punctuation and translations are mine.

25 I will leave the question as to whether this perception of Kabbalah and philosophy being parallel and structurally similar is unique to Cardozo or whether he took it from somewhere else outside of the scope of this article. On the influence of the philosophical epistemic ethos on Kabbalah, see Jonathan Dauber, *Knowledge of God and the Development of Early Kabbalah* (Leiden: Brill, 2012); for the early modern interaction between these two knowledge projects, see David B. Ruderman, *Jewish Thought and Scientific Discovery in Early Modern Europe*, new ed. (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2001), esp. 118–53; Moshe Idel, "Particularism and Universalism in Kabbalah, 1480–1650," in *Essential Papers on Jewish Culture in Renaissance and Baroque Italy*, ed. David B. Ruderman (New York: New York University Press, 1992), 324–44.

For Cardozo, the *sefirot* and the *ʿillot* are crucial for correcting metaphysical knowledge. In his view, philosophy wrongly disturbs the absolute unity of the First Cause, ascribing to it such anthropopathic qualities as charity, judgement, and loving-kindness. Cardozo claims that in order to understand the Godhead correctly, these qualities must be ascribed to external entities—the *sefirot* and the *ʿillot*.

Both these terms have a rich history in Jewish mysticism and Kabbalah. A *sefirah*[26] is one of the most basic Jewish notions, which appears in almost every kabbalistic text and is so popular that it sometimes even appears in other corpora. It emerged in an enigmatic text in the *Book of Formation* (*Sefer Yeṣirah*)[27] as the attributes of God and the means by which he controls the world. Later, it was taken up by numerous mystical texts that ascribe various qualities of God to different *sefirot*, which are understood to stand in complex relations to each other. The other term, *ʿillah*,[28] is much less studied and widespread. This word is initially found in two sources: the Talmud, where it is used as an Aramaic synonym for the Hebrew word *sibbah*, or "a cause, a reason,"[29] and later in Judah ben Saul ibn Tibbon's translations of *Ḥovot ha-Levavot* and *Ha-Kuzari* in the form of *ʿillat ha-ʿillot* (the Cause of the Causes).[30] In the later

26 For the *sefirot* in the *Book of Formation* (*Sefer Yeṣirah*), see Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, 76–77, and 212, 219–20 for the *sefirot* in the *Zohar*. It would be impossible to provide a full literature review on this topic.

27 For *Sefer Yeṣirah*, see Scholem, *Major Trends*, 75–79, and Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, trans. Allan Arkush (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987), 24–35; Yehuda Liebes, *Ars Poetica in Sefer Yetsira* [Hebrew] (Tel Aviv: Schocken, 2000). The nature of this book and whether or not the use of the term *sefirah* there is equivalent to its later usage is still under debate.

28 Cardozo prefers to call it *ʿillat,* arguing that this word is always in *status constructus* (*smikhut*): see *DII*, 4a and ff.

29 Marcus Jastrow, *A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature* (London: Luzac, 1903), 2:1070.

30 Yakov Klatzkin and M.N. Tzovel, *Otzar ha-Munaḥim ha-Filosofiim, Thesaurus philosophicus linguae hebraicae*, 4 vols., repr. ed. (Berlin: Eshkol, 1928–1933), 1:534. I will use the digital copy available from the PESHAT project web portal (https://peshat.gwiss.uni-hamburg.de/nav?path=left.thesaurus). Klatzkin's thesaurus is one of the two dictionaries that are dedicated to medieval Hebrew philosophical terminology. The other is much smaller: see Resianne Fontaine, "The Study of Medieval Hebrew Philosophical Terminology in the Twentieth Century: Klatzkin's *Thesaurus* and Later Studies," *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 7 (2000): 179. Fontaine's article is dedicated to Klatzkin's thesaurus and contains substantial material about its scholarly reception. She concludes that Klatzkin's work must be continued and significantly updated in terms of both methodology and material. Luckily, the situation has improved since 2000 and there is now the online PESHAT project, which defines itself as "an online multilingual thesaurus of medieval Hebrew philosophical and scientific terminology," available at https://peshat.gwiss.uni-hamburg.de/. See

zoharic strata (*Tiqqune Zohar, Raʿya' Mehemna',* and *Zohar Ḥadaš*), it takes at least three different forms that later Kabbalists, including Cordovero and Cardozo, employ in order to explain the highest mysteries of the Godhead (the *ʿillot* are generally higher than the *sefirot*).[31] However, in some works, Cardozo, following Cordovero,[32] permits a broader usage of the term *ʿillat*, stating that the *sefirot* are also *ʿillot*.[33]

Despite their differences, Cardozo maintains that philosophy and Kabbalah follow the same basic epistemological structure: they are both wisdoms (*ḥokhmot*) that use proofs (*derekh re'ayot*) leading to a demonstration (*mofet*). This terminology suggests that *re'ayah* is a weaker form of proof, since it can only lead to *mofet*, or a demonstration, and is not sufficient in its own right.[34]

Using this medieval philosophical terminology, Cardozo shows that philosophy is inadequate to grasp the structure of the highest realms of the world. In the fragment that I have translated, Cardozo claims that philosophy cannot know the intermediaries between the Splendour of Israel[35] and the First

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also Baḥya ibn Paqudah, *Sefer Ḥovot ha-Levavot*, trans. R. Yehudah ibn Tibon (Jerusalem: Lewin-Epstein Bros. and Co. Ltd, 1954), 33, 40; Yehuda ha-Levi, *Ha-Khuzari* (Venetia, 1594). Later in the text, I will use the more common transliteration of "Kuzari" to refer to this book, a scan of which is available at http://hebrewbooks.org/24846, 7a–b.

31 For this concept, see Moshe Idel, "The Image of Man above the Sefirot" [Hebrew], *Daat: A Journal of Jewish Philosophy & Kabbalah* 4 (1980): 41–55. Halperin writes briefly about the use of the term *ʿillat* in Cardozo, *Selected Writings*, 355 n. 97 and 329–30 n. 24. *DII*'s main concern is the difference between the Cause Above All Causes, the Cause Above All, and the Cause of Causes (*ʿillat ʿal kol ha-ʿillot*, *ʿillat ʿal kola'*, and *ʿillat ha-ʿilot*. These terms are used in *Tiqqune Zohar*, where some passages indicate that they are indeed different; see *DII*, 2b; *Zohar* 1:22b, Cordovero, *Pardes Rimonim,* 3.1). This term is used less frequently in Yosef ben Shalom Ashkenazi's (Pseudo-Ra'avad) commentary on *Sefer Yeṣirah*: see Gershom Scholem, "The True Author of the Commentary on *Sefer Yetzirah* Attributed to R. Abraham ibn Daud and His Books" [Hebrew], *Mehqare Kabbalah* 1 (1998): 112–36. Scholem assesses this book as an important stage for the "philosophisation of Kabbalah" (112).

32 Cordovero, *Pardes Rimonim,* 3.1.

33 Cardozo, *Treatise on The Preceding Daughter* (*Deruš Bat bi-Teḥilah*), 1a. This work, a short treatise in Ms. JTS 1653, is mostly unmentioned in scholarship. (See n. 10 about this ms.)

34 This terminology stems back to Samuel ibn Tibbon's (1150–1230) translation of Maimonides's *Guide of the Perplexed*: see Carlos Fraenkel, "Maimonides, Averroes, and Samuel ibn Tibbon on a *Skandalon* of Medieval Science," *Aleph* 8 (2008): 207–9.

35 I translate the Hebrew designation *tif'eret yiśra'el*, which is the full name of the middle *sefirah* called *tif'eret* or "splendour," as "the Splendour of Israel." According to most kabbalistic schemes, this is the place where *zeʿir anpin*, who is the biblical God, resides: see Scholem, *Major Trends*, 213. For its union with the *Šekhinah*, see Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah,* 181. For *tif'eret yiśra'el* as *parṣuf zeʿir anpin,* see Ḥayim Viṭal, *ʿEṣ Ḥayyim*, 48.3.

Cause. This point is crucial for the whole *Treatise on Causes* since the entities which he calls *ʿillot* ("the Causes") stand between the God of Israel (whom he identifies with the Splendour of Israel) and the First Cause. Cardozo calls the teachings about these *ʿillot* one of the most important secrets that Simeon ben Yoḥai, the main protagonist of the *Zohar* and *Tiqqune Zohar*, revealed to his fellows.[36]

The concluding passage of the *Treatise on Causes* shows that philosophy can grasp and demonstrate "the existence of the necessary existent." Here, Cardozo uses another term taken from medieval philosophy and most probably from the *Guide*[37] (which is also notably present in Cordovero's *Pomegranate Orchard*[38]). These "many clear proofs" are still very problematic for Cardozo and he finds them not to be *ḥokhmat emet*, or true wisdom. According to him, philosophy can only demonstrate the obvious—that is, the existence of the creator and the created—but since it fails to grasp the *sefirot* and the *ʿillot*, it proves itself to be unworthy of the title of "true wisdom," as its scope is insufficient to reveal the true reality of the Godhead.

True wisdom is hidden and can only be revealed by the Splendour of Israel. The truth that is revealed by Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle is deficient compared to the truth that God himself reveals. Only God can reveal the secrets that lie in the darkness. Socrates and his human disciples can only reveal something that is visible, or, to put it in Cardozo's words, the human intellect is like a human eye, which can see a tree, but not its hidden roots.

Cardozo's accounts are inconsistent, but in his early period he places the God of Israel in *Tifʾeret de-Aṣilut*: see *DIq*, 124a.

36 *DIl*, 3b; Cardozo claims that the *Zohar's* main secret is the existence of the Cause Above All Causes (*ʿillat ʿal-kol ha-ʿillot*), who is an intermediary between the First Cause and the Cause of Causes (*ʿillat ha-ʿillot*): see *The Zohar*, 3 vols. (Mantua, 1558–1560), 1:22a–b, an interpolation of *Tiqqune Zohar*. For the fragment of *Zohar* 1:22a–29a as an interpolation of *Tiqqune Zohar*, see Gershom Scholem, *Kabbalah* (New York: Meridian, 1978), 218–19. This is close to *Tiqqun* n. 70, and see also no. 16.

37 Moses Maimonides, *The Guide of the Perplexed*, trans. Shlomo Pines, 2 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), 1.72, 2.1, and 2.4; see the discussion of the Necessary Being in Pines's preface to that volume, cxiii–cxiv. According to Pines, Maimonides takes an Avicennian position in 2.4, denying the identity of the Necessary Being and the deity, and agrees with Averroes in 1.72 and 1.4, identifying them.

38 Moshe Cordovero, *Pardes Rimonim*, 3.1, identifies *meḥuyav ha-meṣiʾut* with *ein sof*, stating that it calls time into existence, yet stays above time, and that it designates a nameless entity. In *Pardes Rimonim*, 11.2, Cordovero states "and he has no name at all, but 'the necessary existent.'" Cardozo wrote a treatise named *Deruš Meḥuyav ha-Meṣiʾut ha-Nikraʾ Ein Sof*.

This blindness causes an important mistake: under the name of the necessary existent (*meḥuyav ha-meṣi'ut*), philosophy conflates the First Cause (*sibbah ri'šonah*) and the God of Israel. If Cardozo is referring to Maimonides here, he either chooses to ignore *Guide* 2.4, a fragment that at least denies the identity of the Deity and the Prime Mover, or his interpretation favours two other places that conflate them.[39] In any case, Cardozo follows the spirit of the *Guide*, which on most hermeneutical levels affirms the connection and even equality between the biblical God of Israel and the Aristotelian First Cause.

According to Cardozo, this conflation has two important consequences. First, it is the gravest sin: Cardozo writes on many occasions that God could tolerate many of the Jews' other sins, but not the fact that they had forgotten him, which had led them into exile.[40] Second, the theology that builds on this assumption is severely corrupted. Philosophers do not discern the *'illot* and the *sefirot* at all: the former, according to the *Treatise on Causes*, are necessary for the biblical God to emerge from the nothingness (*ain*) that proceeds from the First Cause,[41] while the latter become God's body.[42]

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39 See n. 38.

40 Cardozo, *Zeh Eli we-Anwehu*, printed in Scholem, "Two New Theological Texts by Abraham Cardozo," 270–73, *Boqer de-Avraham*, 11a–b, 16b–17a; a similar motif is found in *Tiqqun 'Elyon we-'Amoq,* 11b. For Cardozo's rebuke of the philosophers, see Scholem, *On the Mystical Shape of the Godhead: Basic Concepts in the Kabbalah* (New York: Schocken, 1991), 156. See also Yosha, *Philosophical Foundations,* 15, 45, 81 n. 20, 88 n. 44. Cardozo writes on several occasions that the God of Israel forgave Israel for various sins until they forgot him. When that happened, he decided to exile them from their land. My current research deals with some of the theological and psychological reasons why Cardozo was so concerned about this conflation.

41 *DII*, 2b (see "Nine Principles of Wisdom," Principles 5–7).

42 *DII*, 4a (God and the *Šekhinah* "don" [*mitlabšim*] the *sefirot*). According to other texts, the God of Israel is either a duplex soul of the Cause of Causes (which comprises the Cause of Causes [*'illat ha-'illot*] as the *Šekhinah* and the Cause Above All [*'illat 'al kola'*] as *tif'eret yiśra'el*). See Cardozo, *Raza' de-Mehemanuta',* 3a. Yehuda Liebes demonstrated that this text was written by Cardozo and not by Shabbetai Ẓevi: see Liebes, "Michael Cardoso—Author of the Book *Raza deMehemnuta* which had been attributed to Sabbatai Zevi, and the Mistaken Attribution of *'Iggeret Maggen Abraham* to Cardoso, Part 1" [Hebrew], *Kiryat Sefer* 55, no. 3 (1980): 603–16. Alternatively, the God of Israel is a mighty soul that comes from the three *'illot* to dwell in the highest sefirot, which constitute his body: see Cardozo, *Tiqqun 'Elyon we-'Amoq*, 4b–5a. The idea that the tree of the *sefirot* is in the image of a human body is not Cardozo's, but is already found in *Sefer Yeṣirah* and is a commonplace of Kabbalah. For the structural resemblance between the *sefirot* and the parts of the body, such as the fingers or the whole body, see *Sefer Yeṣirah* 1:3 and 5:2 respectively. Again, this topic is outside the scope of this article. See Scholem, *Mystical Shape*, etc.

3 Cardozo and Maimonides on God's Unknowability

The fragment above has shown how Cardozo accuses philosophy of claiming to know too much about the things that are impossible for the human mind to grasp through intellectual inquiry alone. He accuses Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle of claiming to know the First Cause through reason. Cardozo responds that it is impossible to know anything about the First Cause as it is too exalted. When he writes about this unknowability, he employs medieval terminology that comes from the translations of Maimonides's texts made by Samuel ibn Tibbon. While Maimonides stays silent on the subject of the *sefirot* and the *'illot* (since he does not employ this terminology), he writes a lot about other celestial simplexes that are not knowable to the human mind.

4 Are the Separate Intellects Knowable? Maimonides and Samuel ibn Tibbon

In his article "Maimonides' Critical Epistemology and *Guide* 2:24,"[43] Warren Zev Harvey examines Maimonides's attitude to knowledge and its limitations. Harvey begins with a survey of the different attitudes to the levels of understanding in *The Guide of the Perplexed*. Maimonides's stance on these matters is not easy to establish, however, since he employed several layers of interpretation.[44] Harvey follows Pines's criticism of Leo Strauss, claiming that the *Guide* does not have *just* two levels of interpretation—that is, exoteric and esoteric—but rather at least four: from traditional *kalam* theology as the most superficial to intellectual mysticism as the most profound, with orthodox Aristotelianism and critical epistemology in between.[45]

In the context of this essay, the most important question is: Did Maimonides believe that God and the separate intellects are knowable? The question about God is, in a way, the easier one: according to Maimonides, God cannot be known since he is too exalted. The most complicated part is the question about the separate intellects: Pines and Harvey maintain that Maimonides

43 Warren Zev Harvey, "Maimonides' Critical Epistemology and *Guide* 2:24," *Aleph* 8 (2008): 213–35.

44 Harvey, "Maimonides' Critical Epistemology," 213–14. Harvey begins with the enumeration of Pines's four levels: 1) traditional or dialectical theology, 2) orthodox Aristotelianism, 3) critical epistemology, and 4) intellectualist mysticism. Later, he calls this model "not only correct, but an understatement."

45 Harvey, "Maimonides' Critical Epistemology," 213–14.

believed that these entities could not be known[46] as they are also too exalted and remote from the human intellect. The decisive fragment from *Guide* 2.24 in Pines's translation states that:

> For it is impossible for us to accede to the points starting from which conclusions may be drawn about the heavens; for the latter are too far away from us and too high in place and in rank. And even the general conclusion that may be drawn from them, namely, that they prove the existence of their Mover, is a matter the knowledge of which cannot be reached by human intellects.[47]

Though this passage does not explicitly mention the separate intellects, from the parallel places in the *Guide*, it is clear that they are the subject of this fragment. Maimonides identifies them with the angels and designates them as the movers of the celestial objects such as the planets, the sun, the moon, and the stars.[48] Other fragments of the *Guide*, such as the opening parable of Adam's fall from the Garden of Eden and the closing parable of the King in the Palace, also suggest that Maimonides was extremely sceptical about the possibility of knowing remote celestial objects and metaphysical objects such as the separate intellects.[49]

Yet this critical position was not accepted by several of Maimonides's immediate readers, most notably by his translator Samuel ibn Tibbon, who emended the translation from Arabic into Hebrew in a way that allowed for knowledge of the separate intellects.[50] As Harvey has shown, the critical apophatic position was problematic for Ibn Tibbon since it would render his confident rationalism unfounded and therefore void.[51]

Cardozo may have seen Ibn Tibbon's translation, but he may also have been unaware of the internal complexity of the *Guide's* Hebrew text, taking for granted that philosophy claims to know what he deems to be unknowable.

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46 Harvey, "Maimonides' Critical Epistemology," 214–16.

47 Maimonides, *Guide* 2.24 (2:327). Harvey's article has a slightly different version of this translation.

48 Maimonides, 2.19 (2:308): "It appears to me that [Aristotle's] assertion in the 'Metaphysics' that a separate intellect should be supposed for every sphere is also made with a view to the notion in question: namely, in order that there should be there something that would particularize every sphere by means of some motion with which it would be endowed."

49 Josef Stern, *The Matter and Form of Maimonides' Guide* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013), 250–305. For the tacit denial of these intellects in 1.72 and their explicit endorsement in 2.2–12, see 261–62.

50 Harvey, "Maimonides' Critical Epistemology," 223–24.

51 Harvey, "Maimonides' Critical Epistemology," 227, and Maimonides, *Guide*, 2:327 n. 12.

Thus, Cardozo became an *exoteric* reader of Maimonides who failed to grasp his critical point. However, Cardozo devised his own critical epistemological theory that parallels that of Maimonides, which complicates the issue at hand.

5 Did Cardozo Know about Maimonides's Discussion of Knowability?

The text of the *Treatise on Causes* makes no mention of Maimonides, referring only to ancient Greek philosophers. However, Cardozo knew about the problem of the *Guide* and mentions the problem of the proofs and knowability in an earlier work called the *Treatise on Principles* (*Deruš ha-ʿIqqarim*).[52] The fragment from the *Treatise on Principles* deals with another question that is related to knowledge and its boundaries. Cardozo brings up this issue when he discusses time and the question of whether the world is created in time, as the Torah claims, or whether it is eternal, as Aristotle claims.[53] Cardozo sums up the previous opinions, including the "philosophers'" opinion and also that of Maimonides (notably differentiating between them):

> And Maimonides, who shows that this question [of time] is extremely difficult, found himself without arguments for announcing its nature to others. And the rabbis (blessed be their memory!) prohibited enquiry [into] what is inside and what is before. And how many mighty [thinkers] fell into the depths of this matter! And the philosophers also failed, and they said that the world is eternal. And the *Guide* said [2.23] that there is no definitive demonstration [*mofet muḥlaṭ*] to resolve [the problem of time], but that the matter is questionable [*be-safeq*], yet we rely on the Torah, which says, "In the beginning God created," etc.[54]

This fragment deals with another question that Cardozo deems unsolved by all major intellectual factions: neither Maimonides, the Gentile philosophers, nor the talmudic sages could solve the puzzle of time. Cardozo does not refer to the fragment examined by Harvey, Pines, and Strauss, but rather to another one that is situated before the chapter in question (*Guide* 2.23 and 2.24). Moreover, the quote that Cardozo cites is located close to the end of chapter 23, and this chapter itself serves as a methodological introduction to *Guide* 2.24, which is dedicated to the question of the movement of the celestial spheres and the

52 See n. 10.

53 This specific question is analysed in Yosha, "Time and Space."

54 *DIq*, 136b.

separate intellects. Of course, I cannot infer from this a *definitive demonstration* that Cardozo read and understood this fragment from the *Guide* dealing with the question of the knowability of the Prime Mover. However, there is a definite probability that Cardozo was influenced by Maimonides and his critical attitude towards ancient philosophy and its epistemological limitations. This point becomes even stronger if we take into consideration Maimonides's own critical and sceptical approach towards ancient philosophy and Aristotle's ideas.[55]

Of course, we should keep in mind that these two problems (namely, "Can the human mind know whether the world was created in time?" and "Can it know the separate intellects?") are different, and I do not think that they should be confused with one another. However, I do think that Cardozo was most probably informed about Maimonides's stance towards both of these issues (at least in Ibn Tibbon's translation) when he admonished the philosophers.

6 Cardozo and Maimonides: How Similar, How Different

Maimonides identifies the main protagonist of the Bible with the metaphysical God of the philosophers. Between the absolute and immovable God and the sublunar world, there are simple immaterial separate intellects that conceive the simple truths and move the celestial spheres through the power of their understanding. Maimonides doubts that even these intermediaries might be known, since they are too remote from the human intellect.

Cardozo, on the contrary, distinguishes between the God of Israel and the First Cause. The *ʿillot* and the *sefirot* are not separate intellects, yet they are also simplexes and intermediaries. Neither can be known by the human intellect because they are beyond its scope, and only God's revelation can reveal their existence and give information about them. Despite Cardozo not explicitly identifying the *ʿillot* with the separate intellects (*śekhalim nivdalim* or *śekhalim nifradim*), he writes (following Pseudo-Raʾavad) that they are simple intellects.[56] Several Kabbalists identified the separate intellects with the *sefirot*,[57] while others identified them with the *ʿillot*,[58] and though Cardozo

55 For Maimonides's scepticism towards ancient philosophy and a detailed analysis of the respective fragments, see Stern, *Matter and Form*, chapter 7, esp. 294–305.

56 *DII*, 1b. In his *Zeh Eli we-Anwehu*, Cardozo makes another connection: he writes that "ancient philosophers" such as Plato called *sefirot* "divine thoughts," i.e., Ideas. See Scholem, "Two New Theological Texts by Abraham Cardozo," 284.

57 See n. 16.

58 Idel, "The Image of Man above the Sefirot," 45.

might not have seen their works, he may have chosen the same intellectual trajectory as a person on the cusp between Kabbalah and philosophy. In at least two unpublished texts, Cardozo defines the *sefirot* as "separate/unique intellectual entities" (*nimṣa'im śikhliyim meyuḥadim*), which suggests that he was aware of this medieval philosophical terminology and that he considered the *sefirot* and the separate intellects to be the same thing.[59]

Therefore, it is possible that these two distinct types of terms, one hailing from Aristotelian celestial metaphysics and the other from Neoplatonic mysticism, are close to each other in some of Cardozo's texts and that they have similar epistemological functions as a relatively unknowable veil of the absolutely unknowable God. The *'illot* and the separate intellects occupy quite a similar position: they are simple intermediaries between the absolutely simple and unknowable God and the knowable world of sublunar complexes. The major difference between Cardozo and Maimonides is that Cardozo distinguishes between the biblical God and the First Cause, thus adding another layer of metaphysical entities. Such a move would have been completely alien to Maimonides's philosophy (since it would presuppose complexity and changeability in God), yet this elaboration has inherited its epistemological outlook on the celestial simplexes. To put it another way: despite having a very different ontology, Cardozo displays an affinity with and a possible influence from Maimonides's epistemological doubt.

7 Light, Darkness, Spirituality, and the Shades of the Unseen

Cardozo uses the analogy of the eye and its perceptive limitations to describe the limits of the intellect, which he calls an "intellectual eye." Nissim Yosha analyses this analogy in his Master's thesis[60] and retells it as it appears in Cardozo's early work *Abraham's Morn*. Yosha's focus is on explicating the differences between the "corporal" and "spiritual" analogies that Cardozo develops in his work.[61] I will revisit this analogy from a different angle: here, my aim is to explain its possible philosophical sources and to examine its epistemological implications.

Cardozo dispels philosophical arrogance, showing that the philosophers cannot know the intermediaries, which are called the *sefirot* and the *'illot*, and

59 Cardozo, *Bat bi-Ṭḥilah*, 1a. See also a discussion in *Deruš ha-Me'iri*, 12b.

60 See Yosha, *Philosophical Foundations*, 107–10.

61 Yosha, 111–12.

that this knowledge is accessible to the wisdom of Kabbalah. How are these entities known? Is Kabbalah's knowledge unlimited, or, like philosophy, does it have its own limits?

The *Treatise on Causes* finishes with a quotation from Job that supports Cardozo's claim about the philosophical unknowability of the entities called *'illot:* "[God] who reveals the deep matters from the darkness (Job 12:22), and they are three *'illot.*"[62] Here, Cardozo uses a metaphor of darkness to refer to the unknown. This section will explore this obscure matter further with an analysis of two further quotations from the *Treatise on Principles* that describe the most exalted worlds as "dark" due to their unknowability to the human intellects.

Cardozo is not the only Jewish philosopher who describes the unknowable as "dark," and as the quote suggests, this usage has biblical roots.[63] However, there might also be a connection between Cardozo and Maimonides. The *Guide* describes the separate intellects as follows:

> Hence whenever our intellect aspires to apprehend the deity or one of the [separate] intellects, there subsists this great veil interposed between the two. This is alluded to in all the books of the prophets; namely, that we are separated by a veil from God and that He is hidden from us by a heavy cloud, or by darkness or by a mist or by an enveloping cloud, and similar allusions to our incapacity to apprehend Him because of matter.[64]

This fragment, which is situated in a different part of the *Guide's* text, exhibits Maimonides's critical epistemology and his doubts that such exalted matters can be known to the human intellect. This text also draws on the imagery of invisibility, which can be divided into two groups: concealment either by a

62 *Dll*, 10b.

63 There are numerous philosophers and even a sizable proportion of Jewish (and Christian) mystics who describe God as dark, which emphasises his unknowability by the human intellect. Cardozo uses some relevant passages from *Tiqqune Zohar* (Mantova, 1558) in his work, such as 113a. On the theology of darkness in Jewish mysticism, see Elliot R. Wolfson, "Letter Symbolism and *Merkavah* Imagery in the *Zohar*," in *Alei Shefer: Studies in the Literature of Jewish Thought Presented to Rabbi D. Alexander Safran*, ed. Moshe Hallamish (Ramat-Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1990), 195–236, esp. 232–36. For its connection to *Tif'eret* and the letter *Waw*, see Wolfson, "Letter Symbolism," 253 n. 145. See also Wolfson, "Light through Darkness: The Ideal of Human Perfection in the Zohar," *Harvard Theological Review* 81 (1988): 73–95, esp. 81 n. 29 and references therein.

64 Maimonides, *Guide* 3.9 (2:436–37).

different material (a veil or a cloud) or by darkness, which in its turn clouds our vision precisely because we consist of matter.

Cardozo builds a different apophatic model that also explains God's unknowability through the metaphor of darkness. However, his epistemological model rests on a very different ontological basis and provide his readers with a more elaborate differentiation of knowability. As is his wont in *The Treatise in Principles*, Cardozo uses a parable:

> And I will make you a parable. Vision only has power [to see the light] and only comprehends the light or a thing that is in the light. And when there is no light, it comprehends the darkness by way of negation [*derekh šelilah*], because [the vision] receives [the light] by way of existence [*derekh meṣi'ut*] and the darkness by way of privation [*derekh ḥesaron*]. But with the spiritual matters, the vision has nothing to do, because [spirituality] is neither light nor darkness. And if you object and say that according to our own words, "there will be no level and no time when we will be able to comprehend the Existence and the Will of the First Cause, just as the eye is not able to see a person's thoughts," [we will answer you with the following]:
>
> And from the solution of this problem, a secret will be passed on you, so that you can understand the descent and the donning [*hitlabbšut*] from the highest levels to the lowest. What is the first? The truth is that we will not be able to ascend above the Creator, who is the [*sefirah*] Splendour [*tif'eret*], by way of the created [*derekh ha-nirva'im*]. And God (blessed be He!) revealed his secret and his worship. And from the side of Kabbalah, we know that above the Splendour, there is Understanding [*binah*], and with them there are [Personae] of the Long Face [*arikh*], the Ancient of Days [*'atiq*] and the Supernal Crown [*keter 'elyon*], and above them all [is] the First Cause from which they were emanated.[65]

Cardozo elaborates on the three-tier epistemological model which resembles vision: human eyes see the light and the objects in the light. Fully bereft of light, the eye still recognises the darkness by way of privation and negation. This idea relates to the corresponding passage in Aristotle's *Metaphysics*,[66] where Aristotle declares that darkness is the privation of light. Cardozo adopts this

65 *DIq*, 123b–124a.

66 Aristotle, *Metaph*. 1.2, 1053b28, and see the next note for further discussion.

idea with a slight twist: the darkness here is not just the ontological "privation of light"; rather, this ontological privation is paralleled by an epistemological procedure in which the darkness is known by *way of privation/negation.*

However, there is another layer of the unseen that is different from the darkness: *ruḥaniyut*, spirituality. Human eyes cannot see any thought, idea, or concept that is not expressed in the material medium. This third tier of the unseen cannot be known even by negation, since it is not technically a privation,[67] but rather something that does not fall under the dichotomy of light and darkness.

Yosha writes that Cardozo inherited Maimonides's apophatic approach to God. However, I think that this passage goes one step further: if Maimonides claims that the simple intermediaries are unknowable along with the First Cause, thus dividing the world into knowable and unknowable parts, Cardozo adds another layer of unknowability. He departs from the metaphor of light and vision[68] and arrives at the three-tier model which distinguishes between what is knowable by negation and what is absolutely unknowable, which corresponds to the difference between the *'illot* and the First Cause.

For Cardozo, if a philosopher were to claim that unlike human eyes, human intellects can see immaterial things, he would reply (echoing the Neoplatonic position on unknowability) that this is mere arrogance. Human minds are like human eyes, yet the mind's light is *existence* (*meṣi'ut*) itself, for the human mind can see all objects in existence and even pure existence. However, anything above existence is not knowable except through privation. In other words, human minds can know non-existence—namely, the worlds of *aṣilut* and *'illot*—by way of negation.[69] Philosophy, which is only equipped with these optical powers, claims that non-existence simply *does not exist without making any distinctions within non-existence*. When the God of Israel reveals "secrets from the darkness," the subtle structure of nothingness emerges to the human intellect. When speaking about this "darkness," Cardozo

67 Cardozo uses the term *ḥesaron,* which is a Hebrew rendering of the Aristotelian term *steresis*: see James Bogen, "Change and Contrariety in Aristotle," *Phronesis* 37 (1992): 1–21, esp. 14–17. For Maimonides's use of privation to explain the presence of evil in the world, see *Guide* 1.18, 1.73, and 3.10–12, and see the discussion of "double privation" in Z. Diesendruck, "Maimonides' Theory of the Negation of Privation," *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 6 (1934): 139–51.

68 The metaphor of light is analysed in Arreguin, "Aquinas' *Intellectus Agens*," 363–69.

69 Cardozo interprets existence (*meṣi'ut*) quite technically, assuming that only created things exist. From this logic, it follows that only the World of Creation—i.e., *'olam ha-bri'ah*—and the lower worlds exist. Emanation (*aṣilut*), the Causes (*'illot*), Infinity (*ein sof*), and the First Cause are above existence.

refers to the *sefirot* that are located above the *sefirah tif'eret,* or the Splendour of Israel, as this *sefirah* reveals the existence of several *sefirot* that are known to it, yet they cannot be discovered by the human intellect unless they are communicated from above.

It is important to note that Cardozo explicitly uses the expression *via negativa* (*derekh šelilah*), which is extremely important in Christian mysticism, yet quite marginal in Jewish philosophical and kabbalistic texts.[70] This expression suggests that Cardozo had been exposed to Christian sources such as Nicholas of Cusa and the pseudo-Dionysian corpus.[71]

8 Darkness, or Primordial Adam

Cardozo states that the highest *sefirot* and *parṣufim* are dark.[72] For instance, he writes about one such structure which is called *Adam Qadmon* (the Primordial Human):

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70 The question of apophasis in Jewish mysticism and philosophy is too fundamental to address in this article. For negative theology in Maimonides and his influence on scholasticism, see Joseph A. Buijs, "The Negative Theology of Maimonides and Aquinas," *The Review of Metaphysics* 41 (1988): 723–38. On apophasis in Jewish philosophy, see Elliot R. Wolfson, *Giving Beyond the Gift: Apophasis and Overcoming Theomania*, new ed. (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014).

71 A full treatment of this topic deserves an article of its own. Dionysius the Areopagite was a hero of the New Testament (Acts 17:34) and he was not the author of the mystical texts that stand at the beginning of the Christian apophatic tradition. The literature on this figure is immense: for darkness and negativity, see Denys Turner, *The Darkness of God: Negativity in Christian Mysticism*, new ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), esp. 19–50. Dionysius was translated into Syriac, which is very close to Aramaic: see István Perczel, "The Earliest Syriac Reception of Dionysius," *Modern Theology* 24 (2008): 557–71. See also Alexander Golitzin, "Dionysius Areopagites: A Christian Mysticism?" in *The Theophaneia School: Jewish Roots of Eastern Christian Mysticism*, ed. Basil Lourié and Andrei Orlov (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2009), 128–79, esp. 131 n. 10 and references therein.

72 The *parṣufim*, or God's faces, are fundamental notions in late Kabbalah, in the later zoharic strata, and in Lurianic Kabbalah. See the discussion on *parṣufim* in Sharron Shatil, "The Doctrine of Secrets of *Emeq Ha-Melech*," *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 17 (2010): 358–95, esp. 361, 367–71, and Moshe Idel, *Ben: Sonship in Jewish Mysticism* (London: Continuum, 2008), 429–54. In Lurianic Kabbalah, a *parṣuf* is a configuration of several *sefirot* that acts as a member of the celestial family. Most *parṣufim* include just one *sefirah*, with the notable difference of *ze'ir anpin*, or the Small Face (or Irascible One), who comprises six *sefirot* and in some texts is identified with the biblical God. The *parṣuf Adam Qadmon* has a special value in late Sabbatian thought: the Sabbatians believed that Ṣevi became

> But the Primordial Adam [*adam qadmon*] is called Nothing [*ain*], and for us he is also called "Darkness" because he is concealed and we cannot comprehend him by way of existence and reason cannot posit his existence for the created beings, just as reason posits in its inquiry that there is one creator—i.e., the Splendour—and that this creator is the first and he has no beginning [*ha-riʾšon, ein lo reʾšit*], i.e., the Cause of All Causes. But as for the Primordial Adam, we do not have any way to know that he exists except for complete Kabbalah, and that is why he is called "Darkness."[73]

Cardozo departs from the Neoplatonic idea adopted by the Kabbalists that some parts of the world are too exalted to be called "being"[74] and that they therefore ought to be called "nothingness" (*ain*). The human mind's endeavour is deemed to fail when dealing with these entities unless there is true revelation; namely, the Wisdom of Kabbalah. Kabbalah, or tradition, goes back to Simeon ben Yoḥai and his companions, to whom God, his names, and the angels reveal their secrets.[75] This wisdom grants knowledge of God's emergence out of nothingness and out of the First Cause, which is above nothing. These matters are alien to the human mind and thus are "dark." We can know them only by negation, and even then only by virtue of revelation. Technically speaking, we do not need apophatic theology in order to know the God of Israel, as he is existent and perhaps existence itself.[76] However, in order to understand how the God of Israel emerged from the First Cause, one needs Kabbalah, which transcends the apophasis of the human mind. And the First Cause itself, despite the philosophers' claim, cannot be known at all, even through negation.

Adam Qadmon himself, as is attested in some religious hymns. See Hadar Feldman Samet, "Adam Kadmon: The Metamorphosis of a Hymn about Sabbatai Tsevi" [Hebrew], *El Prezente: Journal of Sephardic Studies* 10 (2016): 39–60, and see 54–60 for the theological ideas behind this.

73 *DIq*, 131b.

74 See Plotinus, *Enn.* 5.42. I am not sure that Cardozo knew Plotinus directly. See Yosha's analysis of a parallel section in *Boqer de-Abraham*: Yosha, *Philosophical Foundations*, 107–10.

75 Compare *Tiqqune Zohar*, 1a, which Cardozo considers to be an important fragment.

76 See *DIq*, 120b, 127b; passim. Cardozo is playing on that the metathesis of YHWH is the Hebrew word for "being," *hawaya*; it is crucial that God is the source of all things in being and pure being itself.

9 Exalted Limits of the True Wisdom

This communication between God and the human mind—that is, the Wisdom of Kabbalah—is also limited. Even the God of Israel cannot reveal the existence and will of the First Cause, whom Cardozo identifies with the God of the Philosophers. This leaves his readers in confusion: the God of Israel, who is knowable and the one who must be known (either through revelation, through tradition, or from the "self"),[77] has been forgotten by Israel and is unknown to the nations. In contrast, the unknowable First Cause, which cannot be known by the human intellect even with the aid of the God of Israel, is universally worshipped and philosophers work on creating systems of proofs for this. Cardozo goes still further and claims that even the God of the philosophers is so exalted that it cannot be revealed and therefore cannot be known even by Kabbalists:

> And so regarding the World of Emanation [*ha-aṣilut*], you might say that there are five *parṣufim:* Long-Faced One, Father and Mother, [and] Male and Female, and you can compare them using similes of light, the soul, circles, straight [lines], the face, the backside, the head, the hands, the body, the thighs, and so on, like R. Shimʿon bar Yoḥay and the Rav [Isaac Luria] did, so that these would be slightly understood through a hint [*bi-remizah*]. However, there is nothing that is similar to the Cause of All Causes in any way and in any aspect, because it is ungraspable. And it is completely prohibited to liken it and its concealed existence to anything.

77 Cardozo claims that the messiah most know true identity of the God of Israel from himself (*me-ʿaṣmo*); i.e., that the messiah himself is the source of knowledge about God. See Cardozo, *Selected Writings*, 115–16; Bernheimer, "Some New Contributions," 115–16 (it is an interesting coincidence that Cardozo's testimony regarding his messiahship appears on the same page numbers of two completely unrelated publications). For the parallel places, see Halperin's publication of *Zeh Eli we-Anwehu* in Cardozo, *Selected Writings*, 182, 184, 189, 231; see also *Ani ha-Mekhuneh*, 9b. Another possible source of knowledge are *maggids*, for instance, autobiographical letters, published in Cardozo, *Selected Writings*, 307; for more on *maggids*, see Yoram Bilu, "Dybbuk and Maggid: Two Cultural Patterns of Altered Consciousness in Judaism," *AJS Review* 21 (1996): 341–66. See also Lawrence Fine, *Physician of the Soul, Healer of the Cosmos: Isaac Luria and His Kabbalistic Fellowship* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003), 50–51, 69–71, 290–91. For Sabbatian *maggidism*, see Matt Goldish, *The Sabbatean Prophets* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 67–70; on its earlier forms and possible Islamic context, see 63–65.

> That is why they have prohibited speaking about it by way of similes [*be-derekh mašal*].[78]

Here, Cardozo refers to an array of metaphors, such as different geometrical shapes and body parts. However, upon closer examination, all these images that he applies to the Godhead are taken from Lurianic literature and are present in *ʿEṣ Ḥayyim*[79] and other works by Israel Saruq and others.[80] The family metaphors (Father, Mother, etc.) are well-studied kabbalistic symbolic language that hails from the zoharic corpus and are another attempt to describe the kabbalistic lore regarding the Godhead.[81]

This text refers to these metaphors and symbols as the body of kabbalistic knowledge. This knowledge is important and it refers to the extremely exalted strata of the world, but, like philosophy, it has its own limits. Cardozo treats these symbols as similes (*mešalim*). Yosha writes that Cardozo emphasises similes and analogies in his epistemology: in order to know the previously unknown, the human mind must compare it to something that it already knows.[82] Cardozo writes that the Cause of All Causes (*ʿillat kol ha-ʿillot*) is something that is absolutely unique: it cannot be compared to anything else, and consequently, it cannot be known through a kabbalistic simile. This stance places the First Cause/Cause of All Causes above the scope of kabbalistic knowledge, thus rendering it unknowable by both wisdoms.

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78 *DIq*, 129a–b. In this citation, Cardozo is referring to the First Cause. In his early works such as *Boqer de-Avraham* and *Deruš ha-ʿIqqarim*, he used the term "Cause of All Causes" (*ʿillat kol ha-ʿillot*) as a synonym for the First Cause. Later, he abandons this term and adopts three other *ʿillot* terms that he takes from the later zoharic strata. See Halperin in Cardozo, *Selected Writings*, 329–30 (n. 24). In the same footnote, Halperin writes that Cardozo likely took the theory of the three supernal lights and "attached" them to the later zoharic terminology. He also points out a possible proximity of these supernal entities to Plotinus's terminology. See also 332–33 (n. 21) and 355 (n. 97). On the *Ḥug ha-ʿIyyun*, see Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, 309–61, esp. 331ff.

79 On the circles and straight lines, see Ḥayim Viṭal, *ʿEṣ Ḥayyim*, 1.2; on the three heads and bodies (imagery taken from *Idra' Rabba'*), see *ʿEṣ Ḥayyim*, *Ša'ar ha-Kelalim*; on the body of *ze'ir anpin,* see *ʿEṣ Ḥayyim*, 25.1.

80 For instance, Israel Saruq, *Limude Aṣilut* (Munkacs, 1897), 4a (circles), 19b (heads), etc.

81 Scholem, *Mystical Shape*, 112–13; 224.

82 On the parables/similes (*mešalim*) in Cardozo, see Yosha, *Philosophical Foundations*, 97–112. Yosha shows that Cardozo's approach to zoharic and Lurianic symbolism betrays his philosophical and essentially anti-mystical attitude; see 104 and n. 15 there. For an extended discussion, see Nissim Yosha, "Lurianic Kabbalah as Metaphor in the Homilies of Abraham Miguel Cardozo" [Hebrew], *Kabbalah* 8 (2003): 121–43.

Cardozo denies any possibility of direct revelation by the First Cause/Cause of All Causes in a charming speech that he composes for it in *Deruš ha-Iqqarim*:

> It is not sufficient that you will not be able to tell who am I and which thing I resemble, but I Myself will not be able to explicate my essence to you. And that is why you should not ask me [questions]: "Who am I? What am I? How am I?" The correct answer is that "I [am] I [*še-ani ani*, Deut 32:39]."[83]

This fragment buttresses the unknowability of the First Cause. Even if it did reveal itself to the human mind, the human mind would not grasp it because the First Cause is unique and incomparable to anything else. From the strictly epistemological point of view that we know new things by comparing them to other things that we know, Cardozo deduces two kabbalistic epistemological claims: that revelation and similes cannot be used in order to understand the First Cause. The only correct answer about the First Cause is that we cannot know it.

It is especially important that these arguments about the impossibility of analogy are philosophical, not kabbalistic. They are based on rational reasoning that is not connected to Kabbalah, yet they also restrict it. I can therefore characterise Cardozo's epistemological approach as cautious: he dispels epistemological optimism with kabbalistic truths, and at the same time, he draws the limits of kabbalistic knowledge by appealing to philosophical principles and methodology. Even though Cardozo does not spell it out, it follows from his writings that the two "systems of wisdom" are showing each other the boundaries of their possible scope of knowledge. By merging these two epistemological procedures, Cardozo's project might be interpreted as an attempt to synthesise[84] Kabbalah and philosophy, which bring him closer to the young Salomon Maimon.[85] To put it in Kantian terms, Cardozo says that any "wisdom" can only know the First Cause regulatively, not constitutively: Kabbalah and philosophy can only teach us what God is *not*.

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83 *DIq*, 129b.

84 Albeit in a very reluctant way since he openly dislikes philosophy, despite tacitly operating within its framework and even suggesting that Kabbalah could not be known without proper philosophical training. See Yosha, *Philosophical Foundations*, 101.

85 Gershovich, "Kabbalah and Philosophy," 343.

10 Conclusion

Cardozo leaves his readers puzzled. He writes a lot about how the philosophers erred and led people astray by proclaiming the unknowable to be known and by forgetting the one true God who must be known. However, upon closer examination, this accusation does not hold, since Jewish philosophy (at least Maimonides) would make a similar claim: under no circumstances can God be known to the human intellect. In Samuel ibn Tibbon's translation, however, this situation changes, and we see that the key passage of the *Guide* is translated differently, thus pointing to the possibility of such knowledge (albeit in a very limited form).

Maimonides and Cardozo differ profoundly when it comes to the question of the identity of the God of Israel: while Cardozo notably claims that the God of Israel and the First Cause are different entities,[86] Maimonides assumes that they are identical and that the Bible merely presents God in a poetic way so that the uneducated masses will be able to grasp him through their imagination.[87]

Both Cardozo and Maimonides agree that God is accompanied by other immaterial and highly exalted entities, which Maimonides, following the medieval Aristotelian tradition, calls "separate intellects." Cardozo follows kabbalistic tradition and writes about the *sefirot* and the *'illot,* where the former constitute God's body and the latter participate in the formation of his soul.[88] Maimonides's doubtful picture places these entities below God, while Cardozo places them above and in the God of Israel, while confirming Maimonides's position that they are below the First Cause.

The knowability and even existence of these entities is questionable. Maimonides *doubts* that human intellects can understand them; however, Ibn Tibbon's translation states that this knowledge is possible. Cardozo echoes the philosopher's claim in a slightly different way: the human intellect *alone* cannot achieve the necessary knowledge, yet with the aid of the revelation of the God of Israel, knowledge of the *'illot* and the *sefirot* becomes possible.

I believe that Cardozo's stance regarding the knowability of these intermediaries was influenced by Samuel ibn Tibbon's translation of Maimonides's *Guide*. However, Cardozo was already engaging with other texts (such as zoharic and Lurianic Kabbalah) and his memory of the *Guide* was partial and imprecise.

86 *Dll*, 2a, and throughout his other works.

87 See Pines's introduction to the *Guide*, 1:lxxxix.

88 See n. 37.

This makes the reconstruction of Cardozo's position towards Maimonides on this question especially problematic and reveals his inconsistent position towards Jewish philosophy: a frank but superficial rejection, but—on a deeper level—an intimate connection and shared doubts towards the human ability to know supernatural things.

After a careful examination of Cardozo's position, an elegant construction becomes visible: Cardozo takes a sceptical position towards both Kabbalah's and philosophy's claims to have absolute knowledge about God and uses one wisdom to set the limits of another. Kabbalah demonstrates philosophy's blindness since philosophy cannot discover the *sefirot* and the *'illot.* In its turn, philosophical analysis of the First Cause shows its uniqueness, which renders the kabbalistic method of analogy incapable of studying and explaining it. Moreover, this position might have been influenced by Maimonides's cautious approach to the knowability of the separate intellects (which exhibit many functional similarities to the *'illot* in Cardozo's system) and to the whole project of ancient Greek metaphysics.

To put Cardozo's system into Gottlieb's dichotomy: Cardozo is an apophatic mystic who denies any possibility of seeing The One, whom he calls the First Cause. However, this apophatic truth becomes known through the revelation of the God of Israel, who announces the impossibility of knowing the First Cause. God's revelation even sets limits on what could be seen—the highest *sefirot* and *'illot*—which will always remain in the darkness of His secrets. This combination of epistemological restrictions places his system in a special category that can be called "apophatic revelatory" mysticism.

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Looking for Signs

Criticism, Doubts, and Popular Belief in Fifteenth-Century Germany

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Abstract

This article focuses on the impact of criticism against the church, individual priests, and clerical practices. The theme gives rise to a wide array of questions: Did it lead to general doubts concerning ecclesiastical dogmas, or did it only focus on certain aspects of popular piety? And was there a gap between the learned debates of the clergy and the criticisms of (educated or non-educated) laypeople? My analysis attempts to address these sorts of questions by drawing on three examples that concern both the clerical and the lay perspective: the reports on the so-called "holy blood" of Wilsnack, the canonisation acts for the Prussian saint Dorothea von Montau, and some pilgrims' reports from late medieval Germany. Criticism of malpractices in the church was raised both inside and outside the clerical sphere. However, while in ecclesiastical debates, this criticism was intended to be an instrument of reform, laypeople used criticism to give reasons for their doubts about certain (often newly established) practices.

Keywords

criticism – doubts – popular piety – (Roman catholic) clergy – pilgrims – late medieval Germany

1 Introduction[1]

In the fifteenth century, people still were personally pious, working hard to achieve salvation for their souls. However, this did not prevent them from

1 This article was written during my research sabbatical at the Maimonides Centre for Advanced Studies at the University of Hamburg, financed by a fellowship at the "Jewish

criticising the church, its customs, or individual priests and practices, which was linked to the growing influence of anticlericalism.[2] This article focuses on the impact of this criticism: Did it lead to general doubts concerning ecclesiastical dogmas, or did it only focus on certain aspects of popular piety? How much did the critics attempt to influence popular beliefs? And—if it is possible to answer this question—was there a gap between the learned debates of the clergy and the criticisms of (educated or non-educated) laypeople? The search for answers leads to a wide range of factors.[3] Of course, within the scope of a single article, it is only possible to discuss some cases; thus, the focus here will be on three examples which concern both the clerical and the lay perspective. The first example is the so-called "holy blood" of Wilsnack, which provoked intensive ecclesiastical disputes despite being widely accepted by ecclesiastical authorities and the lay public;[4] the second is the canonisation acts for the Prussian saint Dorothea von Montau from 1404, which, though recorded by clerical scribes, also contain critical accounts from lay witnesses,[5] while the third is formed of pilgrims' reports from late medieval German pilgrims,

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2 See Peter A. Dykema and Heiko A. Oberman, eds., *Anticlericalism in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Leiden: Brill, 1993); Wendy Scase, *Piers Plowman and the New Anticlericalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Michael Burleigh, "Anticlericalism in 15th-Century Prussia: The Clerical Contribution Reconsidered," in *The Church in Pre-Reformation Society: Essays in Honour of F.R.H. Du Boulay*, ed. Caroline M. Barron and Christopher Harper-Bill (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1985), 38–47.

3 For a general overview of disbelief and doubts in the Middle Ages, see Peter Dinzelbacher, *Unglaube im "Zeitalter des Glaubens." Atheismus und Skeptizismus im Mittelalter* (Badenweiler: Wissenschaftschaftlicher Verlag Dr. P. Bachmann, 2009); R.N. Swanson, *Religion and Devotion in Europe, c. 1215–c.1515* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), esp. 329–39.

4 There is a wide range of publications on Wilsnack. To name just a few important examples: Ernst Breest, "Das Wunderblut von Wilsnack (1383–1552). Quellenmäßige Darstellung seiner Geschichte," *Märkische Forschungen* 16 (1881): 131–302; Hartmut Boockmann, "Der Streit um das Wilsnacker Blut. Zur Situation des deutschen Klerus in der Mitte des 15. Jahrhunderts," *Zeitschrift für Historische Forschung* 9 (1982): 385–408; Felix Escher and Hartmut Kühne, eds., *Die Wilsnackfahrt. Ein Wallfahrts- und Kommunikationszentrum Nord- und Mitteleuropas im Spätmittelalter* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2006); Caroline Walker Bynum, *Wonderful Blood: Theology and Practice in Late Medieval Northern Germany and Beyond* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), esp. 25–45.

5 See Ute Stargardt, "The Political and Social Backgrounds of the Canonization of Dorothea von Montau," *Mystics Quarterly* 11 (1985): 107–22; Cordelia Heß, *Heilige machen im spätmittelalterlichen Ostseeraum: Die Kanonisationsprozesse von Birgitta von Schweden, Nikolaus von Linköping und Dorothea von Montau* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2008).

especially that of Arnold von Harff from 1496/98,[6] with critical remarks from both clerical and lay travellers.

Most aspects of criticism and doubt are already implied in the debates on the "holy blood" of Wilsnack in the diocese of Havelberg, where in 1383, three consecrated hosts had turned red after surviving a fire, which was seen as a sign of the blood of Christ that was present in them. From at least the beginning of the fifteenth century, ecclesiastical authorities outside the bishopric began to doubt the authenticity of the miraculous claims made by the priests of Wilsnack. Thus, alarmed by the increasing number of pilgrims, in 1403, the new archbishop of Prague, Zbyněk Zajíc of Hasenburg (Hazmburk), formed a committee of three masters from the University of Prague, including Jan Hus, for an investigation. This led to a formal prohibition on visiting Wilsnack being issued by a synod in Prague in June 1405.[7] About the same time, Jan Hus published a *Quaestio* about the "holy blood" in which he denied the existence of anything like the blood of Christ on earth. In his third conclusion, he remarks: "Nevertheless, with this the malice of greedy priests is growing, which is found in [the fact that] many messengers of the Antichrist diabolically put their own blood onto the host and allow it to be venerated by stupid, unbelieving Christians, who demand signs in their unbelief."[8] In the following *correlaria*, he adds: "Those who ask for visible, corporeal signs [like] the hair or blood of Christ as such and miracles from them, are a bad, unbelieving, unlawful and heretical race."[9] Hus also named and attacked the miracles reported about the "holy blood" of Wilsnack, which were widely believed by laypeople.[10] His harsh criticism is therefore directed against two groups of people: the "greedy priests" and "messengers of the Antichrist" who initiated the fraud and the

6 See, e.g., Philippe Kohler, *Arnold von Harff (1471–1505), chevalier, pélerin, écrivain*, 2 vols. (Bordeaux: Université de Bordeaux III, 1974); Hartmut Kokott, "Der Pilgerbericht des Arnold von Harff," in *Pilgerreisen in Mittelalter und Renaissance*, ed. Barbara Haupt and Wilhelm G. Busse (Düsseldorf: Droste, 2006), 93–112.

7 Constantin von Höfler, ed., *Concilia Pragensia, 1353–1413. Prager Synodal-Beschlüsse* (Prague, 1862), no. 23.2, p. 47, statute of 15 June 1405.

8 "Verum tamen an tantum heu creuit auarorum sacerdotum malicia, quod compertum est multos Antichristi nuncios cruorem suum pro Christi sanguine diabolice in hostia procurasse et illum a stultis, imo Christianis infidelibus signa infideliter quaerentibus venerari"; Jan Hus, "Determinatio quaestionis cum suo tractatulo de omni sanguine Christi glorificato," in *Historia von der erfindung, Wunderwercken und zerstörung des vermeinten heiligen Bluts zu Wilsnagk* […], ed. Matthäus Ludecus (Wittenberg, 1586), fol. H iii r. Unless otherwise noted, all the translations from the Latin are my own.

9 "Quaerentes signa visibilia corporaliter crinum vel sanguinis Christi in se, et miracula de illis, sunt generatio praua, infidelis, adultera, et peruersa"; Hus, "Determinatio," fol. H iii r.

10 Hus, "Determinatio," esp. fols. K iii v–K iv r.

"unbelieving Christians" in need of signs. He also questions the object of veneration as well as the related forms of popular piety which focused on signs and visible objects.

The spread of this criticism becomes clear from the fourteen questions which a later opponent of Wilsnack, Dr Heinrich Tocke of Magdeburg, directed to the University of Erfurt in 1446. Among other questions, he asked "whether the miracles can be so easily announced from the pulpit before they have been examined because they are usually highly faked and entirely suspect" and "whether indulgences can be proclaimed in such a place because they [the local priests] do not want to show by whom they have been granted."[11] Thus, Tocke also doubted the authenticity of the miracles, not only—like others—out of rivalry (as in the case of Wilsnack's adversaries from Magdeburg), but also out of concern for the common believers or for theological doctrines.[12] Similar doubts concerned the miracles of (future) saints recorded during canonisation processes. In the later Middle Ages, opportunities for canonisation were very limited, and some were highly contested.[13] In the acts from the failed canonisation process of Dorothea von Montau, witness statements from many laypeople are documented, some of which allow insights into (initial) doubts about Dorothea's sanctity and demonstrate that the search for signs was an important aspect of late medieval popular belief. This also becomes clear from pilgrims' reports. If people did not have to go on pilgrimage as a penance—for example, several courts in German, French, or Flemish cities sent people on pilgrimage to Wilsnack[14]—their aim was to profit for the salvation of their

11 *Dr Heinrich Tocke's Fourteen Questions to the University of Erfurt* (1446), ed. Ernst Breest, in "Wunderblut," 300–1: "Quinto. Utrum miracula ita leviter debeant de ambone pronuntiari, antequam examinentur, quae tamen communiter reperiuntur falsissima et omnia sunt suspecta. […] Tredecimo. Utrum indulgentiae in tali loco pronuntiari debeant, cum non velint ostendere, a quo vel a quibus sint donatae."

12 Examples in Dinzelbacher, *Unglaube*, 44–64.

13 "The narrow path to canonization admitted a fairly limited group of people into the ranks of the saints: although different parts of Europe tended to produce different types of saints, official saints of the later Middle Ages were usually individuals of aristocratic birth, men very high in the ecclesiastical hierarchy (cardinals and popes rather than bishops), or associates of the Mendicant movements, though members of the laity gained ground in the 14th century": see Laura Wertheimer, "Clerical Dissent, Popular Piety, and Sanctity in 14th-Century Peterborough: The Cult of Laurence of Oxford," *Journal of British Studies* 45 (2006): 14. For contested canonisations, see, e.g., Ronald C. Finucane, *Contested Canonizations: The Last Medieval Saints, 1482–1523* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2011).

14 Bynum, *Wonderful Blood*, 43.

souls. This greatly depended on the authenticity of the saints, relics, and miracles related to the pilgrims' destinations.[15]

Therefore, in all three examples, both clerical and lay criticism is present and plays an important role. The first focus is on doubts about miracles as criticism of the clergy involved in the ministry of the believers, the second is on the object of veneration, and the third is on doubts in popular piety. These aspects will be examined in sections 5 to 7. However, first, the three examples will be expounded in more detail (sections 2 to 4).

2 The Debates about the "Holy Blood" of Wilsnack

After the church of Wilsnack had been burnt down during a feud in 1383, at least according to one version of the legend, the local priest (later named as Johannes Kabuz), who was staying in a neighbouring village, heard a voice that ordered him to say mass in his church. When he returned, he found burning lights and three hosts, which had turned red, lying on the altar.[16] When the relevant bishop, the bishop of Havelberg, Johann (III) Wöpelitz, supported the growing interest in the miracle, the pilgrimage to Wilsnack became a success story, almost comparable to major places of pilgrimage such as Santiago de Compostela, Thann in Alsace, Einsiedeln, Cologne, or Aix-la-Chapelle.[17] The archbishop of Magdeburg as well as his suffragans, the bishops of Lebus, Brandenburg, and Havelberg, granted an indulgence of forty days, and a papal indulgence from Urban VI in 1384 supported the building of a new church.[18] The members of the dynasty of Luxemburg—Roman kings, emperors, and kings of Bohemia—took a special interest in Wilsnack, especially in the years 1390 to 1405, when they sent several representatives, although they did not come personally. Two of the early donators to Wilsnack were Duke William the Ambitious of Austria (1370–1406), who gave a precious cross, and

15 For a "critical" approach to pilgrims and the collection of information, see Ursula Ganz-Blättler, *Andacht und Abenteuer. Berichte europäischer Jerusalem- und Santiago-Pilger (1320–1520)*, 3rd ed. (Tübingen: Gunter Narr Verlag, 2000), 110–11.

16 For the events and their context, see Jan Hrdina and Hartmut Kühne, "Wilsnack—Prag—Magdeburg. Neue Perspektiven auf die ersten Jahrzehnte einer europäischen Wallfahrt," in *Der Havelberger Dombau und seine Ausstrahlung*, ed. Leonhard Helten (Berlin: Lukas Verlag, 2012), 20–44, and an early report in Karl Koppmann, ed., *Detmar-Chronik von 1101–1395* (*Chroniken der deutschen Städte 19: Die Chroniken der niedersächsischen Städte. Lübeck 1*) (Leipzig, 1884), 579–80.

17 Boockmann, "Streit," 385.

18 Felix Escher, "Brandenburgische Wallfahrten und Wallfahrtsorte im Mittelalter," *Jahrbuch für die Geschichte Mittel- und Ostdeutschlands* 27 (1978): 130–31.

Queen Jadwiga of Poland, who sent a chalice and vestments at about the same time.[19] In the fifteenth century, the Hohenzollern electors of Brandenburg, especially Frederick II (1440–1471), also supported the pilgrimage.[20] The popularity of Wilsnack is demonstrated by many sources and works of art. Thus, for example, in 1397, Abbot Ludolf of Sagan recorded a massive pilgrimage to Wilsnack and added that news of the miracles had reached Hungary, Russia, Poland, and Denmark.[21] There are regulations concerning the pilgrimage to Wilsnack in testaments from Lübeck[22] and notes about the pilgrims in the account books of the Teutonic Knights in Prussia.[23] There is also an image of the miracles in Wilsnack in Saint Leonhard's Church in Basel,[24] and in 1456, a citizen of Lübeck erected a cross in the city indicating the way to Wilsnack, similar to the crosses erected to show the routes to Santiago.[25] There were also spontaneous mass pilgrimages to Wilsnack (the so-called Wilsnack Laufen), very often made by young people or children, which were heavily criticised by the clergy; for example, by Johannes Bauer von Dorsten and his pupil Johannes von Paltz.[26]

Nevertheless, from a very early point, doubts were raised. Even the bishop of Havelberg is reported to have been critical at first. He was afraid that the host had not been consecrated before the events. Thus, he summoned the priest before him and then went to Wilsnack himself to consecrate the hosts in order to avoid an instance of idolatry. It is said that he was only convinced when blood came out of the hosts during mass.[27] The miracle could only be

19 Hrdina and Kühne, "Wilsnack," 25–27; Jan Hrdina, "Wilsnack, Hus und die Luxemburger," in *Die Wilsnackfahrt*, 41–63.

20 Bruno Hennig, "Kurfürst Friedrich II. und das Wunderblut zu Wilsnack," *Forschungen zur brandenburgischen und preußischen Geschichte* 19 (1906): 391–422.

21 Hrdina and Kühne, "Wilsnack," 27; Maria Starnawska, "Die Beziehungen des Königreichs Polen und des Herzogtums Litauen zu Wilsnack und die Christus-Reliquienverehrung im Spätmittelalter," in *Die Wilsnackfahrt*, 79–95.

22 Boockmann, "Streit," 390 n. 18; Dietrich Kurze, "Aus Hamburg und vom Südsaum des pommerschen Meeres nach Wilsnack," in *Die Wilsnackfahrt*, 115–49.

23 Jürgen Sarnowsky, *Die Wirtschaftsführung des Deutschen Ordens in Preußen, 1382–1454* (Cologne: Böhlau Verlag, 1993), 11 n. 49, 355, 815.

24 Breest, "Wunderblut," 190.

25 Johannes Baltzer, Friedrich Bruns, and Hugo Rahtgens, eds., *Bau- und Kunstdenkmäler den Freien und Hansestadt Lübeck, Band 4: Die Klöster, die kleineren Gotteshäuser der Stadt, die Kirchen und Kapellen in den Außengebieten, Denk- und Wegekreuze und der Leidensweg Christi* (Lübeck: Verlag von Bernhard Nöhring, 1928), 617.

26 Mario Müller, "Das Wilsnacker Wunderblut," in *Deutsches Literatur-Lexikon. Das Mittelalter—Autoren und Themen nach Themenkreisen und Gattungen*, vol. 3: *Reiseberichte und Geschichtsdichtung*, ed. Wolfgang Achnitz (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012), col. 1157.

27 Hrdina and Kühne, "Wilsnack," 22.

authentic when the hosts had already been consecrated and thus had been turned into the body of Christ according to the teachings of the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215. Only then could there have been something like blood on the hosts after the fire; if not, or if there were other substances, the people would instead be worshipping a piece of bread that had been tainted by impurities.

Around 1400, the bishop of Verden, Konrad von Soltau (1400–1407), took a firm stand against the "holy blood" of Wilsnack, at least according to later reports. He is said to have ordered the pilgrim signs worn on the hats of the pilgrims coming from Wilsnack to be torn off when they entered his diocese.[28] Another early critic may have been a theologian named Johann Wünschelburg, who wrote a book against fraud and false miracles which briefly mentioned Wilsnack.[29] As mentioned above, in June 1405, a Prague synod prohibited further visits to Wilsnack, a decree which was to be read from the pulpit at least one Sunday per month.[30] The treatise by Jan Hus relating to the condemnation at Prague was also received at the University of Erfurt and in Magdeburg.

Though the archbishop of Magdeburg, Günther von Schwarzburg (1403–1445), was not really interested in theological questions, in 1412 a provincial council discussed the problem of Wilsnack, perhaps instigated by a local Franciscan, Master Christian. It passed ten articles directed to the bishop of Havelberg, who was responsible for Wilsnack, asking for an investigation into reported abuses,[31] but ultimately, nothing happened.[32]

When the Erfurt theologian Heinrich Tocke, a canon of Magdeburg and Brandenburg, came back to Magdeburg as a lector in 1426, he began to criticise misusages in his diocese, but, as he later stressed, not publicly or in the presence of laypeople, but only in discussions with other clerics.[33] He may have instigated a critical assessment of the "holy blood" by the Theology Faculty at Leipzig in 1429, but this had no consequences. Later, Tocke was sent by the archbishop to the Council of Basel, and it seems that the "holy blood" of Wilsnack was also discussed there. Perhaps the council had already decreed

28 Breest, "Wunderblut," 163, only mentioned by Tocke in his speech at a synod in 1451.

29 Breest, "Wunderblut," 162–63; according to Ludecus, *Historia*, fol. M i r; the Wünschelburg manuscript appears to be lost.

30 See n. 6.

31 Summary in Breest, "Wunderblut," 176–77, with references to Christianus, who met Heinrich Tocke in Erfurt in 1411; text in Johann Friedrich Schannat and Joseph Hartzheim, eds., *Concilia Germaniae*, vol. 5 (Cologne, 1763), 35–36, and Breest, "Wunderblut," 296–97.

32 Later, the supporters of Wilsnack even claimed that the Council of Constance had approved the "holy blood" of Wilsnack, but this has no basis in the documents; see Breest, "Wunderblut," 178–79.

33 Breest, "Wunderblut," 184; Hennig, "Kurfürst," 398.

what finally became the solution of the debates; namely, to always add a newly consecrated host to the old hosts at Wilsnack.

In June 1443, Heinrich Tocke met the bishop of Havelberg, Konrad Lintorff, chaplain of Elector Frederick II of Brandenburg, when he travelled through Magdeburg. Tocke attempted to convince the bishop that the pilgrimage to Wilsnack was based on fraud, to which more lies were being added daily. He asked them to suppress the fraud and for the hosts to be examined by learned and devoted men. This was supported by the archbishop, who also warned the bishop to end the illicit activities at Wilsnack. The bishop agreed, and when Tocke came to Havelberg in July 1443, he asked to see Wilsnack himself. He went through the heavily decorated church, inspected the books which reported the miracles, and finally turned to the original hosts, which were displayed in a monstrance. In his report of his visit, he remarks that he did not find anything that looked like a host and that he did not see anything red, as was confirmed by the priests standing around him. For Tocke, this was proof enough that the "holy blood" was a complete fraud.[34]

The bishop of Havelberg did not keep his promises, because he was protected by Frederick II, while Archbishop Günther only gave Tocke half-hearted support. Ten years of efforts, negotiations, and treatises regarding Wilsnack followed. The papers and treatises, also disseminated in South German libraries, mostly took up a position against the miracle.[35] However, Tocke could not convince Frederick II of Brandenburg when he met him in Magdeburg. Instead, Frederick found a defender of the "holy blood," the Franciscan Matthias Döring. In about 1444/45, Döring reacted with a treatise in which he refuted Jan Hus's arguments and then—in an extension of the original text—also turned against Tocke's theses.[36] The Franciscans felt close to forms of popular piety like those performed at Wilsnack, and thus other Franciscans, Johannes Kannemann and Johannes Bremer, later joined Döring. Even the famous Giovanni da Capestrano had some sympathy for the pilgrims, though he was finally persuaded to apply for papal measures against the abuses of Wilsnack when he came to Magdeburg in October 1452.[37]

Tocke received support from the new archbishop of Magdeburg, Friedrich von Beichlingen (from April 1445), who ordered several meetings with the

34 Breest, "Wunderblut," 193–95.

35 Ludger Meier, "Wilsnack als Spiegel deutscher Vorreformation," *Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte* 3 (1951): 55–59.

36 Incipit *Quum olim*, written in two parts; see Breest, "Wunderblut," 202.

37 Boockmann, "Streit," 398 n. 2; Breest, "Wunderblut," 258–70 (see also for the conflict between Capistrano and Eberhard Waltmann, the provost of Magdeburg); Capistrano's letter in Ludecus, *Historia*, fol. O i r–v.

bishop of Havelberg. Tocke compiled thirty articles and seven questions concerning the "holy blood" for a meeting in Ziesar in April 1446, pointing to how the common people were being tricked and led astray at Wilsnack.[38] In the end, the bishop of Havelberg did not come himself, but sent some of his clerics, and thus no final decision was taken. Some respite also came from one of the Franciscans, Johannes Kannemann, who returned from Rome with some papal letters. Pope Eugenius IV suggested to the bishops of Havelberg and Lübeck that they should add newly consecrated hosts to the old ones, exchange them regularly, and only display them to the people on certain days. The responsibility for deciding Wilsnack's fate was left in the hands of the bishop of Havelberg, thus ignoring the archbishop's authority.[39]

After Döring had published his treatise against Hus and Tocke, Tocke compiled the set of fourteen questions mentioned above.[40] In August 1446, he presented them to the doctors at the Faculty of Theology in Erfurt, together with the thirty articles and seven questions written for the meeting at Ziesar. After some deliberation, the Erfurt theologians followed Tocke, while others supported the events at Wilsnack.[41] When the reformer and cardinal legate Nicholas of Cusa came to Magdeburg by accident in 1451 and presided over a provincial council there, Tocke used the opportunity to make a long speech and to ensure that Wilsnack became an important topic. In consequence, in July 1451, Cusa issued a letter to all German archbishops, which was to be transmitted to all bishops and the entire clergy. He did not mention Wilsnack, but rather spoke generally of pilgrimages caused by the alleged presence of the blood of Christ in which priests were alluring the people simply because of their own greed. He stated that these frauds had to be stopped, that no miracle should be presented, and that no signs should be sold to the pilgrims.[42]

In 1452, the archbishop of Magdeburg finally put the church of Wilsnack under interdict and excommunicated the local priests and the bishop of Havelberg. He convinced Giovanni da Capistrano to write three letters to the pope and the Roman Curia asking for support for his complaints, and in December 1452, he wrote a final letter to the pope. He pointed to the idolatry committed in Wilsnack, where the hosts were so damaged by age that no one

38 For the articles, see Breest, "Wunderblut," 206–8.

39 Breest, "Wunderblut," 210.

40 See n. 10 above.

41 Meier, "Wilsnack," 57; Caroline Walker Bynum, "A Matter of Matter: Two Cases of Blood Cult in the North of Germany in the Later Middle Ages," in *Medieval Paradigms: Essays in Honor of Jeremy Duquesnay Adams*, ed. Stephanie Hayes-Healy (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 2:183.

42 Breest, "Wunderblut," 237–40; cf. Ludecus, *Historia*, fols. N i r–O i r.

could discern bread or blood, and criticised the addition of newly consecrated hosts to the old ones as nothing more than a means for the greedy local clergy to increase their income. This led to the final papal decision in March 1453. Against the archbishop, Nicholas of Cusa, and even Capestrano, Nicholas V decided in favour of the pilgrimage to Wilsnack, again only demanding the addition of consecrated hosts. The archbishop was to be compensated for all damages and losses, but the interdict on Wilsnack and the excommunications were repealed.[43] Wilsnack continued as a place of pilgrimage, even stronger than before, until and even after the Reformation.

3 The Failed Canonisation Process of Dorothea von Montau

In the case of the "holy blood" of Wilsnack, both the original miracle—the bleeding of the host—and the following miracles were subject to doubt. Similarly, in the later Middle Ages, the sanctity of recently deceased persons was not simply accepted or at least confirmed by widespread veneration, but had to be established by complex procedures, specifically by a canonisation process that was finally decided by the Roman Curia.[44] As John Theilman remarked, "canonization came neither swiftly nor easily in the late fourteenth century,"[45] which also holds true for the fifteenth century.

It is this historical context that may explain why the canonisation process for the Prussian recluse Dorothea von Montau failed.[46] When it ended in 1406, the conflicts around the schism escalated, finally ending with the election of a third pope in 1409 at the Council of Pisa. Though the main promoter of the canonisation was Johannes Marienwerder, canon of Marienwerder in the bishopric of Pomesania and Dorothea's second confessor, it was also supported by the Teutonic Knights, who governed Prussia. In fact, one of the witnesses in June 1404 was Grand Master Konrad von Jungingen, who stated that Dorothea's miracles would earn her a place in the catalogue of saints and

43 Breest, "Wunderblut," 244–47.

44 For canonisation in general, see Gábor Klaniczay, ed., *Procès de canonisation au Moyen Age: Aspects juridiques et religieux/Medieval Canonization Processes: Legal and Religious Aspects* (Rome: École française de Rome, 2004); Thomas Wetzstein: *Heilige vor Gericht: Das Kanonisationsverfahren im europäischen Spätmittelalter* (Cologne: Böhlau Verlag, 2004); Marcus Sieger, *Die Heiligsprechung. Geschichte und heutige Rechtslage* (Würzburg: Echter, 1995).

45 John M. Theilman, "Political Canonization and Political Symbolism in Medieval England," *Journal of British Studies* 29 (1990): 257.

46 Stargardt, "Backgrounds," 118.

that her sanctity was well known in Prussia.[47] He recorded that Dorothea had warned him about four dangers which did indeed materialise when he went on a campaign against Lithuania. When the Order ran into political difficulties after its defeat by Poland and Lithuania in the battle of Tannenberg/Grunwald, it seems that its leaders lost interest in Dorothea. There was an effort to renew the canonisation process at the end of the Middle Ages in 1486, but by then, the Order had lost important parts of its territory and influence and seems to have been reluctant because of the costs involved.[48] Dorothea was only canonised in 1976.

Dorothea was born in 1347, the seventh of nine children of a couple in the village of Montau.[49] When her father died, her mother remained a widow for forty years, practising a strict ascetic life, including fasting, which Dorothea attempted to imitate at a very early age. She performed her first ascetic exercises, fasting and self-inflicting wounds, when she was six years old, scalding herself badly with boiling water. At ten, she already had permanent wounds, including one on her back which prevented her from walking upright and did not heal until she was sixteen. At this point, she was married against her will to Albert (Adalbert) Schwertfeger of Danzig. Between 1364 and 1381, she gave birth to nine children, of whom only one daughter, Gertrud, survived after 1383. With her husband and daughter, she went on pilgrimage to Aix-la-Chapelle and Köslin, and when she returned in 1387, she asked her husband to return to Danzig with her daughter so that she could go to live as a beggar elsewhere. This request was denied by a local priest, but it points to a critical aspect of Dorothea's life. Several times, her confessor Johannes Marienwerder punished her and accused her of having neglected her household and children. It seems that her ascetic life collided with her duties as a mother and wife and that her focus was on attending mass, fasting, and inflicting wounds on herself.[50]

In 1389, she went on pilgrimage to Rome, and when she returned, she found that her husband had died. Her deviant public conduct, especially singing and laughing in church when she became ecstatic, made her position in Danzig increasingly difficult. Finally, in 1391, she decided to go to Marienwerder, the see of the bishopric and cathedral chapter of Pomesania. Johannes Marienwerder

47 Richard Stachnik, ed., *Die Akten des Kanonisationsprozesses Dorotheas von Montau, von 1394 bis 1521* (Cologne: Böhlau Verlag, 1978), 63–69; for the source, see Cordelia Heß, "Heiligenverehrung in Preußen. Die Kanonisationsakten Dorotheas von Montau als Quelle zur Mentalitätsgeschichte," *Beiträge zur Geschichte Westpreußens* 19 (2004): 11–13.

48 See the documents in Stachnik, *Akten*, 544–50, and the comments on xxiii–iv.

49 For a short biography, see Heß, "Heiligenverehrung," 17–19.

50 See Petra Hörner, *Dorothea von Montau: Überlieferung—Interpretation. Dorothea und die osteuropäische Mystik* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1993), 65.

then became her confessor and allowed her to be enclosed in a cell in the cathedral, where she lived for the last eighteen months of her life, confessing and receiving communion every day. She died on 25 June 1394. Her mystical experiences, such as mystical pregnancies before communion or the piercing of her heart in her cell, her particular form of piety, and her frequent advice to laypeople during her time in Marienwerder very soon made her a popular regional saint.[51]

Already at the turn of 1394/95, Johannes Marienwerder tried to convince the proctor general of the Teutonic Knights at the Roman Curia, Johann vom Felde, to apply for Dorothea to be canonised, and in September 1395, different groups of petitioners sent eleven letters from Marienburg to the papacy to this end.[52] Though a committee of cardinals was formed by Boniface IX in the same year, the process was delayed, only starting when the pope had renewed his nominations for the committee in 1403. The hearings in Marienwerder, Dorothea's place of burial, began in June 1404 and finished in February 1406.[53] They were conducted by Bishop Arnold of Kulm, Bishop Heinrich of Ermland, and Jacob, abbot of the Cistercian convent at Oliva, and 257 witnesses were heard. The articles for the questions and the evidence were collected in a manuscript, of which only a notarial copy from 1486, which was made for the renewal of the process, survives. It is not clear whether another copy reached Rome, but it seems that the Teutonic Knights were still interested in securing the canonisation in 1521.[54] Nevertheless, Dorothea was only canonised in the twentieth century.

The detailed acts of the canonisation process document both the proceedings of the commissioners at Marienwerder and the statements from the witnesses. Essentially, the commissioners used two forms of interrogation. Dorothea's confessors, people who had been well acquainted with her, or higher status people mostly followed a catalogue of 149 articles, while simple witnesses were given only some basic questions and were free to narrate the events they had experienced. They had to identify themselves and other persons involved, give details of their personal status, dates, and places, name their sources, and describe illnesses which had been cured. Obviously, the witnesses had been selected for their credibility. Thus, there were no poor or marginalised people or children, and the witnesses were mostly forty years

51 Heß, "Heiligenverehrung," 19.

52 See the documents in Stachnik, *Akten*, 497–531.

53 Stachnik, *Akten*, xviii.

54 Stachnik, *Akten*, xxiii–xxiv, and the document on 550.

old or older.[55] Nevertheless, there were several cases in which doubts about Dorothea's sanctity were raised, which—in the narrative of the acts—had to be cleared either by the saint herself or by the sequence of events.

4 Pilgrimage and Popular Piety

Wilsnack and Marienwerder were places of pilgrimage, and pilgrimage was a widespread phenomenon in the later Middle Ages.[56] The major pilgrim destinations such as Rome, Jerusalem, and Santiago de Compostela were important places in late medieval piety,[57] but the lesser destinations were also frequently visited. Some of the pilgrims collected information on their journeys, very often combined with literary sources, and wrote pilgrims' reports, which were often intended as a guide for other visitors. Thus, they describe the technical details of their journeys and give advice on the places to visit. Bernhard von Breitenbach, for example, not only composed a traveller's report, but in 1483, he also wrote instructions for pilgrims to Jerusalem, focusing on provisions and medicine.[58] Another German pilgrim, Anselm von Eyb, who travelled with Count Eberhard V of Württemberg in 1468, especially noted places with indulgences.[59] Many reports remain very impersonal and topical, so it is difficult to find hints about personal experiences, but at least of them some allow

55 Heß, "Heiligenverehrung," 12–13.

56 In general, see Christian K. Zacher, *Curiosity and Pilgrimage: The Literature of Discovery in Fourteenth-Century England* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976); Jonathan Sumption, *The Age of Pilgrimage: The Medieval Journey to God* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press 2003); Diana Webb, *Pilgrimage in Medieval England* (London: Bloomsbury, 2007).

57 See, e.g., Claudia Zrenner, *Die Berichte der europäischen Jerusalempilger (1475–1500). Ein literarischer Vergleich im historischen Kontext* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1981); Michel Balard, *Les Latins en Orient (X^e–XV^e siècle)* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2006); Bianca Kühnel, Galit Noga-Banai, and Hanna Vorholt, eds., *Visual Constructs of Jerusalem* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2014); Ganz-Blättler, *Andacht*; Klaus Herbers, *Jakobus—der Heilige Europas. Geschichte und Kultur der Pilgerfahrten nach Santiago de Compostela* (Düsseldorf: Patmos, 2007); Adeline Rucquoi, *Mille fois à Compostelle: Pèlerins du Moyen-Âge* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2014); Debra J. Birch, *Pilgrimage to Rome in the Middle Ages: Continuity and Change* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 1998); Herbert L. Kessler and Johanna Zacharias, *Rome 1300: On the Path of the Pilgrim* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000).

58 Bernhard von Breitenbach, "Die Reiseinstruction des Bernhard von Breitenbach 1483," in *Deutsche Pilgerreisen nach dem Heiligen Lande*, ed. Reinhold Röhricht and Heinrich Meisner (Berlin, 1880), 120–45.

59 Anselm von Eyb, *Pilgerbuch* (1468), ed. Regine Birkmeyer in *Eberhard im Bart und die Wallfahrt nach Jerusalem im späten Mittelalter*, ed. Gerhard Faix and Folker Reichert (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1998), 173–94.

insights into the pilgrims' perception of the places they visited. A critical attitude towards narratives like those of the Franciscans who guided the pilgrims through Jerusalem is sometimes hidden under introductory phrases such as "it is said," "on dit," or "man sagt."[60]

The German Dominican Felix Fabri is a special case.[61] After travelling to Aix-la-Chapelle in 1467, he went on two pilgrimages to the Holy Land, once in 1480 and once in 1483/84. He combined his experiences with written and oral sources in the lengthy *Evagatorium in Terrae Sanctae, Arabiae et Egypti peregrinationem*,[62] which he wrote for his fellow brethren in Ulm and which is full of learned digressions. His attitude towards the Muslims in the Holy Land was hostile, and he saw them as occupants sent as God's punishment for the Christians' sins. Though this was sometimes subverted by the narration of positive personal encounters, Fabri attempted to refute several passages of the Koran.[63] Egypt was strange to him, but he felt familiar with Jerusalem and its many holy places due to their being mentioned in the Bible.[64]

Nevertheless, Fabri maintained a critical attitude towards the "standard" knowledge of his time, which he was attempting to correct and enhance. Thus, he included a lengthy chapter on superstitions related to the water of the River Jordan, reporting that many pilgrims believed that they would not age when they were baptised in the Jordan and that they therefore rebaptised themselves. A related belief was that people would grow younger for the same amount of time that they spent in the river; that is, they would grow an hour younger after bathing for an hour. Fabri ironically remarks that many of his company would have had to bathe for sixty years in order to regain their youth,

60 Ganz-Blättler, *Andacht*, 110.

61 Cf. Stefan Schröder, *Zwischen Christentum und Islam. Kulturelle Grenzen in den spätmittelalterlichen Pilgerberichten des Felix Fabri* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2009).

62 Felix Fabri, *Fratris Felicis Fabri Evagatorium in Terrae Sanctae, Arabiae et Egypti peregrinationem*, ed. Konrad Dietrich Hassler, 3 vols. (Stuttgart, 1843–1849); abridged German translation in Fabri, *In Gottes Namen fahren wir. Die Pilgerfahrt des Felix Faber ins Heilige Land und zum Katharina-Grab auf dem Sinai A.D. 1483*, trans. Gerhard Sollbach (Kettwig: Phaidon, 1990); abridged English translation in Fabri, *The Wanderings of Felix Fabri*, trans. Aubrey Stewart, 4 vols. (London, 1893–1896). Three other works refer to his pilgrimages: Felix Fabri, "Eigentliche beschreibung der hin vnd wider Fahrt zu dem Heyligen Land […]," in *Reyßbuch deß heyligen Lands* […], ed. Sigmund Feyerabendt (Frankfurt am Main, 1584), fols. 122v–188r (for a wider lay public); Fabri, *Die Sionpilger*, ed. Wieland Carls (Berlin: Erich Schmidt Verlag, 1999) (for a female monastery); and Fabri, *Bruder Felix Fabers gereimtes Pilgerbüchlein*, ed. Anton Birlinger (Munich, 1864) (which only describes his first voyage).

63 Schröder, *Christentum*, 281.

64 Schröder, *Christentum*, 377.

being already in their eighties.[65] Many tried to bring water from the Jordan home—for example, in mugs, casks, and flagons—because it was also believed that there could only be true baptism if the holy water used for it contained some drops of water from the River Jordan. On the other hand, captains and sailors were afraid of water from the Jordan being aboard their ships, due to the belief that it could cause dangers such as contrary winds, loss of wind or current, or other events. Therefore, they would inspect their ships even before the start of the journey to see whether anyone had brought water from Jordan with them. Fabri had even heard of a papal bull which forbade this.[66] For him, all these beliefs were superstitious. This approach was rare among pilgrims, because many of them mixed knowledge with information from hearsay or popular beliefs.

The Rhenian nobleman Arnold von Harff may be another example of a more critical attitude. Enrolled at the University of Cologne from an early age, he had scientific interests, taking an astrolabe on his journey and recording samples of seven languages including medieval Hebrew and Albanian.[67] In November 1496, he left Cologne and went first to Rome, then via Venice to Egypt, Sinai, and finally Jerusalem. From Jerusalem, he travelled to Constantinople on land, then across the Balkans and Northern Italy to Santiago de Compostela. From there, he went to Paris, and he finally returned home in October or November 1498. Unlike Felix Fabri, Harff was open to contact with other people, cultures, languages, and religions. Thus, he did not repeat the traditional stereotypes about Islam, but was interested to learn more about its religious customs.[68] Though he also gives detailed information about indulgences, his

65 "Refert enim vulgus, quod qui in Jordane balneatur, ulterius non senescit, et cum hoc, quamdiu in flumine manet, tam diu juvenescit, ut pote, si una hora balneatur, una hora junior efficitur […]. Indiguae fuissent nostrae sociae hoc balneo LX annis ad recuperandam juventutem, quia fuerunt octogenariae et ultra," Fabri, *Evagatorium*, 2, 41.

66 Fabri, *Evagatorium*, 42–43.

67 Cf. Zrenner, *Berichte*, 98. The text of his report can be found in Arnold von Harff, *Die Pilgerfahrt des Ritters Arnold von Harff von Cöln durch Italien, Syrien, Aegypten, Arabien, Aethiopien, Nubien, Palästina, die Türkei, Frankreich und Spanien, wie er sie in den Jahren 1496 bis 1499 vollendet, beschrieben und durch Zeichnungen erläutert hat*, ed. Eberhard von Groote (Cologne, 1860); English translation in von Harff, *The Pilgrimage of Arnold von Harff from Cologne, through Italy, Syria, Egypt, Arabia, Ethiopia, Nubia, Palestine, Turkey, France and Spain, Which He Accomplished in the Years 1496 to 1499*, trans. Malcolm Letts (London: Hakluyt Society, 1946).

68 Britta Kölling, "Das Islambild Arnolds von Harff," in *Vorstellungswelten der mittelalterlichen Überlieferung. Zeitgenössische Wahrnehmungen und ihre moderne Interpretation*, ed. Jürgen Sarnowsky (Göttingen: V&R unipress, 2012), 233–34.

focus was on collecting direct evidence. Sometimes, this also led to critical remarks.

5 Doubts of Miracles as Criticism of the Clergy

If all three examples are taken together, perhaps the most important criticism concerning miracles, saints, relics, and pilgrim destinations as objects of popular piety is directed against the clergy involved, mostly expressed in intensive clerical debates. In the case of Wilsnack, Heinrich Tocke asked why miracles were so "easily [...] announced from the pulpit before they are examined" and added that "they are usually highly faked and entirely suspect."[69] This implies that reported miracles could not simply be accepted, but first had to be verified by the authorities. In the collections of canon law, for example, a chapter of the *Liber extra* is dedicated to the hearing of witnesses. This particularly includes the authentication of miracles for a canonisation. The witnesses also have to answer questions about their personal circumstances, and they must be interrogated individually and diligently.[70] Alexander III had already claimed that the papacy was responsible for determining sanctity,[71] but the regulations for miracles worked by material elements such as "holy blood" were less clear.

If it could be proven that the people who had related the miracle had caused it themselves, then this would be fraud and not a miracle at all. In Wilsnack, this already concerned the original miracle of the bleeding hosts. While Hus made a general reference to "the malice of the greedy priests,"[72] Tocke was convinced that he knew the original offender: the priest of Wilsnack, Johannes Kabuz (or Kalbutz). When Tocke intensified his struggle against the "holy blood," he collected as much evidence as possible. One point of suspicion was that quite soon after the first miracle in 1386, the bishop of Havelberg had Johannes replaced

69 See n. 10.

70 "Discretioni vestrae mandamus, quatenus testes, quos abbas et monachi S. Martini Cisterciensis ordinis super vita et miraculis piae memoriae M. abbatis monasterii supradicti duxerint producendos, examinare sigillatim curetis cum ea diligentia, quae solet et debet in receptione testium adhiberi"; Decretal. Gregor. IX, Lib. II, Tit. XX, *De test. et attest.*, c. LII, in Emil Friedberg, ed., *Corpus iuris canonici. Editio Lipsiensis secunda* [...], 2nd ed. (Leipzig, 1881), col. 340.

71 In Scandinavia, a man who was killed while drunk was venerated as a saint; Alexander replied: "Illum ergo hominem non praesumatis de cetero colere, quum, etiamsi per eum miracula plurima fierent, non liceret vobis ipsum pro sancto absque auctoritate Romanae ecclesiae publice venerari"; Decretal. Gregor. IX. Lib. III, Tit. XLV, *De reliquis et veneratione Sanctorum*, in Friedberg, *Corpus*, col. 650.

72 See n. 3 above.

and transferred to another village. Tocke heard rumours that the bishop paid Johannes 6½ marks every year, even after 1386. When the payments stopped and Johannes repented for what he had done, the bishop did not believe him and declared that the priest only wanted his regular income back.[73]

In his long speech before a provincial synod of Magdeburg in which he presented his evidence,[74] which was accidentally presided over by the reformer cardinal Nicholas of Cusa in 1451, Tocke also tells a story about an old priest who met Johannes when he was stricken by remorse. According to a secondary source, Johannes then went to Rome and claimed to have received absolution, but died soon after his return. Tocke supports his accusation against Johannes with another report which he had allegedly already heard while he was still at Erfurt University in 1411. There, he met a certain Master Christian from the Franciscans at Magdeburg, who told him that the former priest from Wilsnack had come to them when he was lector there. At that time, the Franciscans had started to build a new church, but had had problems financing it, and thus Johannes had offered to "produce" a pilgrimage for them that was even greater than that of Wilsnack because, as he said, he had learned how to improve his method in the meantime.[75] In 1429, the Dominican Petrus Rumelant, auxiliary bishop and vicar of the archbishop of Magdeburg, confirmed a similar story concerning Johannes for the Dominicans at Magdeburg.[76] From this perspective, Johannes Kabuz was an impostor, and the whole pilgrimage to Wilsnack was built on a fraud.

Similar accusations were raised against the later miracles reported from Wilsnack. If we discount the criticism of Johannes Wünschelburg, which was only superficially known,[77] it was Jan Hus who first doubted the miracles claims made by the priests at Wilsnack. Against his third conclusion that nothing on earth should be adored as the blood or hair of Christ, he quotes eight objections. The last of these is related to the miracles:

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73 Breest, "Wunderblut," 182.

74 His *Tractatus contra cruorem* (Dessau, Anhaltische Landesbücherei, Ms. BB 3944, fols. 261ra–271vb; possibly incomplete); excerpts in Ernst Breest, "Synodalrede des Domherrn Dr. Heinrich Tocke von Magdeburg, gehalten auf dem Provinzialkonzil zu Magdeburg. Nach einem Manuscripte der herzoglichen Behörden-Bibliothek zu Dessau," *Blätter für Handel, Gewerbe und soziales Leben* (*Beiblatt zur Magdeburgischen Zeitung*) 34 (1882): 167–68, 174–76, 177–80, and Ludger Meier, "Christianus de Hiddestorf OFM scholae Erfordiensis columna," *Antonianum* 14 (1939): 52–57, only tract. 1, art. 3, c. 1.

75 Breest, "Wunderblut," 175.

76 Breest, "Wunderblut," 182.

77 See n. 28 above.

> This blood (which, as it appears, is somewhat red and which is displayed in Wilsnack) works miracles. It makes the lame walk, allows the blind to see and sets captives free. This proves that it is the blood of Christ, visibly to see, highly to honour.[78]
>
> He answers that if the miracles are doubted, the faithful must respond by denying the antecedent (i.e., that this red thing, I do not know what is it, works miracles, and before a greedy priest proves this antecedent, he commits many lies, since he says: "See, this blood frees this one from captivity, and this person from death, and makes this person walk again." Because you will not have certainty from the Bible, nor from faith, nor from divine revelation, nor from experience, nor from topical arguments, or from anything else.[79]

In Hus's view, miracles can be claimed arbitrarily. If a person commits a severe crime for which he goes to prison, vows to the "Blood of Christ" at Wilsnack that he will become free, and finally his chains are violently broken, this does not prove that the blood of Wilsnack liberated him. Similarly, if a person fighting in a single combat vows to offer his weapons to the "holy blood" in Wilsnack and then kills his opponent, this does not prove that the blood helped him.[80] According to one of Hus's stories, the reports of miracles quite often seem to have been initiated by the priests in Wilsnack themselves. Thus, a citizen of Prague named Petrus von Ach went to Wilsnack before 1403, seeking help for his malformed hand. There, he donated a silver hand to the "holy blood" in hope of healing. When nothing happened, he said farewell to the priest, but stayed for three more days to wait and see whether the priest would say anything about him. As he later reported to the archbishop of Prague, in fact, the priests then told a story of a man whose hand had been healed by the "holy blood" of Wilsnack and who had left a silver hand in thanks for the miracle.[81]

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78 "Iste sanguis (demonstrato illo apparenti, quicquid sit rubeo, quod in Vuilznak monstratur) facit miracula. Nam claudis gressum, cæcis visum, captiuis egressum præstat. Ergo illud monstratum est sanguis Christi, visibiliter apparens, summe honorandus"; Hus, "Determinatio," fol. K iii v.

79 "Hic primo respondere debet fidelis negando antecedens, scilicet, quod illud rubeum nescio quid, quod illud facit miracula, et antequam sacerdus auarus probabit illud antecedens, comittet prius mendacia valde multa. Nam dicet. Ecce illum ille sanguis liberauit de capitiuitate, et illum a morte, et illi gressum restituit. Cum nec certitudinem habeat ex scriptura, nec ex fide, nec ex reuelatione diuina, nec ab experimento, nec ex argumento topico, vel alio"; Hus, "Determinatio," fol. K iii v.

80 Hus, "Determinacio," fol. K iv r.

81 Hus, "Determinacio," fol. L ii v; cf. Breest, "Wunderblut," 164.

The criticism of the provincial synod at Magdeburg in 1412 followed the same lines,[82] probably influenced by Hus and the decisions at Prague. It directed ten articles to Bishop Otto of Havelberg which also claimed clerical fraud. Thus, the text starts: "In your small town of Wilsnack, illicit things are said to occur in deeds, preaching, and treacherous signs; in particular, numerous and incredible miracles are reported, often that dead people have been resurrected, though no one has seen them."[83] This is termed "well-known lies," but it seems that none of the bishop's critics had been punished for this, because this would have to have taken place publicly.[84] The third article refers to extensive materials written about the miracles:

> In order to corroborate these errors, whole books have been written on these miracles, and new lies are written down every day. It should be assumed that even Christ and the apostles are reported to have performed fewer miracles than those announced there. It is arrogance to leave this behind to our posterity as if it had been approved by former prelates and doctors.[85]

Finally, the fourth article states that all events would go back to "a certain priest who should not have been given credence because he confessed what he did at Magdeburg,"[86] naming witnesses. The synod demanded information about the events at Wilsnack and, though implicit, actions against the treacherous priests there, referring to negative effects on the reputations of the church of Magdeburg and its archbishop. Thus, the first four articles make it clear that

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82 See n. 30 above.

83 "(1) In oppido vestro Wilsnak illicita fieri perhibentur in opere, sermone et fallacibus signis; et primo quidem innumerabilia et incredibilia miracula, et saepe quod mortui resurgant, quorum tamen nemo visus est"; text in Breest, "Wunderblut," 296; German translation on 176.

84 "(2) Licet talia figmenta sint publica, nunquam tamen audivimus aliquem vestrorum clericorum propter hoc esse punitum, ut aliis cederet in exemplum; cum tamen scriptum sit, peccantem coram omnibus arguere, ut caeteri timorem habeant"; text in Breest, "Wunderblut," 296; German translation on 176.

85 "(3) In majorem confirmationem errorum magna miraculorum volumina conscripta sunt et dietim talia figmenta conscribuntur, ita quod de Christo et ejus apostolis non tot scripta sunt, quam ibidem habentur, et haec magna praesumptio est, posteris nostris talia rel inquere in scriptis, quasi per praedecessores praelatos et doctores sint approbata"; text in Breest, "Wunderblut," 296; German translation on 176.

86 "(4) […] Hoc primo ortum habuit ab illius loci quondam plebano, cui fides non debuit haberi, ex eo quod per se fassus est in Magdeburg, qualiter egit"; text in Breest, "Wunderblut," 296; German translation on 176.

the participants of the synod also assumed that the miracles were the result of fraud.

When Heinrich Tocke took up his fight against the "holy blood" at Wilsnack, he had already had a similar experience close to Magdeburg. At least according to his synodal speech, in 1429, the archbishop sent Tocke, together with an Austin friar, to a small town close to Wittenberg to investigate the events regarding a host which was said to have bled during mass. Soon, he and his companion decided that this was based on fraud, and they attempted to find the host and bring it to Magdeburg. However, some of the councillors of the duchess of Saxony prevented him from doing so. Only after an intervention by the archbishop and some negotiations did Tocke manage to obtain the sacrament. He used his voyage to examine seven miracles which were said to have happened in Zerbst, Wittenberg, and Jüterbogk. At least three had been faked, one seemed to him to be highly suspicious, and he considered another of them to be ridiculous. Thus, he focused on proving the local priest's guilt. When the priest was finally imprisoned, he confessed that he had cut his finger and put his own blood onto the host.[87] The situation was similar to that in Wilsnack: a fraud committed by a local priest, soon supported by other miracles reported from the neighbourhood, by the interests of local people hoping for an increase in traffic and income, and by the territorial lords who also anticipated profits from the pilgrimage to their village or town.

Tocke met the bishop of Havelberg, Konrad Lintorff, in June 1443, and he soon went to Wilsnack to look for the hosts and the additional miracles.[88] He was shaken by the situation there. In a personal note about his visit, he speaks of the matter occurring there which "stands for idolatry, multiplies lies, confuses the poor, supports heresies, causes quarrels, offends the clergy, oppresses the people [and] blasphemes God."[89] The earlier arguments against the miracles and the local priests who had promoted them from the provincial synod of 1412 are taken up and expanded in his thirty articles produced for the negotiations with the bishop of Havelberg, with seven additional questions.[90]

87 From Tocke's *Tractatus contra cruorem*, see n. 79; Breest, "Wunderblut," 185–86.

88 See n. 33 above.

89 "Nam res illa ibi continuata sapit idolatriam, mendacia multiplicat, pauperes vexat, confortat haereses, generat lites, scandalisat clerum, confundit populum, blasphemat deum," from a sheet of paper copied into Magdeburg, Kunsthistorisches Museum (olim Domgymnasialbibliothek Magdeburg, cod. 36), of which only fragments of the burnt codex remain; see Ursula Winter, *Die Manuscripta Magdeburgica der Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin—Preussischer Kulturbesitz. Teil 1: Ms. Magdeb. 1–75* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2001), a16; text edited in a note in Breest, "Wunderblut," 195–96.

90 See n. 37 above; text in Breest, "Wunderblut," 297–300; German translation on 206–7.

Thus, the criticism voiced against the local clergy is formulated even more sharply: "The clerics serving there are said to be drunkards, lewd, frivolous, overly talkative, without fear of God, absolving severe cases that occur there by an unknown authority."[91] Tocke also states the guilt of the other prelates, doctors, and masters in allowing the pilgrimage and the events at Wilsnack to go on for sixty-three years and repeats the accusation that what is taking place there is done for financial gain.[92]

Claims of clerical deceitfulness were topical in the fifteenth century. They can also be found in the documents which allow insight into popular belief and lay criticism; for example, in the acts of the canonisation of Dorothea von Montau as well as in the traveller's report by Arnold von Harff, though more indirectly. Thus, one of the witnesses to Dorothea's miracles, Margaretha Bassaw from the village of Fischau, indirectly reports how the canons attempted to spread the information regarding Dorothea's sanctity. She remembered that one day, men from the church of Pomesania came to her telling her about Dorothea's works and miracles. When she heard about this, she reacted very strongly, saying "that the canons of this church would do this rather for money than for the salvation of souls."[93] According to her own report, she also added words of blasphemy. As in other cases,[94] disbelief and blasphemy were immediately punished, here by her daughter suffering an epileptic attack after the canons had left her house. Even though this is an exceptional example from the canonisation hearings—the daughter, though healed by Dorothea, later died in a fire, which was ascribed to her mother's sins—the feelings voiced by Margaretha may have been more common than they seem.

In his report, Arnold von Harff alludes several times to the role of the clergy in the veneration of relics. Already for the church of Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome, where he was shown the grave of Saint Matthew the apostle, he refers to other places which hold relics of Saint Matthew and adds: "But I will leave it to God to decide these errors of priests."[95] Again, when he came across the grave of Saint Dominic for a second time in the church in the small town of San

91 "(12) Clerici ibidem ministrantes dicuntur ebriosi, lubrici, leves, multiloqui, absque timore dei, absolventes in casibus gravibus undecunque venientes, nescitur cujus auctoritate"; Breest, "Wunderblut," 299; cf. the text from 1412: "(8) Clerici ibidem ministrantes divina, leves et multiloqui, absque timore Dei absolvunt in casibus gravibus, nescitur cujus autoritate"; Breest, "Wunderblut," 297.

92 Breest, "Wunderblut," 207, 299–300.

93 "Ipsi canonici ecclesie predicte hoc plus facerent propter pecuniam quam salute animarum; et consimilia verba blasphemie protulit"; Stachnik, *Akten*, witness 218, at 452.

94 See below.

95 "Dan ich laissen der paffen eirronge got scheyden"; von Harff *Pilgerfahrt*, 17; English translation in *Pilgrimage*, 19.

Domingo de la Calzada, he noted: "I leave God to decide these disputes among priests, who never allow that they are wrong."[96] These remarks probably reflect a typical position among the laity. Since laypeople were not allowed to voice their own opinion, they had to follow the decisions and explanations given by clerics. An independent point of view was always wrong; thus, only God could change the priests' attitude. This is exemplified by another report from the same church. The pilgrims were shown a white cock and a hen in a cage on the left-hand side of the high altar and were told that they had miraculously appeared there. They were told that they had to believe in the miracle, without further explanation. Critical minds like Arnold von Harff were not satisfied with this situation. Therefore, in Santiago de Compostela, Harff wanted to see the relics of the Apostle Saint James the Greater himself and even gave large donations in order to achieve this, but was ultimately denied access.[97]

6 Theological Doubts: The Object of Veneration

Clearly, an allegation of clerical fraud was a common and popular way of putting miracles into doubt. However, there were also other forms of criticism that were based on theological arguments. These doubts could be very general, as in the case of Jan Hus, or they could be based on problems of definition and denomination. This was closely connected with the topic of the authenticity and usability of material assets related to relics and holy places.

Jan Hus dedicated his treatise to the question of "whether Christ glorified all the blood that flowed from his body at the hour of resurrection."[98] His argument proceeds in three steps. Starting from the dogma concerning the nature of Christ, Hus first concludes that "Christ sufficiently merits that all the blood which flowed from his body is glorified in his body."[99] In consequence, it is clear that for Hus, Christ unified all parts of his body in his glorification, even those which previously belonged to it, in order to create bodily harmony.[100]

96 "Ich laesse aber der paffen irrunge got scheyden. die en moissen ind wyllent nyet onrecht hauen"; von Harff, *Pilgerfahrt*, 228; English translation in *Pilgrimage*, 268.

97 Von Harff, *Pilgerfahrt*, 233; English translation in *Pilgrimage*, 275.

98 "Vtrum Christus omnem sanguinem, qui de corpore suo effluxit, in eodem corpore hora resurrectionis glorificauit"; Hus, "Determinatio," fol. H i r.

99 "Conclusio prima. Christus sufficienter meruit omnem sanguinem, qui de corpore suo effluxit, in corpore suo glorificari"; Hus, "Determinacio," fol. H i v.

100 "Christus in hora resurrectionis corpus suum ex omnibus eius partibus unquam habitis composuit, integrauit et glorificauit secundum optimam harmoniam corporis glorificabilis"; Hus, "Determinacio," fol. H ii v.

This leads to the third conclusion that "the followers of Christ shall not adore anything today which exists locally and visibly on earth as the blood or hair of Christ."[101] This conclusion follows from the logical outcome of the first two conclusions that none of Christ's hair or blood remains on earth. To venerate something as "the blood of Christ" and adore it means to dishonour the true blood of Christ, "as if the fetid blood of a dead horse were venerated as the blood of Christ."[102] This is followed by some corollaries and a series of possible objections and answers from Hus. Thus, Hus denies the existence of particles of Christ's blood on relics such as parts of the cross, the crown of thorns, the tunic, or his *sudarium*. It may be true that they had once been touched by the blood of Christ, but now only the "redness" remains for remembrance, not the substance of the blood, as the accidents are preserved through transubstantiation. Therefore, none of Christ's body parts such as his foreskin or beard remained on earth, and he would not have left anything intentionally.

In his *Determinatio*, Hus focuses on the integrity of Christ's body in order to maintain the hope of redemption and resurrection.[103] His theory would have had radical consequences for many places of pilgrimage or reported miracles, which would therefore have been revealed to have been based on deceit. However, his position was not singular. Already in the twelfth century, Guibert of Nogent had stressed the wholeness of Christ in his resurrection, as was maintained by Robert Grosseteste in the thirteenth century in his treatise *De sanguine Christi*.[104] Though there were many other theologians who held a different position,[105] the opponents of Wilsnack also followed Hus. Both Tocke and the provincial synod of 1412 seem to have been reluctant to adopt Hus's entire argument. However, Tocke at least follows the general line when he states in his thirty articles that in Wilsnack, the people seem to be adoring the created rather than God and that those who wished to dishonour the sacrament of the Eucharist were strengthened by the practice there.[106]

101 "Conclusio tertia. Christi fideles hodie non debent quicquam localiter et visibiliter supra terram existens, pro sanguine vel crine Christi venerari"; Hus, "Determinacio," fol. H iii r.

102 "Vnde venerans et dicens aliquid talium esse sanguinem Christi […] dehonestaret sanguinem Christi cruorem foetidum equi mortui veneraretur"; Hus, "Determinacio," fol. H iii r.

103 Cf. Bynum, *Wonderful Blood*, 96.

104 Bynum, *Wonderful Blood*, 97–98.

105 In about 1280, Gerhard of Cologne held the opinion that God may have allowed his glorified body to exist in both heaven and earth simultaneously, while the University of Paris declared in 1448 that the faithful were permitted to believe that some of the blood of Christ had remained on earth; Bynum, *Wonderful Blood*, 109.

106 "Decimo nono. Sapit idolatriam colere creaturam pro Deo aut colere Deum aliter quam colendus est. Vicesimo. Confortat haereticos, praesertim eis qui detrahunt eucharistie sacramento ut Waldenses et flagellatores"; Breest, "Wunderblut," 299.

When Tocke directed his fourteen questions to the Faculty of Theology in Erfurt, the reaction was much clearer. For the faculty in 1447, it was impossible that the sacrament had shown the "true" blood of Christ, because according to all the doctors, none of Christ's blood had been left on earth after the resurrection. Even if that were the case, there was no reason why it should appear on a red-coloured host, because it would not have been left there.[107] Cusa's letter to all the archbishops of Germany from July 1451, which was intended to be transmitted to bishops and clergy following a query from the archbishop of Magdeburg,[108] took up a similar theological argument. Without naming Wilsnack, the cardinal pointed to the praxis that priests would refer to a red mark on transformed hosts as "the blood of Christ," allow it to be adored, and further the public interest by the publication of even more miracles simply to receive more money. This would be not "without maximum offence to God [...] because the Catholic faith teaches us that after the glorification of the body of Christ, his glorified blood must be taken to be invisible in his glorified veins."[109] Even though the focus is on the glorification, it is clear that he assumes the integrity of Christ's body and blood.

Another opponent of Wilsnack, the provost of Magdeburg, Eberhard Waltmann, had his own ideas about adoration. In a treatise with which he attempted to convince Giovanni da Capistrano about the dangers arising from the "holy blood" of Wilsnack,[110] he argued that "one can only talk to and adore something reasonable; therefore, adoration is only possible for God and the saints who are already in their eternal home; [...] anyone who is down here merits neither adoration nor veneration."[111] For Waltmann, the cross of Christ was adored only because of its physical contact with the Saviour, and the sacrament because of the divine grace in it. Prayers in front of shrines were not directed to bones or blood, but to the souls of saints because of their future glorification, and relics were not to be invoked. However, he did not believe that it was possible that anything like the holy blood of Christ could be found on earth. He even criticises the pope for granting indulgences to two places where miracles had supposedly occurred: "It seems that the Holy

107 Breest, "Wunderblut," 221.

108 See n. 41 above.

109 "Nos igitur, qui rem tam perniciosam, et nostrae fidei contrariam, sine Dei maxima offensa sub silentia pertransire non possumus, cum corpus Christi glorificatum, sanguinem glorificatum in venis glorificatis penitus inuisibilem habere, Catholica fides nos instruat"; Ludecus, *Historia*, fol. N ii r, inserted into a letter from Archbishop Friedrich to the bishop of Havelberg.

110 Cf. n. 36 above.

111 German translation in Breest, "Wunderblut," 259–60.

Father, who has many other important businesses, quite often signs what he is asked to thanks to false reports, which he would not do if he had been better advised and more properly informed."[112] Waltmann's position seems even more radical than that of Hus. His theories would not only have made the adoration of the "holy blood" impossible, but they also put many medieval practices of piety into doubt. No wonder Capistrano was furious and accused Waltmann of blasphemy.[113]

The doubts about the "holy blood" at Wilsnack also concerned the true object of veneration. The popular perception of the relic can be gathered from the references to Wilsnack in the deposition of the witnesses in the canonisation process at Marienwerder. For them, it was either "the Lord's blood," "the blood of Christ," or even "divine blood."[114] Obviously, the priests in Wilsnack ignored the theological reservations concerning the presence of anything resembling the blood of Christ on earth. These reservations and the reactions of the priests in Wilsnack are already mirrored in the articles directed to the bishop of Havelberg formulated in the Magdeburg provincial synod of 1412. It is first stated that "the people are venerating some blood there; we do not know which blood, because there is no blood and nothing that resembles blood." This clearly leads to uncertainty concerning the object of veneration:

> Some maintain more carefully that not the blood, but the sacrament is venerated there. But this conflicts with the common designation of the place, if it is called "of the holy blood," and if the appeal to it is "Help me, holy blood," or "may the holy blood release me," since for the sacrament alone, it would not be necessary to go to this place, because you can get it everywhere in the churches.[115]

In fact, the focus on the sacrament would have reduced the doubts regarding Wilsnack, but it would have made it less attractive to pilgrims.

When Heinrich Tocke took up his fight against Wilsnack in the 1440s, he repeated the statement made at the provincial synod. In the fourteen

112 German translation in Breest, "Wunderblut," 259–60.

113 Bynum, *Wonderful Blood*, 119.

114 Stachnik, *Akten*, witnesses 103f, 181, 224, and 255l, at 246, 397, 456, and 481.

115 "(4) Veneratur ibidem populus cruorem, nescimus quem, cum tamen nullus ibidem habeatur nec quid simile cruori. […] (5) Alii cautius loquentes asserunt, non cruorem, sed sacramentum ibidem venerari, contra quos communis nominatio loci militat; quia dicitur: ad sacrum sanguinem, et invocatio talis est: Adjuva me sacer sanguis, vel: sacer sanguis me liberet. Quando tamen necesse non est ad illum locum propter sacramentum recurrere, cum ubique in ecclesiis habeatur"; Breest, "Wunderblut," 296, see also 176–77.

questions directed to the Faculty of Theology in Erfurt in 1446, he also asked for the proper denomination for Wilsnack, "whether this place may be named 'of the holy blood' even though there is no blood there," and he adds the question of "whether the Feast of Corpus Christi may be named the Feast or the Day of the Holy Blood because it seems to have originated from this place."[116] The Feast of Corpus Christi had been introduced by Pope Urban in 1264 in relation to the dogma of transubstantiation that had been formulated in the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215, but it had become more popular in the fourteenth century.[117] Probably in consequence, the Eucharist and the communion lost their originally strong connection to the church wherein being excluded from communion meant being excluded from the church. Rather, piety was now directed towards the host and towards the benefits of the mass.[118] Obviously, the priests at Wilsnack attempted to use the popularity of the Feast of Corpus Christi to further their own interests, which may also have led to confusion and doubts among the common people. Therefore, the doctors from Erfurt refused both; that is, that Wilsnack could be named after the "holy blood" and that the Feast of Corpus Christi could be named the "Feast of the Holy Blood."[119]

Doubts were also raised against material objects connected with the "holy blood." In his fourteen questions, Tocke asked "whether a candle may be especially venerated as people are instructed to honour it and to give alms to it" and "whether the cloth which was allegedly found on the sacrament may find such veneration that people are touched with it as [they are] with the relics of the holy martyrs."[120] The popularity of such material elements seems closely connected to the search for signs, even if these were only loosely connected with the original miracle. At least here there was something to see, reach, and possibly touch. Pilgrims were ready to pay a lot of money to receive pilgrim signs, to be inscribed in the church records, or to receive a document to prove that they had been there.[121]

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116 "Undecimo. Utrum locus iste possit nominari ad sacrum sanguinem, quum nullus ibi sit sanguis. Duodecimo. Utrum festum corporis Christi vocari debeat festum seu dies sacri sanguinis ex eo quod ex illo loco videtur ortum habuisse"; Breest, "Wunderblut," 301.

117 See, e.g., Miri Rubin, *Corpus Christi: The Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 164–212.

118 Arnold Angenendt, *Geschichte der Religiosität im Mittelalter* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1997), 304.

119 Breest, "Wunderblut," 223.

120 "Octavo. Utrum cera sit singulariter veneranda et colenda quemadmodum ibi inducuntur homines talem honorare et offerre ibi elemosynam. Nono. Utrum corporale super quo dicitur inventum sacramentum, tanta possit veneratione coli ut homines cum illo signentur veluti cum reliquiis sanctorum martyrum"; Breest, "Wunderblut," 301.

121 The thirtieth of Tocke's thirty articles; Breest, "Wunderblut," 300.

The veneration of material objects—like the three hosts—caused much criticism and doubt, and not only from Tocke. When Arnold von Harff was on the way to Damascus, he came upon a large stone where, he was told, Saint George had stood before he went to fight the devil in the form of a dragon. This stone had now become an object of veneration for both Christians and Muslims. Harff states: "Both Christians and heathen have great faith in this stone, and if man or woman is plagued with pain in their back, he or she goes to this stone and rubs their back against it and forthwith it is cured. What a pitiful superstition is this, of which we have many in our own country, and believe!"[122] In fact, many looked for help with their personal problems when visiting places of pilgrimage and attempting to reach holy objects, and Eberhard Waltmann had already voiced a strong objection to this form of veneration.[123] Also, Harff not only ironises the practice at this place, but moreover generally criticises similar forms of veneration—which he describes as being plentiful in Germany—as superstition.

7 Doubts in Popular Piety

The debate about the object of veneration was nearly exclusively clerical, though an educated layman like Arnold von Harff may have had his own feelings about the problem. Nevertheless, miracles or the sanctity of particular persons may also have been questioned by laypeople, if our impression from the sources is correct. A typical report comes from the histories of the early events at Wilsnack. A certain nobleman named Diderick (Theodoricus) Wencksterne is said to have doubted the "holy blood" when he left his castle to go riding. He even had blasphemous thoughts and ridiculed it, as he later confessed. Riding some distance from his companions, he suddenly became blind and felt a strong pain in his eyes.[124] His companions found him stupefied and guided him to a safe place, where he prayed, promised donations, and vowed

122 "In desem steyne hauen cristen ind heiden gar groissen gelouuen. Soe weme man ind wijff sijn ruck we deyt, der geyt zo desem steyne mit deme rucken stayn sich wrijuende. van stunt an wirt er gesunt. O wat gelouues is leyder dat, der wir gar vil in vnsen laden hauen, ind geleuuen!"; von Harff, *Pilgerfahrt*, 197; English translation in *Pilgrimage*, 231.

123 See n. 110 above.

124 "Contigit enim eodem anno et mense, quibus inuentum fuit dictum sacramentum, scilicet anno millesimo tricentesimo octugesimo tertio, quod quidam nobilis nomine Theodoricus Wencksterne […] dum a fortulitio suo Wencksternberch appellato cum duobus familiaribus equitaret, et fama de inuentione huius excellentissimi sacramenti per totam terram diuulgata esset. Theodoricus non solum in hac incredulous, verumetiam in eadem via cogitationes de ea sacrilegas habuit blasphemias, prout ipse postmodum est

to visit the "holy blood." Thus, God gave him back his sight, and Diderick later visited Wilsnack with thirty companions. He died soon after these events. Reports of punishment for disbelief are a common strategy for proving the authenticity of miracles and the holiness of saints. The punishment is a miracle in itself, but the names of people and places as well as those of witnesses also suggest that the events really happened. Thus, one report is supported by another.

This strategy was also used in the canonisation process for Dorothea of Montau. The general mode of explanation is made clear in the deposition of the witness Margaretha Zeiler, whom Dorothea had helped to give up a life of carnal sin and desire. She then firmly believed in Dorothea's sanctity, but also added "that some disagree [and say] the opposite, who have been well punished for this by God."[125] This line of argument is repeated by two other witnesses, Heinrich Mockenbergk of Mestin and Dorothea, an elderly innkeeper from Falkenau.[126] Both refer to the case of the priest Johannes (Swetzmann) of Melencz, who is also prominent in other depositions. His sister Margaretha, a widow from Kulm, reported that Johannes had somewhat doubted Dorothea's sanctity.[127] He immediately became mute and blind, such that he could not read the Bible (*scriptura*), and his body became deformed. When he came to regret his detraction, he made confession and prayed to Dorothea. After a visit to her tomb, he began to speak, but his speech was indistinct and incomprehensible. He was partly restored to health only after another visit. Nevertheless, his deformation was not completely reversed, and he still had difficulty speaking. It seems that his punishment was more severe because he was a priest, and perhaps his deformation did not heal completely in order to remind others of what would happen if one doubted Dorothea's sanctity.

Late medieval people often developed a very personal connection to saints, who came to be considered as something like family members.[128] This is exemplified by another report about disbelief. Paul Erwarden of Schmückwalde at first did not believe in the miracles allegedly worked by Dorothea because he

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confessus, quod [...] idem caecus factus fuit"; Ludecus, *Historia*, fol. E i r–v; cf. the German version on fol. F ii r and an image on fol. G iii v.

125 "[Dicit ...] quod aliqui contradixissent oppositum, qui bene fuissent a Deo propter hoc castigati"; Stachnik, *Akten*, witness 26, at 71.

126 Stachnik, *Akten*, witnesses 64–65, at 160–62.

127 "Dixit quomodo quadam vice sanctitati matris Dorothee detraxit"; Stachnik, *Akten*, witness 61, at 154. Johannes is also mentioned by witnesses 66, 68 (here with the family name), and 99, at 167, 175, 238; as well in the original list of questions, art. 3.37, at 27–28.

128 Heß, "Heiligenverehrung," 19–20, with reference to Aaron J. Gurjewitsch, *Mittelalterliche Volkskultur*, trans. Matthias Springer (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1987), 70.

did not have any personal experience of them: "I will not believe that she is holy if I do not see any sign or revelation made to me by her."[129] However, his demand for signs was soon met. When his wife became ill during her pregnancy and many women came to help her, there was one woman whom he could not identify. Later, he came to believe that this woman was Dorothea, who wanted to give him a sign. Thus, he retired to a quiet place and implored Dorothea to restore his wife to her former health, vowing that he would forever believe in her sanctity and visit her tomb. Soon, his wife recovered. Dorothea saved him and his family once more when they fell ill during a return of the plague. All survived after vowing to Dorothea and visiting her shrine, apart from one female servant who did not pray or vow to her.[130] While disbelief and disobedience were punished, faithful veneration could help a family through the dangers of daily life.

On the other hand, Dorothea's closeness to the people in late fourteenth- and early fifteenth-century Prussia also led to doubts, especially for those who had known her before. Thus, when Johannes Lembergk visited his relative Gertrudis in Danzig, who had a blind daughter, and advised her to vow to visit Dorothea's shrine, Gertrudis did not believe in Dorothea's sanctity because she had lived near her while Dorothea was still in Danzig.[131] Another witness, Katharina, stressed Dorothea's human nature. How could one believe in her sanctity when she only was "a piece of earth like me"?[132] Similarly, Nicolaus Grudencz of Marienwerder doubted Dorothea's sanctity because she had given birth to many children: "Do you believe that the woman Dorothea was holy because she had children like you? You should never believe [this], just as I do not believe that she was holy."[133]

The demand for signs sometimes becomes somewhat magical or perhaps even related to pre-Christian traditions in which sanctity is given credit only under certain conditions. Thus, Helwig, the widow of Heinrich Repschlager of Danzig, did not believe the reports of Dorothea's miracles she had heard from the pulpit in the church of Marienwerder. When she returned to her home on

129 "(Cum non crederet miraculis ac sanctitati domine Dorothee, in hec verba prorupit:) 'Ego non credo, quod sit sancta, nisi videro signum aliquod aut revelationem michi ab ea factam'"; Stachnik, *Akten*, witness 171, at 382.

130 "Omnes remanserunt vivi excepta una ancilla, pro qua non oravit neque votum fecit, que obit"; Stachnik, *Akten*, at 383.

131 "Non haberet fidem ad eam, quia sibi cohabitasset in opido Gdanczk"; Stachnik, *Akten*, witness 247, at 468.

132 "(Quid debeo credere in eius sanctitatem? Ipsa fuit) gleba terrea sicut et ego"; Stachnik, *Akten*, witness 255d, at 479; cf. Heß, "Heiligenverehrung," 19.

133 Stachnik, *Akten*, witness 6, at 53.

the River Vistula, she thought that the events that had been reported to her were impossible. However, an accident then occurred, in which a man who had fallen overboard did not rise to the surface. Then Helwig prayed:

> Oh, holy sister Dorothea. If you have any power before God, as is said about you, I ask you that you may make it so that this man does not drown today. If you do so, I will firmly and unquestioningly believe in your sanctity and in everything that is said and preached about you. But if he is drowned, I will never believe in your sanctity, nor in what is said and preached about you.[134]

Needless to say, Helwig received her sign and the drowned man reappeared and soon recovered. In another case, a woman was restored to health after forgetting to publicise a first miracle, also by connecting her recovery with her belief in Dorothea's sanctity.[135]

In consequence, veneration could be denied if the prayers did not help. When Katharina Roder's pain remained despite her giving money to a priest to appeal to Dorothea, she stopped believing in Dorothea's sanctity and even started to mock her.[136] In a similar case, the healing was incomplete, which led to the saint's power being called into doubt.[137] Sometimes, the effect of prayers to the saints was also unclear. Thus, Lorenz Furstenaw of Thorn reported that he had vowed to many saints on his wife Katherina's behalf, not only to Dorothea in Marienwerder, but also to the "holy cross" in the parish church of Saint Katherine in Strasburg and elsewhere. However, when his wife recovered, he thought that this had happened because of help and advice from

134 "O beata soror Dorothea. Si aliquam habes potestatem coram Deo sicut de te dicitur, peto te, ut hodie iuves hunc hominem, ne submergatur. Quod si feceris, firmiter et indubie in tuam credo sanctitatem et omnia, que de te dicuntur et predicantur, ex tunc credo esse vera; sin autem si submergatur, nunquam credam in tuam sanctitatem neque his, que de te dicuntur et predicantur"; Stachnik, *Akten*, witness 42, at 104.

135 Cecilia, widow of Johannes Berenwalt, appealed to Dorothea: "O beata Dorothea, fac, ut tuis intercessionibus recedat a me dolor et pristine restituar sanitati! Alias non credo in tuam sanctitatem"; Stachnik, *Akten*, witness 90, at 233.

136 "Sed dolor ipsam non dimittens, per amplius noluit credere in eius sanctitatem. Et cum post hoc cottidie derideret eius sanctitatem"; Stachnik, *Akten*, witness 240, at 464. After this, Katharina's disease became worse, and she was only cured after a vow to visit Dorothea's shrine.

137 Stachnik, *Akten*, witness 205, at 446: Elizabeth Hundertmark of Marienwerder, who is later convinced by the saint that she should be thankful to God for what he has done for her.

her doctors, not because of the vows.[138] This critical attitude may have been an exception, but the need for signs and proofs felt by many led to a competition between the miracles, saints, and institutions that were related to them. Thus, in Dorothea's canonisation process, several other saints or "holy places" are mentioned which did not offer sufficient help, and it is only the vow to Dorothea and the promise to visit her shrine that lead to recovery and improvement. On at least four occasions, Wilsnack is named as one of the places visited in vain,[139] and other places of pilgrimage include the above-named "holy cross" in Strasburg,[140] Saint Barbara in Althaus-Kulm, the "Holy Virgin" in Köslin, and other mostly local shrines.[141]

Given the popular awareness of the places of pilgrimage, it is no wonder that pilgrims were thrown into doubts when they encountered the same saint, or rather the relics of the same saint, on several different occasions. As mentioned above, Arnold von Harff also voiced his doubts when he found the same relics in different places.[142] In the church of Santa Maria Maggiore, he was shown not only the "true" grave of Saint Matthew the apostle, which he had already encountered in Padua in Lombardy, but also other precious relics:

> Item in another altar on the right hand lies St. Jerome the Teacher, but I was told that he lies in Bethlehem where he was first buried, after which he was carried to Constantinople. How he then came to Rome, I leave to the learned to decide. Item on the left side of the choir altar is the picture of our Lady which St. Luke painted of which I have seen many.[143]

Even though Harff leaves these discrepancies for God or "the learned" to decide, it is clear that he does not simply accept what he is told by the clerics on the spot, but rather puts at least some of the relics into question. A similar attitude can be found in the pilgrims' reports made by clerics such as the

138 "Verum quod propter huiusmodi vota facta, ut credit deponens, ipsa Katherina uxor sua non convaluit, sed ex iuvamine medicorum et adiutorio"; Stachnik, *Akten*, witness 72, at 184.

139 See n. 120 above.

140 Stachnik, *Akten*, witnesses 72, 124, and 220, at 183, 342, and 454.

141 For these places, see Stachnik, *Akten*, witnesses 95, 124, 220, and 224, at 236, 342, 454, and 456; sometimes without exact information; see also witnesses 53 and 112, at 136 and 333.

142 See nn. 94–96 above.

143 "Item in dem anderen altaer zo der rechten hant lijcht sent Jheronimus der lerer, dat mir ouch gesaicht waert zu Bethleem, das er eirst begrauen waert ind waert von dann zo Constantinopell gefoirt, mer wie hee dan zo Rome komen sij, lais ich idt an die geleirden stayn. Iem off der lyncker sijden des koirs altaers is vnser lieuer vrauwen beylde dat sijnt Lucas gemaelt hait, der ich ouch gar vil gesien hane"; von Harff, *Pilgerfahrt*, 17; English translation in *Pilgrimage*, 19.

Franciscan Paul Walther of Guglingen, a travelling companion of Felix Fabri. When he visited Saint Katherine's monastery on Sinai, he doubted whether he had truly been shown the places where Moses had been. He also had his own thoughts about the parts of the crown of thorns displayed in Rhodes, Rome, Assisi, or Utrecht because he believed that the original crown of thorns had been made from different materials.[144]

8 Conclusion

The three examples treated here clearly show no general doubts concerning ecclesiastical dogmas, and one would need to look for these in other parts of late medieval society.[145] The criticism raised was mostly directed against clerical malpractice and misunderstandings in popular belief. The strong late medieval criticism of the clergy indicated by the term "anticlericalism" was quite widespread. The laity accused the clergy of keeping the ecclesiastical sphere for themselves, "never allow[ing] that they are wrong."[146] Also, the stereotype of the "greedy priests" doing everything for money was widely used, also by clerical reformers.[147] Therefore, "treacherous priests," to use the terms of the provincial synod at Magdeburg in 1412,[148] could easily follow their own interests by forging miracles, as one of the witnesses of Marienwerder put it, as "the canons of this church would do this for money rather than for the salvation of souls."[149] This is clearly related to the widespread fear of impostors in the later Middle Ages and early modern period.[150]

The clerical debates about the objects of veneration were intended not only to change certain theological attitudes, but also to influence the beliefs of the lay audience. When Jan Hus, Heinrich Tocke, the doctors of the Faculty of Theology at Erfurt, or Nicholas of Cusa maintained that no part of the body of Christ has remained on Earth after his resurrection, they also opposed well-established ecclesiastical practices. As becomes clear from the conflict between

144 Paul Walther, *Fratris Pauli Waltheri Guglingensis Itinerarium in Terram Sanctam et ad Sanctam Catharinam*, ed. Matthias Sollweck (Tübingen: Litterarischer Verein in Stuttgart, 1892), 209, 277–78.

145 In heretic groups like the Waldensians, the Hussites, or the Lollards.

146 Arnold von Harff; see n. 95.

147 Cf., e.g., nn. 78, 86, and 96.

148 See nn. 88–91.

149 Margaretha Bassaw of Fischau; see n. 92 above.

150 See, e.g., Miriam Eliav-Feldon, *Renaissance Impostors and Proofs of Identity* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), concerning the inventing and fabricating of identities. I wish to thank Bernard D. Cooperman for this hint.

Eberhard Waltmann and Giovanni da Capistrano, even the popes had authenticated blood miracles,[151] and many places claimed to possess relics related to Christ. The Fourth Lateran Council of 1215 had fixed the dogma of transubstantiation. However, since the common people only received the host, it did not seem entirely strange to them to suppose that the host, as Christ's body, also contained blood and that it was possible to see it under certain circumstances. In her study of "holy blood," Caroline Walker Bynum concluded: "Perhaps the frenzy for some sort of palpable contact with *Blut Christi*, in cup or vision, monstrance or miracle, was not, as some historians have argued, doubt about presence or guilt over such doubt, but rather a desire to participate in the saving stuff of sacrifice in the only way left if one could neither be gift or giver."[152] In fact, it seems that this was an important factor in the spread of "blood" miracles in the later Middle Ages.

The critics wanted the laypeople to focus on the sacrament instead. Thus, when people in Wilsnack were told that they were venerating "holy" or even "divine" blood, the critics wanted to redirect this veneration to the consecrated host, even more so following the papal decision to add newly consecrated hosts to the original ones.[153] The decay of the original hosts led to the charge of idolatry, since the original substance was long gone.[154] Similarly, the veneration of other material objects, like the cloth found on the original hosts in Wilsnack, the water from the River Jordan in the report by Felix Fabri, or the stone in the story of Arnold von Harff, was heavily debated. Following Eberhard Waltmann, even the relics of saints should not be venerated as such; rather, one should pray "to the souls [of the saints] because of their merits in life, their salvation in death, and their future glorification in the final judgement."[155] According to the critics, popular piety obviously had to become more spiritual and less focused on material objects.

Nevertheless, the laity were excluded from the theological debates[156] and had difficulty understanding the consequences of theological dogmas. Criticism of malpractices in the church was raised both inside and outside the clerical sphere, as holds true for accusations of greed. However, while in ecclesiastical debates, the criticism was intended to be an instrument of reform,

151 See n. 111 above.

152 Bynum, *Wonderful Blood*, 224.

153 See n. 42 above.

154 E.g., in the responses to Tocke's fourteen articles deciding that the aging of hosts should not be allowed: Breest, "Wunderblut," 219.

155 See n. 110 above.

156 Tocke claimed to have only discussed the problem of Wilsnack with other clerics, not publicly or in the presence of laypeople; see Breest, "Wunderblut," 184.

laypeople used criticism in order to give reasons for their doubts about certain (often newly established) practices. In general, popular piety was not only determined by faith in ecclesiastical teachings, but also implicated doubts which had to be resolved—which explains the search for signs. In contrast, doubts raised by the clergy mostly resulted from criticism based on theological arguments, as in the cases of Hus, Tocke, or Waltmann. Though there were clear differences resulting from education and environment, there was not a wide gap between the clergy and the laity.

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