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Ehud Krinis

Judah Halevi's Fideistic Scepticism in *The Kuzari*

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Ehud Krinis

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Ehud Krinis
Kibbutz Shoval, June 2019

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Warren Zev Harvey
Foreword

Ehud Krinis is one of the finest interpreters of the philosophy of Judah Halevi. His first book, *God's Chosen People: Judah Halevi's* Kuzari *and the Shīʿī Imām Doctrine*,[1] continued the pioneering research of Shlomo Pines and gave us a profound and detailed understanding of the Shiʿite influences on Halevi's *Kuzari*. In the words of a leading expert on Judeo-Arabic philosophy, Krinis's book is "the most comprehensive and bold project to date of situating Halevi's *Kuzari* within its context in Islamic civilization."[2] Krinis's present book examines the sceptical motifs in Halevi's *Kuzari* and is the first extended study of Halevi's scepticism.

Halevi was a brilliant poet in Hebrew. His philosophical book *The Kuzari*, written in Arabic, also exhibits extraordinary literary skill. The book is composed in dialogue form and purports to record the discussions of the King of Khazaria, whose kingdom has allegedly converted to Judaism, with a philosopher, a Christian scholar, a Muslim scholar, and a Jewish scholar. Krinis shows how Halevi resourcefully used the dialogue form in order to portray the tension between scepticism and dogmatism in religion and science.[3]

In what sense was Halevi a sceptic? Pines, whose research did much to advance the study of scepticism in medieval Jewish and Muslim philosophy, chose to avoid the term "scepticism," since he was not convinced that Greek scepticism had exerted a significant influence on medieval Arabic philosophy.[4] However, at least since the studies of Saul Horovitz eleven decades ago,[5] there have been authors

1 Ehud Krinis, *God's Chosen People: Judah Halevi's* Kuzari *and the Shīʿī Imām Doctrine*, trans. Ann Brener and Tamar Liza Cohen (Turnhout: Brepols, 2014). See Krinis, "The Arabic Background of the *Kuzari*," *Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy* 21 (2013): 1–56; Krinis, "Galut and Ghayba: The Exile of Israel and the Occultation of the Shīʿī Imām-Messiah: A Comparative Study of Judah Halevi and Early Imāmī-Shīʿī Writers," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 40 (2013): 245–300. See also Shlomo Pines, "Shiʿite Terms and Conceptions in Judah Halevi's Kuzari," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 2 (1980): 165–251.

2 Diana Lobel, review of *God's Chosen People: Judah Halevi's* Kuzari *and the Shīʿī Imām Doctrine* by Ehud Krinis, *Journal of Semitic Studies* 61 (2016): 543.

3 See below, 30.

4 Shlomo Pines, "The Limitations of Human Knowledge according to Al-Fārābi, Ibn Bājja, and Maimonides," in *Studies in Medieval Jewish History and Literature*, vol. 1, ed. Isadore Twersky (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979): 82–109; Pines, "Les limites de la métaphysique selon Al-Fārābi, Ibn Bājja, et Maïmonide," *Miscellanea Mediaevalia* 13, no. 1 (1981): 211–25.

5 Saul Horovitz, *Über den Einfluss der griechischen Philosophie auf die Entwicklung des Kalam* (Breslau: Schatzky, 1909); Horovitz, "Über die Bekanntschaft Saadias mit der griechischen Skepsis," in *Judaica: Festschrift zu Hermann Cohens siebzigstem Geburtstage*, ed. Ismar Elbogen, Benzion Kellermann, and Eugen Mittwoch (Berlin: Bruno Cassirer, 1912), 235–52; Horovitz, "Der Einfluss der

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such as Carmela Baffioni[6] and Giuseppe Veltri[7] who have argued that there was indeed such an influence. Josef Stern, in his *The Matter and Form of Maimonides'* Guide, presented a compelling sceptical interpretation of Maimonides's book.[8]

To be sure, Krinis is well aware of all the arguments against the use of the term "scepticism" with regard to medieval philosophers writing in Islamic lands. He explains his own view as follows:

> The first gap between [the Greek sceptics and their Arabic successors] is that of knowledge. […] No translation of any essay written by a Hellenistic sceptic was […] included in the […] translations […] from […] Greek […] or […] Syriac to Arabic during the eighth to tenth centuries. The Academia and Pyrrho […] are rarely mentioned in [classical] Arabic literature […]. The channels by which knowledge of ancient scepticism reached writers in Arabic culture in the [classical] era […] were thus indirect […]. In Halevi's case […], the place of direct exposure to […] Hellenistic sceptics was filled by non-sceptical Hellenistic writers such as Galen […] and […] Ptolemy […]. A second gap between [the Greeks and the philosophers of Arabic culture] […] is that of [religion]. From the pagan perspective […] the gods were an inseparable part of the natural order [and] discussing them [was considered] part of the science of physics. By contrast, a [monotheistic] religion […] posits […] a God whose existence […] [predates] that of the world and nature […]. These [two] gaps […] provide an explanation as to why it is impossible to speak of [the] continuity of scepticism […] in the transition from the classical world to the Muslim era. […]
>
> Nonetheless, this should not get in the way of [the] scholar […]. [Scepticism in Arabic philosophy] […] would […] indicate a transformation rather than [a] replication. Gaps in knowledge and cultural climate function as catalysts […]. Halevi's thought provides us with highly instructive examples of the extent to which the transmission of sceptical concepts […] between eras and cultures can be […] fascinating precisely because of the profound transformation they underwent.[9]

Yes, Krinis admits, medieval philosophers in Islamic lands had only a meagre knowledge of Greek scepticism. However, this meagreness was not only a disadvantage; it was also an advantage! The literary and cultural gaps separating those monotheistic philosophers from their Greek predecessors prevented them from being merely *replicators* and forced them to be *transformers*. They developed their

griechischen Skepsis auf die Entwicklung der Philosophie bei den Arabern," in *Jahresbericht des jüdisch-theologischen Seminars Fraenckel'scher Stiftung für das Jahr 1914* (Breslau: Schatzky, 1915), 5–49.

6 Carmela Baffioni, "Per l'ipotesi di un influsso della scepsi sulla filosofia islamica," in *Lo scetticismo antico: Atti del Convegno organizzato dal Centro di Studi del pensiero antico del CNR, Roma 5–8 nov. 1980*, ed. Gabriele Giannantoni (Naples: Bibliopolis, 1981), 1:417–34.

7 Giuseppe Veltri, "Scepticism in Jewish Philosophy," in *Judaistik im Wandel: ein halbes Jahrhundert Forschung und Lehre über das Judentum in Deutschland*, ed. Andreas Lehnhardt (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017), 211–22.

8 Josef Stern, *The Matter and Form of Maimonides'* Guide (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013). See my review (in Hebrew) of the 2017 Hebrew translation in *Iyyun* 66 (2017): 399–404.

9 See below, 14-17.

own brand of scepticism which was not a replication of Pyrrho, but which was "fascinating" in its own right. True, as Pines insisted, there was no real continuity between Greek scepticism and the scepticism of the philosophers in the Islamic world. However, there was something even better: creative discontinuity.

Halevi's scepticism, according to Krinis's analysis, is inextricably connected to fideism. Krinis explains this connection as follows:

> Fideism is the concept that permitted ideas rooted in the world of ancient Hellenistic scepticism to enter into Halevi's religious worldview. [...] Fideism is a theory that maintains that faith is independent of reason. In the fideist approach, intellectual pursuit is considered to be an inappropriate foundation for religious belief. [...] Pure or radical fideism [...] utterly rejects the need for intellectual inquiry, [...] whereas moderate fideism distinguishes [...] fields in which intellectual inquiry is valid [...] from fields in which [it] is invalid [...]. The latter fields are those with significance [...] to religious belief.[10]

Krinis's historical theory may be summed up as follows. When some Muslim and Jewish philosophers writing in the classical era of Islam appropriated Greek scepticism, they did so selectively. They were selective doubters. They did not doubt all things across the board, as the Greek sceptics did; for example, they did not doubt divine revelation or religious dogmas, but they did doubt "intellectual inquiry." Their doubts about intellectual inquiry were motivated by their fideism; that is, by their conviction that "faith is independent of intellectual inquiry" and should not be founded on it. Criticism of intellectual inquiry supported their fideism in that it seemed to show that reason could not be a reliable foundation for religion. They used scepticism, in other words, as a weapon against reason. Scepticism had no essential value for them, but only instrumental value. It was thus due to his fideism that Halevi was able to incorporate sceptical elements into his philosophy.

Krinis describes Halevi as a "moderate" fideist, not a "pure" or "radical" one.[11] He did not reject the legitimacy of intellectual inquiry *tout court*, but only with respect to certain theological subjects. In this regard, Krinis observes, Halevi was similar to the great Muslim savant al-Ġazālī, who had a manifest influence on his thought in general and on his scepticism in particular. Both al-Ġazālī and Halevi were staunchly committed to logical demonstration, but they argued that reason is severely limited in the areas of metaphysics and theology.[12] This is essentially the

10 See below, 19.
11 See below, 21.
12 See below, 80–81. According to Krinis, Halevi is more sceptical than al-Ġazālī regarding physics. See also Taneli Kukkonen, "Al-Ghazālī's Skepticism Revisited," in *Rethinking the History of Skepticism: The Missing Medieval Background*, ed. Henrik Lagerlund (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 29–59, and Ariel Malachi, "Scepticism at the Service of Revelation? Preliminary Observations on Logic and Epistemology in Judah Halevi's *Kuzari*," in *Scepticism and Anti-Scepticism in Medieval Jewish Philosophy and Thought*, ed. Racheli Haliva (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018), 23–40.

same position that was held by the rationalist Maimonides, who explained in his *Guide of the Perplexed* I, 31 that wherever there are logical demonstrations, there are no differences of opinion, and thus there are no divisions of opinion in mathematics, some in physics, and a great many in metaphysics.[13] Halevi's position is close to the fideism of the rationalist Kant, who denied knowledge to metaphysics "in order to make room for faith."[14]

Truth to tell, it would be difficult to find a good example of a "true" or "radical" fideist among the Muslim and Jewish philosophers who flourished in the classical era of Islam. In general, the term "fideism" is more appropriate in Christianity, which is a religion of *fides*, than in Judaism or Islam, which are religions of law. It was the Christian Tertullian who dismissed philosophy, asking "What indeed has Athens to do with Jerusalem?",[15] and it was he who allegedly cried out "Credo quia absurdum est."[16]

In any case, for Halevi, knowledge of God is not achieved by a leap of faith. It is gained by means of direct sense experience or by a reliable tradition based on that experience. As Krinis skillfully explains, it is the result of *ʿiyān* ("eyewitness perception"), *mušāhadah* ("direct sense testimony"), *baṣīrah* ("spiritual vision"), and *ḏawq* ("taste"); or of *al-tawātur* ("concurrent tradition") and *taqlīd* ("imitation, reliance on tradition"). Halevi's philosophy was more a *Gefühlsphilosophie* than a *Glaubensphilosophie*.

In *Kuzari* I, 5 (see also I, 8), the king remarks that the phenomenon of magnetic attraction seemed to contradict the laws of physics, but that once they were confronted with the eyewitness perception (*al-ʿiyān*) of the phenomenon, scientists were compelled to accept it and to try to explain it. Similarly, he says, divine miracles seem to be impossible, but if we have an eyewitness perception (*al-ʿiyān*) of such miracles, we are compelled to accept them and to try to explain them. The relationship between *al-ʿiyān* and reason in physics and in theology is thus similar. Direct experience cannot be denied either in science or in religion. Halevi also makes this point in *Kuzari* II, 48: reason does not accept miracles until it is forced to do so by direct experience (*al-ʿiyān* or *mushāhadah*).

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13 Moses Maimonides, *The Guide of the Perplexed*, trans. Shlomo Pines (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), 66.

14 Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), preface to the 2nd edition (Bxxx), 116: "Ich mußte also das Wissen aufheben, um zum Glauben Platz zu bekommen."

15 *De Praescriptione Haereticorum*, 7. English translation: "On Prescription Against Heretics," in *Ante-Nicene Christian Library; Translations Of The Writings Of The Fathers Down To A.D. 325*, vol. 15, *The Writings Of Tertullian*, vol. 2, trans. Peter Holmes (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1870), 9.

16 Compare *Tertullian's Treatise on the Incarnation*, ed. and trans. Ernest Evans (London: SPCK, 1956), 18–19.

Halevi insists that theological propositions must answer to the same scientific standards as scientific propositions. Krinis gives a lengthy discussion of the Jewish scholar's significant comments in *Kuzari* I, 67.[17] The Jewish scholar exclaims: "God forbid that the Law should teach something that repudiates [the testimony of] direct sense experience (*ʿiyān*) or [the conclusion of] a demonstration (*burhān*)." As for the question of the creation or the eternity of the world, he sceptically asks: "Who could provide us with the demonstration (*al-burhān*) on this question?" The Jewish scholar thus seems to be advocating a sceptical suspension of judgment (*epochē*) here. However, he immediately adds that since reason leaves the question undecided, one should accept the traditional view that the world is created. Nor is this his last word. If one is forced by argument to accept the eternity *a parte ante* of matter, he concludes, one may do so without contradicting the Law, as long as one holds that *this world* was created, as written in Genesis, and that the first human beings were Adam and Noah, as also recorded there. One sees here Halevi's sincere determination to remain faithful to both the biblical text and to reason. However, one also sees his "selective scepticism" – philosophy leaves us in a state of *epochē*, but religion rescues us from it.

Krinis notes the close historical connection between the Arabic *burhān* and the Hebrew *mofet*: both words bear the double meaning of a logical demonstration and a miraculous sign.[18] Already in the *Qurʾān*, the Arabic *burhān* translates the Hebrew *mofet* in the sense of a miraculous sign (see Sura 28 [The Story], verse 32, together with Exodus 4:21 and 7:9). This Quranic usage is subsequently found in Jewish authors, such as Saʿadia Gaon (e.g., in the introduction to *The Book of Beliefs and Opinions* and often in his biblical translations and commentaries). When *burhān* later came to be used to designate a logical demonstration, medieval Arabic-to-Hebrew translators routinely translated it as *mofet*. The two words thus developed together, mutually influencing each other. Krinis points out how Halevi artfully compares the two senses of *burhān*: the greatest *burhān* is not that of the logicians, but that of the prophets (see *Kuzari* I, 15). *Burhān* preempts *burhān*.

According to Krinis's analysis, Halevi seems to have seen his own scepticism as Socratic.[19] In *Kuzari* IV, 13, and again in V, 14 (and cf. III, 1, on the rare level attained by Socrates), the Jewish rabbi approvingly cites a dictum of Socrates from Plato's *Apology* 20d–e: "O people, I do not deny this divine wisdom of yours. Rather, I say that I don't comprehend it. I am wise only in human wisdom." Krinis sees this twice-cited quotation of Socrates as corroborating Halevi's own fideistic scepticism. Socrates in effect asserts here that philosophy has nothing to say about the mysteries of religion. It has nothing to say about *fides*. Krinis makes yet another important

17 See below, 61–74.
18 See below, 45–46.
19 See below, 82–85.

point about Halevi's appreciation of Socrates: that Halevi identified with Socrates's "humble philosophical approach." Scepticism goes hand in hand with humility.[20]

Ehud Krinis has written a perceptive, erudite, and lucid study of the sceptical motifs in Judah Halevi's *Kuzari*. He challenges us to read Halevi's book in a new and stimulating way.

20 See also below, 100, n. 2.

Chapter 1 Classical Hellenistic Scepticism as a Background to the Appearance of Scepticism in Arabic Culture and *The Kuzari*

In recent decades, academic research on sceptical trends in classical Greek and Latin cultures has flourished.[1] Similarly, there have been great advances made in research into sceptical trends in Christian lands in the modern era.[2] However, when it comes to sceptical trends in the Middle Ages, research has yet to thrive. Despite some interesting beginnings, research into sceptical manifestations in this period is still awaiting scholars who will further enrich our understanding.[3] This is particularly true of Arabic culture and its Judeo-Arabic subculture,[4] which blossomed during the classical Islamic period (from the ninth to the thirteenth century), a period parallel to the European High Middle Ages.[5]

Judah Halevi (aka Abū al-Ḥasan al-Lāwī, d. 1141) lived and worked in the Iberian Peninsula from the end of the eleventh century to the first decades of the twelfth century. His major literary output was poetry, a genre in which he excelled and in which he gained renown in his own lifetime.[6] In the last years of his life, before he carried out his planned journey to the Land of Israel, Halevi wrote his only prose work.[7] This composition, whose official title is *The Book of Refutation*

1 See Diego E. Machuca, "Ancient Skepticism," *Philosophy Compass* 6, no. 4 (2011): 234–58.

2 Richard H. Popkin's *The History of Scepticism from Erasmus to Descartes*, first published in 1960, usually receives the credit for initiating the study of early modern scepticism.

3 Henrik Lagerlund, "A History of Skepticism in the Middle Ages," in *Rethinking the History of Skepticism*, 1.

4 Giuseppe Veltri, *Alienated Wisdom: Enquiry into Jewish Philosophy and Scepticism* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018), 148–49, 153–54.

5 Throughout this study (unless stated otherwise), the term "Arabic culture" refers to the general culture during the classical Islamic period. This culture, whose main language was Arabic, was shared not only by Muslims, but also by Christian, Jewish, and other cultural elites who came under the political domination of Islam during this period. For the relevant periodisation of Islamic history, see Shlomo Dov Goitein, "A Plea for the Periodization of Islamic History," *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 88, no. 2 (1968): 227.

6 For the course of Halevi's life and his literary achievements, see Angel Sáenz-Badillos and Daniel J. Lasker, "Judah Halevi," in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, ed. Fred Skolnik and Michael Berenbaum, 2nd ed. (Detroit: Macmillan Reference, 2007): 11:492–501; Joseph Yahalom, *Yehuda Halevi: Poetry and Pilgrimage*, trans. Gabriel Levin (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2009).

7 Recent identifications of relevant Geniza documents unknown to previous scholars and technological advancements in reading Geniza materials have enabled Mordechai Akiva Friedman to pinpoint the composition of *The Kuzari* to Halevi's last years in al-Andalus (1139–40). See Mordechai Akiva Friedman, "Judah Ha-Levi on Writing *The Kuzari*: Responding to a Heretic," in *From a Sacred Source – Genizah Studies in Honour of Professor Stefan C. Reif*, ed. Ben Outhwaite and Siam Bhayro

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and Proof on Behalf of the Despised Religion (*Kitāb al-radd wa-l-dalīl fī al-dīn al-ḏalīl*), is known as *The Book of the Kuzari* or simply *The Kuzari*.[8] In terms of its impact over the centuries, *The Kuzari* stands alongside *The Book of Beliefs and Opinions* ([*al-Muḫtār fī*] *al-amānāt wa-l-iʿtiqādāt*) by Saʿadia Gaon (aka Saʿīd ibn Yūsuf al-Fayyūmī, d. 942), *The Book of Direction to the Duties of the Heart* (*Kitāb al-hidāyah ilā farāʾiḍ al-qulūb*) by Baḥya ibn Paqudah (aka Ibn Baqūdah, *fl.* second half of the eleventh century), and *The Guide of the Perplexed* (*Dalālat al-ḥāʾirīn*) by Maimonides (aka Mūsā ibn Maymūn, d. 1204) as one of the major compositions of Judeo-Arabic theological literature.[9]

Of the theological works of these four central thinkers of Judeo-Arabic culture, along with those of other authors, it is Maimonides's thought that has received most scholarly attention. It should therefore not come as a surprise that when it comes to scepticism too, serious discussion of Maimonides's thought has preceded any discussion of that of the other thinkers.[10] Josef Stern's recently published research, which extensively discusses and analyses sceptical manifestations in *The Guide of the Perplexed*, is the first comprehensive study devoted to scepticism in Judeo-Arabic thought.[11] The initial contribution to the study of sceptical aspects in Halevi's thought in particular was made by Nahum Arieli, who devoted several pages to *The*

(Leiden: Brill: 2010), 157–69; Friedman, "An India Trader's Partnership in Almería (1139)," *Sefarad* 76, no. 1 (2016): 75–96; Friedman, *India Book IV/A*: *Ḥalfon and Judah ha-Levi – The Lives of a Merchant Scholar and a Poet Laureate according to the Cairo Geniza Documents* [Judeo-Arabic and Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi Institute, 2013), 226, 242–43.

8 In a private letter found in the Cairo Geniza, Judah Halevi refers to it as "The Khazarī Book" (*al-Kitāb al-ḫazarī*). See Moshe Gil and Ezra Fleischer, *Yehuda Ha-Levi and His Circle: 55 Geniza Documents* [Judeo-Arabic and Hebrew] (Jerusalem: World Union of Jewish Studies, 2001), 325; Mordechai Akiva Friedman, *India Book IV/B*: *Ḥalfon the Merchant Scholar and the Great Traveller according to the Cairo Geniza Documents* [Judeo-Arabic and Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi Institute, 2013), 277.

9 In the history of Jewish thought, these works became known to most readers not in their original Judeo-Arabic, but in Hebrew translations. The more popular translations were made in the second half of the twelfth century and the beginning of the thirteenth century by Judah ibn Tibbon (d. 1190) and his son Samuel (d. 1232).

10 A preliminary treatment of the acquaintance of Saʿadia Gaon – who ran second to Maimonides in attracting the attention of academic scholarship – with Greek scepticism can be found in Horovitz, "Über die Bekanntschaft Saadias mit der griechischen Skepsis," 235–52. For an overview of the subject of scepticism in Jewish philosophy, see Giuseppe Veltri, "Scepticism in Jewish Philosophy," 211–22.

11 Stern, *The Matter and Form of Maimonides'* Guide. In this volume, Stern incorporates his studies from previous decades that tackle the sceptical aspects of Maimonides's thought. See also Moshe Halbertal, *Maimonides: Life and Thought*, trans. Joel Linsider (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), 301–2, 304–11, 354.

Kuzari in a study focused on doubt in the thought of Abū Ḥāmid al-Ġazālī (d. 1111) and René Descartes (d. 1650).[12]

The current study seeks to follow the lead set by the pioneering work of Saul Horovitz, Josef Stern, and Nahum Arieli and to expand on it by revealing more about manifestations of scepticism in Judeo-Arabic thought, a direction that is still underdeveloped in Judeo-Arabic studies. As Judeo-Arabic culture was a subculture of Arabic culture in general, this study also offers a contribution to the study of the manifestation of sceptical thinking in the broader context of that culture.

The concept of scepticism is in frequent use in nowadays language. As one may expect of a concept with a long history and many applications, scepticism has taken on different and, at times, wildly divergent meanings. In terms of its relevance for this study – the perspective of Arabic culture – two diverse approaches presenting the essence of scepticism are of particular interest. The first stresses the condition of non-assent, or avoiding assent to any proposition as the essential state of intellectual inquiry; the other approach places doubt at the core of that inquiry.

The approach stressing the condition of non-assent was typical of Hellenistic culture. Hellenistic scepticism was designed to serve as a response to the formation of concurrent philosophical trends (from the fourth century BCE on), such as the Stoic, Epicurean, and Aristotelian schools. The common starting point of these and other schools was that the use of the intellect leads to dogmas: that is, proven truths in various fields of knowledge. An embedded assumption of this starting point is that human intelligence is characterised by its ability to decide, sorting the essential and certain from the non-essential and uncertain and coming down on the side of whatever is certain and true.[13] This basic assumption guided the criticisms of the sceptical Hellenistic thinkers, those who distinguished themselves by their constant

12 Nahum Arieli, "Divine Light and Natural Light" [Hebrew], *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 7 (1988): 112–17. In addition, Richard Popkin and Luciano Floridi pointed to the relevance of both Halevi and al-Ġazālī to medieval scepticism. See Richard H. Popkin, *The History of Scepticism from Savonarola to Bayle*, rev. ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 17; Luciano Floridi, "The Rediscovery and Posthumous Influence of Scepticism," in *The Cambridge Companion to Ancient Scepticism*, ed. Richard Bett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 274. Two other contributions to this subject were published after I completed my work on this study: see Howard Kreisel, "Between Philosophic Optimism and Fideistic Scepticism: An Overview of Medieval Jewish Philosophy," in *Scepticism and Anti-Scepticism in Medieval Jewish Philosophy and Thought*, 12–14, and Ariel Malachi, "Scepticism at the Service of Revelation?"

13 For a detailed description of the process of reaching a dogmatic certainty via the intellect's ability to discern it from the non-essential and uncertain, see Saʿadia Gaon, *al-Muḫtār fī al-amānāt wa-l-iʿtiqādāt*, ed. Yosef Qāfiḥ (Jerusalem: Yeshiva University; New York: Sura Institute for Research and Publication, 1970), 7–10 (= Saʿadia Gaon, *The Book of Beliefs and Opinions*, trans. Samuel Rosenblatt [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1948], 9–13). See, in this context, Sarah Stroumsa, "Saadya and Jewish *Kalam*," in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Jewish Philosophy*, ed. Daniel H. Frank and Oliver Leaman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 82–83.

skepsis ("search," "investigation"). They found it necessary to examine each of the arguments in favour of assenting to certain truths made by the various dogmatic philosophers. This sceptical investigation usually involved raising counter-arguments to the claims made by dogmatic thinkers, though the sceptical thinkers did not consider themselves to be beholden to their own counter-claims. These were formulated not in order to create new dogmas, but rather to show that against any argument that could be generated by an intellectual inquiry, that same intellectual inquiry could generate different arguments inconsistent with the first, whose proponents had rashly and impetuously considered it to be dogmatic. By constructing counter-claims to dogmatic arguments, the sceptics created a situation of *isostheneia*; that is, an equipollence of counter-arguments. According to the sceptics, as long as the intellectual inquiry persists – and it persists forever – the human intellect must not be tempted to settle on any given position. The inevitable conclusion of *isostheneia* is that *epochē* (the suspension of judgment) is the answer to the question of which claim prevails over the others. According to the sceptics, the state of *epochē* is not an end in itself, but a necessary step that enables truth-seekers to continue in their constant search for truth.[14]

The scepticism whose core consists of casting doubt differs from the scepticism of non-assent. Scepticism positing non-assent as the perennial state of the intellect rejects dogmas and the rationality of their proponents. The sceptic, as a rational human being, is one who takes steps to avoid falling into a dogmatic stance. The sceptical approach of non-assent does not necessitate the casting of doubt; one must merely take the above-mentioned steps of the sceptical method. The equipollence of counter-arguments (*isostheneia*) and the suspension of judgment (*epochē*) are the essential components of the non-assent type of scepticism. According to this type of scepticism, an equipollence of counter-arguments does not necessarily lead to casting doubt on any particular position involved in the issue at hand, but rather to a suspension of judgment on all of the positions on the issue at hand.

In scepticism based on doubt, on the other hand, the dogma is the starting point. Thinkers applying this type of scepticism begin from a position in which they themselves are attached to some dogmas. The casting of doubt is the means that thinkers use in order to engage in a rational investigation of the truth of the dogmas that they have typically acquired uncritically, without intellectual questioning or inquiry. In casting doubt on conventional dogmas – that is, exposing them to the unbiased criticism of the mind – inquirers lose the previous uncritical confidence that they had placed in these dogmas as proven knowledge. Nonetheless, the casting of doubt may lead thinkers to find intellectually based support through which they can rebuild their dogmatic world atop its ruins. Two prominent examples of this

14 For a general survey of this kind of scepticism, see Peter Suber, "Classical Skepticism: Issues and Problems," https://legacy.earlham.edu/~peters/writing/skept.htm (last visited 14.5.2019).

type of scepticism are found in *Discourse on the Method* (*Discours de la méthode*) by René Descartes and *The Deliverance from Error* (*al-Munqiḏ min al-ḍalāl*) by al-Ġazālī.[15]

Nahum Arieli, in the work referenced above, discussed scepticism in Halevi's writing through the prism of a comparison of doubt as depicted in the essays of al-Ġazālī and Descartes, devoting most of his attention to scepticism of that form. Paul L. Heck, who a few years ago published the first monograph of its type on scepticism among Muslim writers in the classical Islamic period, also approached scepticism first and foremost as the casting of doubt.[16] In this study, I will take a different approach. A major assertion I will seek to prove is that despite the many differences between ancient Hellenistic scepticism and Halevi's thought in *The Kuzari* (as a work that emerged from the Judeo-Arabic and general Arabic cultures of the classical Islamic period), there are also similarities between Halevi's thought and this ancient tradition. The establishment of this claim is linked to issues that must be explained and resolved before beginning the discussion of the main topic.

It is first necessary to consider the development that occurred in the last generation of research into ancient Hellenistic scepticism, a development that significantly changed the historiographical picture of how this brand of scepticism came into being. To date, the prevelant view of the development of sceptical thinking in the classical Hellenistic world has given much credence to the presentation of the topic in the writings of Sextus Empiricus (active around 200 CE) and other ancient sources. According to the common perception, ancient Hellenistic scepticism consisted of two separate schools of thought operating in tandem. The first, whose supporters viewed it as the only authentic undogmatic school of scepticism, was supposedly founded by Pyrrho (c. 360–270 BCE). The second was founded by Arcesilaus (316–241 BCE) as part of the Platonic Academy. However, contemporary scholarship has shattered this picture. According to the current revisionist view, promoted by prominent scholars of antique scepticism, the Pyrrhonian school was not established by Pyrrho. Based on what we know about his opinions, Pyrrho does not seem to have supported the sceptical approach which is named after him.[17] The so-called Pyrrhonian school was established by Aenesidemus in the first century BCE, some 250 years after Pyrrho's time. Aenesidemus was a member of the last generation of the Platonic Academy in Athens before it ceased its activities and its

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15 Michael Williams, "Descartes' Transformation of the Sceptical Tradition," in *The Cambridge Companion to Ancient Scepticism*, 288–313; Kukkonen, "Al-Gazali's Skepticism Revisited," 44–52.
16 Paul L. Heck, *Skepticism in Classical Islam: Moments of Confusion* (London: Routledge, 2013), preface. The same holds for Franz Rosenthal's older and shorter discussion: Franz Rosenthal, *Knowledge Triumphant: The Concept of Knowledge in Medieval Islam* (Leiden: Brill, 1970), 299–308.
17 Katja M. Vogt, "Ancient Skepticism," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Fall 2018 Edition, ed. Edward N. Zalta, https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/skepticism-ancient/ (last visited 14.5.2019), 4.1.

members scattered a few years before the death of Philo of Larissa (159–84 BCE), its last head. Before the dispersal of the Academy, its last generation of teachers had disagreed about the sceptical direction that had marked its path since Arcesilaus's time. Antiochus of Ascalon (d. 69 BCE), the most prominent philosopher of the last generation of the Academy, deviated from the tradition of sceptical thought and laid the foundations for what is now called Middle Platonism. In light of this history of philosophical disagreements and the organisational breakdown of the Academy,[18] Aenesidemus founded a new sceptical school of thought that took its inspiration and historic (albeit invented) ancestry from the long-dead Pyrrho.[19] Based on the historical picture provided by the contemporary scholarly understanding of the emergence of the Pyrrhonian school, it would seem that the Academic schools and the Pyrrhonian school are in fact two chronological stages in the development of ancient Hellenistic sceptical thought. The Academic sceptical stream ceased its activity in the first half of the first century BCE just as the Pyrrhonian sceptical stream began, taking the sceptical tradition from Academic scepticism and maintaining it for about another 250 years.

Philosophically, the worldviews of the Pyrrhonian writers largely relied on those of their Academic predecessors and their true relationship with their Academic forerunners (a relationship that was, at least in Sextus Empiricus's case, belied by polemical rhetoric designed to stress the originality of Pyrrhonian scepticism) consisted mostly of continuity and expansion.[20] Pyrrhonian sceptics took the anti-dogmatic stance – which refutes the "rashness" (*propeteia*) manifested in making any act of determination – from their precursors, from whom they also derived the key sceptical tactic of the "equipollence of counter-arguments" (*isostheneia*), as well as another central sceptical stance: that of "suspending judgment" (*epochē*). The polemical agenda that determined the content of sceptical discussions was almost exclusively dictated by the Academic school. The Pyrrhonian sceptics aimed their polemics not against the dogmatic schools that were flourishing in their day (such as Neoplatonism), but rather against the schools (some of which were no longer active) that their Academic predecessors had targeted in their debates.[21] The Pyrrhonists further inherited the *ad hominem* style of argument that adapts itself to the assumptions of the particular dogmatic opponent being debated. The Pyrrhonian school introduced several innovations into the sceptical approach, including

18 Gisela Striker, "Academics Fighting Academics," in *Assent and Argument: Studies in Cicero's Academic Books*, ed. Brad Inwood and Jaap Mansfeld (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 257–76.

19 Vogt, "Ancient Skepticism," 4.2; Gisela Striker, "On the Difference Between the Pyrrhonists and the Academics," in *Essays on Hellenistic Epistemology and Ethics*, ed. Gisela Striker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 144.

20 Philip de Lacy, "Galen's Response to Skepticism," *Illinois Classical Studies* 16 (1991): 285.

21 Jonathan Barnes, "Introduction," in Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines of Scepticism*, ed. and trans. Julia Annas and Jonathan Barnes, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), xvi.

the systematisation of sceptical arguments collected into various lists of "modes" (*topoi*),[22] the refinement of "sceptical language" formulated in sceptical expressions,[23] the stress on the importance of appearances (*phainomena*), and "tranquillity" (*ataraxia*) being the practical purpose of the sceptical theoretical undertaking.[24] As transmitted to us mainly via the writings of Sextus Empiricus, Pyrrhonian sceptical thought is generally multifaceted and more sophisticated and developed compared to the Academic sceptical thought chiefly transmitted through Cicero's writings. The above reconstruction of its historical course allows us to see that the ancient Hellenistic sceptical tradition gained an early coherence of ideas as part of the Platonic Academy and later refinements as part of the Pyrrhonian school.

The emphasis on the fundamental unity of the classical Hellenistic sceptical tradition is related to efforts made by contemporary scholars to uproot a common misperception propagated by past scholars. According to that notion, the fundamental approach of the Academic school was not sceptical, but rather negatively dogmatic. This mistaken opinion is based on an intentional distortion from the side of the Pyrrhonian school: Sextus Empiricus begins his work *Hypotyposis Pyrrhoniae* (*Outlines of Pyrrhonism*) by distinguishing between the positive dogmatic approach committed to the intellectual goal of discovering truths, for which the Aristotelian, Epicurean, and Stoic schools are all noted, and the negative dogmatic approach committed to the intellectual goal of denying the possibility of discovering truth, for which the thinkers of the Academy – Clitomachus (187–110 BCE), Carneades (214–129 BCE), and their supporters – are noted. The sceptical Pyrrhonian approach differs from both dogmatic approaches in that it presents perennial inquiry as its intellectual goal.[25] At a later stage of the *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, Sextus admits that Arcesilaus, the founder of the Academic school to which Carneades and Clitomachus belonged, was not a negative dogmatist and that his approach did not essentially differ from that of the Pyrrhonists.[26] The writings of Cicero (106–43 BCE), composed two hundred or more years before those of Sextus, provide a much more reliable

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22 Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines of Scepticism*, 12–46 (I, 35–186); Diogenes Laertius, *Pyrrhonian Skepticism in Diogenes Laertius*, ed. Katja M. Vogt (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015), 29–35 (sec. 79–89).
23 Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines of Scepticism*, 46–53 (I, 187–208); Diogenes Laertius, *Pyrrhonian Skepticism in Diogenes Laertius*, 25–27 (sec. 74–77).
24 Gisela Striker "Academics versus Pyrrhonists, Reconsidered," in *The Cambridge Companion to Ancient Scepticism*, 195–207; Striker, "On the Difference between the Pyrrhonists and the Academics," 135–49; Katja M. Vogt, "Appearances and Assent: Sceptical Belief Reconsidered," *Classical Quarterly* 62, no. 2 (2012): 648–63.
25 Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines of Scepticism*, 3 (I, 1–3).
26 *Outlines of Scepticism*, 61 (I, 232–33).

picture of this school of thought,[27] demonstrating that Carneades, the other key figure in the Academic stream (after Arcesilaus), also rejected negative dogmatism.[28]

Another problem that must be addressed before discussing the relationship of Halevi's writings to classical Hellenistic sceptical thought is the historical and conceptual gulf between Hellenistic culture and the Arabic culture in which Halevi lived and worked in the classical Islamic period. The sceptical tradition in ancient Hellenistic thought was created and developed in response to the consolidation of the dogmatic streams, such as Stoicism, Epicureanism, and Aristotelianism. The Hellenistic sceptical tradition is a phenomenon so deeply embedded in the conceptual world of these streams, especially the Stoic stream,[29] that it can only be understood from within this world and in relation to it. In this context, we may ask if and to what extent we can speak about manifestations of scepticism of the type that was expressed in Hellenistic thought outside the historical realm of its cradle. This question becomes more acute in light of the historical and conceptual gaps between ancient Hellenistic sceptical thought and the legacy of Arabic culture.

The first gap between these two disparate worlds is that of knowledge. The Arabic culture of the classical Islamic period was the only pathway by which Halevi could familiarise himself with ancient scepticism. Like his Judeo-Arabic cultural contemporaries, Halevi only read scientific and philosophic literature in Arabic.[30] However, unlike the Christian writers of the Middle Ages, who often had Cicero's Latin essays on Academic scepticism and sometimes also Sextus's essays on Pyrrhonian scepticism at their disposal, as well as other valuable essays such as Augustine's polemics on scepticism,[31] as far as we currently know, Arabic readers' access to the source of ancient scepticism was much more limited. To the best of our knowledge, no translation of any essay written by a Hellenistic sceptic was ever included in the mass of translations of Hellenistic philosophical literature from its Greek sources or from Syriac to Arabic during the eighth to tenth centuries.[32] The

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27 Cicero was a student of Philo of Larissa, the last major figure among the Academic sceptics.

28 Cicero, *On Academic Scepticism*, ed. and trans. Charles Brittain (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2006), 18–19 (*Lucullus*, sec. 28); 106 (*Academici Libri*, sec. 45). See also Myles F. Burnyeat, "Antipater and Self-Refutation: Elusive Arguments in Cicero's Academica," in *Assent and Argument*, 280–86; Striker, "On the Difference Between the Pyrrhonists and the Academics," 136, 138.

29 In this context, see the well-known saying by Carneades: "Had there not been Chrysippus, there would not be me." Here, Carneades positioned his sceptical thought as a contra-philosophy to the thought of the central Stoic thinker Chrysippus (279–c. 206 BCE). See Striker, "Academics versus Pyrrhonists, Reconsidered," 200.

30 However, we cannot rule out the possibility that Halevi encountered sceptical notions through conversations with Latin-reading Christian scholars in Toledo and other Christian towns in which he was temporarily resident (I owe this observation to Sarah Stroumsa).

31 See Lagerlund, "A History of Skepticism in the Middle Ages."

32 Dimitri Gutas, "'Pre-Plotinian' Philosophy in Arabic (Other Than Platonism and Aristotelianism): A Review of the Sources," in *Aufsteig und Niedergang der Römischen Welt, Part II: Principate*, vol.

Academy and Pyrrho, who were generically identified with scepticism in the ancient world, are rarely mentioned in the Arabic literature of the classical Islamic period.[33] The channels by which knowledge of ancient scepticism reached writers in Arabic culture in the classical Islamic period were thus indirect and selective. As this study will demonstrate, in Halevi's case (which seems representative on this point), the place of direct exposure to the writings of the Hellenistic sceptics was filled by non-sceptical Hellenistic writers such as Galen (129–c. 200 CE) and Ptolemy (c. 100–c. 170 CE), many of whose scientific treatises were translated into Arabic and disseminated widely, making a deep impression in Arabic cultural circles. In their writings, particularly those of Galen, one can find a great deal of disagreement with the Hellenistic sceptics and the global sceptical approach associated with them.[34] However, one may also find selective adoptions of sceptical positions on certain issues (scholars sometimes call this attitude "local" or "mitigated scepticism" as opposed to "global scepticism"). Although it would require much study – which has yet to be carried out – to establish this hypothesis,[35] it seems that the absence of an all-encompassing global scepticism from the writings of Arabic writers[36] on the one hand and the manifestations of selective scepticism among some of them on the other re-

36.7, ed. Wolfgang Hasse and Hildegard Temporini (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1994), 4963; Josef Van Ess, "Skepticism in Islamic Religious Thought," in *God and Man in Contemporary Islamic Thought*, ed. Charles Malik (Beirut: American University of Beirut, 1972), 85.

33 The most important source in this context is probably the Arabic Pseudo-Ammonius: see *Die Doxographie des Pseudo-Ammonios: ein Beitrag zur neuplatonischen Überlieferung im Islam*, ed. Ulrich Rudolph (Stuttgart: F. Steiner Wiesbaden, 1989), 65–67 (sec. 19). In the commentary part of this edition, Rudolph identified St. Hippolytus (d. 235) as the main source of Pseudo-Ammonius's presentation of Pyrrho and the Academy (190–93). See Hippolytus, *Refutation of All Heresies*, trans. M. David Litwa (Atlanta, GA: SBL Press, 2015), 73–76.

34 See De Lacy, "Galen's Response to Skepticism."

35 For the role played by Galen's translated writings in exposing Arabic scholars to Stoic ideas, see Roger Arnaldez, "Falsafa," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, ed. P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs (consulted online on 06 February 2020. http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_COM_0210). The suggestion that the same writings also played a major role in exposing Arabic scholars to sceptical ideas seems to be worthy of consideration and examination. The possibility that Galen's translated writings served as the main channel for transferring sceptical notions to Arabic culture stands as a more likely and promising route of investigation than the option singled out long ago by Van Ess, which suggests that there was an empiricist medical school that may or may not have survived into the Islamic era. See Van Ess, "Skepticism in Islamic Religious Thought," 86–87.

36 Van Ess's example, which he considered an example of global scepticism in Arabic culture, is actually an expression of solipsism, not scepticism. See Van Ess, "Skepticism in Islamic Religious Thought," 83. The term "sophism" (*sūfisṭāʾiyya*) appears in Arabic culture as a term that refers, among other things, to features that were typical of the sceptical tradition. Thus, due to their lack of direct and coherent knowledge regarding the views of the Hellenistic sceptics, the bulk of the scholars of Arabic culture could not properly distinguish the ancient Sceptical school from the

flects the approach of the Hellenistic sources available to them, first and foremost (apparently) Galen's works.[37]

A second gap between ancient Hellenistic sceptical thought and that of the Arabic philosophers, which is also related to the absence of global scepticism in the latter culture, is that of their religious worldviews. From the pagan perspective of the Hellenistic culture in which the sceptics operated, the gods were an inseparable part of the natural order. Therefore, discussing them was considered part of the science of physics.[38] By contrast, a religion based on revelation posits basic assumptions of a single God whose existence is separate, transcending that of the world and nature, a God who reveals His word to His emissaries and prophets, a God whose revelations are assembled in canonical writings with the binding validity of sanctity. These assumptions, as foreign as they were to the conceptual climate of the ancient Hellenistic world, were fundamental conventions that very few thinkers defied in the ideological climate of the Arabic culture of the classical Islamic period.[39]

The combination of these gaps – the Arabic writers' lack of direct familiarity with the writings and worldview of the sceptical tradition of Hellenistic culture and the essential difference in the basic assumptions of the two cultures about the nature of divinity and its relationship to the world and humanity – provides an explanation as to why it is impossible to speak of a continuity of scepticism and its expressions in the transition from the classical world to the Muslim era. The world of Arabic culture did not produce sceptical schools such as we find in Hellenistic antiquity and, relatedly, did not produce sceptical thinkers like those of ancient Greece. Nonetheless, this should not get in the way of a scholar searching the history of ideas for expressions of classical scepticism in the world of Arabic culture. From the perspective of such a scholar, the phenomena most worthy of consideration would be those that indicate a transformation rather than a mere replication.

Sophist school, so much so that in their defective orientation map of ancient philosophical trends, the sceptical trend merged into "sophism." See Rosenthal, *Knowledge Triumphant*, 302.

37 See, in this context, Van Ess, "Skepticism in Islamic Religious Thought," 87 n. 23; Patricia Crone, *Islam, the Ancient Near East and Varieties of Godlessness*, ed. Hanna Siurua (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 124; Shlomo Pines, "Translator's Introduction: The Philosophical Sources of the *Guide of the Perplexed*," in *The Guide of the Perplexed*, lxxvii; Ayman Shihadeh, *The Teleological Ethics of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 198 n. 147; Stern, *The Matter and Form of Maimonides' Guide*, 146.

38 Vogt, "Ancient Skepticism," 5.1.

39 See, in this context, Crone, *Islam, the Ancient Near East and Varieties of Godlessness*, 118–50; Sarah Stroumsa, *Freethinkers of Medieval Islam: Ibn al-Rāwandī, Abū Bakr al-Rāzī, and Their Impact on Islamic Thought* (Leiden: Brill, 1999). From yet another angle, it is worth mentioning that the transition between the classical Hellenistic schools of antiquity and the religious faiths of the Middle Ages also involved a radical change in the idea of happiness, which was no longer either eudemonia or tranquillity, but instead salvation and redemption through faith, making the ancient sceptical way of life seem less compelling. (I owe this observation to Josef Stern.)

Gaps in knowledge and cultural climate function as catalysts in a transformative process of adapting concepts and ideas in the transitions from one culture to another. As I shall demonstrate below, Halevi's thought provides us with highly instructive examples of the extent to which the transmission of sceptical concepts and ways of thinking between eras and cultures can be productive and fascinating precisely because of the profound transformation they underwent from their classical beginnings to *The Kuzari*. In this, too, Halevi is representative. Because of the knowledge and culture gaps, the most interesting and fruitful part of the study of sceptical manifestations in the Arabic culture of the classical Islamic period does not lie in attempting to recreate or indicate signs of continuity in the transition from antiquity to this period,[40] but rather in clarifying the unique and creative ways in which certain thinkers and schools of thought of Arabic culture used sceptical motifs that they derived from the Hellenistic sceptical tradition.[41]

As stated above, the development of scepticism in the context of Arabic culture, including Halevi's writings, differs from the way in which it developed in the ancient Hellenistic culture, as thinkers in Arabic culture generally relied on scepticism more narrowly than thinkers of Hellenistic culture did. Hellenistic thinkers across all schools of scepticism displayed a commitment to the global sceptical approach; they applied it to all fields of intellectual inquiry. By contrast, for the thinkers in Arabic culture, the sceptical approach was usually limited to the issues that preoccupied them the most; that is, questions of theology.[42] Moreover, Arabic thinkers who did not systematically apply scepticism did not necessarily see themselves as being obligated to adopt the sceptical approach. In their writings, sceptical motifs were incorporated into an intellectual approach that was generally not sceptical.[43] For many of these thinkers, including Halevi, the use of sceptical motifs was often utilitarian and instrumental, and one of several polemical tools in their arguments with ideological rivals. Their reliance on scepticism was characterised by flexibility and selection, approaches that were lacking in the rigid and systematic application of scepticism by its supporters in the Hellenistic world. Among the Arabic thinkers who used a great deal of selectiveness in applying scepticism in their thought, the

40 This was the direction of inquiry taken by Saul Horovitz, Jörg Kraemer, Josef Van Ess, and Carmela Baffioni, the pioneers of the study of scepticism in Arabic culture. See Van Ess, "Skepticism in Islamic Religious Thought"; Horovitz, "Der Einfluss der griechischen Skepsis auf die Entwicklung der Philosophie bei den Arabern," 5–49; Jörg Kraemer, "About the Arabic Sceptical Philosophy" [Arabic], in *A Selection from the Studies of the Orientalists*, vol. 1, ed. Ṣallāḥ al-Dīn al-Munǧid (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat lağnat al-taʾlīf wa-l-tarğamah wa-l-našr, 1955), 209–24; Baffioni, "Per l'ipotesi di un influsso della scepsi sulla filosofia islamica," 417–34.

41 This direction of inquiry was taken in recent studies by Ayman Shihadeh and Josef Stern. See Shihadeh, *The Teleological Ethics of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī*; Stern, *The Matter and Form of Maimonides'* Guide.

42 Crone, *Islam, the Ancient Near East and Varieties of Godlessness*, 207–8.

43 Compare Vogt, "Ancient Skepticism," 5.1.

very integration of sceptical components into the course of their assertions is much less expected compared to the consistent application of these components in the thought of the Hellenistic sceptics. Accordingly, the appearance of sceptical motifs in the writings of these Arabic thinkers is surprising for its daring, an element that is absent from their routine appearance in the writings of the Hellenistic thinkers.

In the spirit of the emphases presented in this introductory chapter, the second section of this study will focus on the presentation of fideism that characterises Halevi's thought in *The Kuzari*. Fideism is the concept that permitted ideas rooted in the world of ancient Hellenistic scepticism into Halevi's religious worldview. In this section, I will also address the place of scepticism in the overall scheme of Halevi's thought. The third section of this study is dedicated to a detailed examination of three examples demonstrating the incorporation of classical sceptical components into important tactics of argumentation in *The Kuzari*. This section represents the heart of this study. The fourth and last section will discuss the historical background of the Arabic culture to which Halevi belonged and address the relevant contexts for the appearances of scepticism in his thought as a part of this culture.

Chapter 2 Fideism and Scepticism in *The Kuzari*

Ancient Hellenistic scepticism was a thoroughly rational school of thought which viewed intellectual questioning as the exclusive pathway for discussing theoretical matters. Its basic definition – *skepsis* as constant searching[1] – obligated sceptics to take the path of rational discussion, the only method available to them in debates with their dogmatic rationalist adversaries. In their discussions, the sceptics' only tool was rational philosophical debate. In the transition to cultures where religions of revelation were a formative component, sceptical manifestations had lost the homogenous rational nature that they had possessed in the ancient Hellenistic tradition. Scepticism in such cultures became far more heterogeneous and multifaceted with regard to rationalism. Unlike their predecessors in Hellenistic times, whose discourse was thoroughly rationalistic, thinkers with a tendency to scepticism who were active in later cultures worked within multiple discourses simultaneously, both rationalistic and non-rationalistic. In this context, the concept of fideism played a major role. To generalise, fideism is a theory that maintains that faith is independent of reason. As such, in the fideist approach, intellectual pursuit is considered to be an inappropriate foundation for religious belief.[2] However, this attitude to rationalism is not uniform. Pure or radical fideism denotes an approach that utterly rejects the need for intellectual inquiry, giving faith an exclusive status in terms of attaining and grounding positive knowledge of any kind, whereas moderate fideism distinguishes and separates fields in which intellectual inquiry is valid and leads to knowledge, and is therefore both legitimate and necessary, from fields in which intellectual inquiry is invalid and fails to lead to knowledge, and is therefore illegitimate and unnecessary. The latter fields are those with significance and relevance to religious belief.[3]

In recent decades, fideism has merited a revival in the study of manifestations of scepticism in European Christian culture in the early modern period. Several scholars, most notably Richard Popkin, have drawn attention to the great versatility of fideism in understanding how sceptical lines of thought were adapted and incorporated into the thought of various thinkers from the end of the fifteenth century and through the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.[4] The fideist component was in large part responsible for the transformation of ancient scepticism and its adaptation into a framework of thought for European Christian thinkers in the early mod-

1 Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines of Scepticism*, 3 (I, 1–3), 4 (I, 7).

2 Richard Amesbury, "Fideism," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Fall 2017 Edition, ed. Edward N. Zalta, https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/fideism/ (last visited 14.5.2019), 1.

3 See, in this context, Popkin, *The History of Scepticism from Savonarola to Bayle*, 79, 89–90.

4 Popkin, xxi–xxii, 17–98, 274–302; Terence Penelhum, *God and Skepticism: A Study in Skepticism and Fideism* (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1983), 31–39; Penelhum, "Skepticism and Fideism," in *The Skeptical Tradition*, ed. Myles F. Burnyeat (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983): 287–318.

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ern period. For sceptics in classical antiquity, using the tools of scepticism was meant to undermine the dogmatists' pretensions to assent on certain positions. In terms of the Christian European fideists during the early modern period, they often engaged in a turn to sceptical thought as part of their confrontations with the rationalist dogmatic schools that were prevalent in this period. In this sense, the similarity between the eras is only partial. Hellenistic sceptics did not stray beyond the limits of rational arguments. This was not the case with the early modern fideists. From their perspective, the use of the rationalistic tools of the sceptical approach merely prepared the way for faith. The purpose of the debate with the rationalists was to provide a foundation and backing for these thinkers' appeal to religious belief as a supra-rational outlook.

Compared to the development noted in research into sceptical manifestations in European Christian thought in the modern era, where fideism played a central role, research into sceptical manifestations in Arabic culture (which is at a much more preliminary stage) has yet to recognise the importance of this concept. Patricia Crone made a general remark about the potential inherent in studying the development of scepticism in Arabic culture in the context of fideism;[5] Paul L. Heck, in his book on scepticism in classical Islam, mentioned the concept only a handful of times, and on the few occasions that he brought it up, he attempted to absolve the thinkers under discussion of the suspicion of it.[6] In this study, I wish to meet Crone's challenge and, using Halevi's thought as a case study, to demonstrate the value of an analysis of sceptical manifestations in Arabic culture in the context of the discussion of fideism.

When it comes to religious belief, fideism's approach is, *inter alia*, a reaction to the dogmatic rationalist approach. While the latter's approach is to insert intellectual inquiry into the field, the fideist approach works in the opposite direction: extricating religious beliefs from the tentacles of intellectual inquiry. Fideism seeks to re-establish the superior, independent status of religious belief, liberated from the intellectual quest. The classical Islamic period was the first period of time during which dogmatic rationalism made a lasting impact on Judaism (unlike sporadic precedents, such as Philo of Alexandria in the first century CE). This development was one of the most important revolutions in the history of Judaism: its dogmatisation, which was simultaneously also a theologisation.[7] This revolution was a direct

5 Crone, *Islam, the Ancient Near East and Varieties of Godlessness*, 126.

6 Heck, *Skepticism in Classical Islam*, 28, 29, 52, 100. Fideism gained its pejorative connotation when the Catholic Church labelled it heresy associated with Protestantism: see Popkin, *The History of Scepticism from Savonarola to Bayle*, xxii.

7 Menachem Kellner, *Dogma in Medieval Jewish Thought: From Maimonides to Abravanel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 1–9 (in particular, 4: "Judaism, for the rabbis of the Talmud, was not a series of propositions which could be either affirmed or denied. Rabbinic Judaism does not demand belief that certain propositions are true or false; it does demand belief in [*emunah*] or trust

outcome of the fact that from the ninth century onwards, Jewish thinkers within the general Arabic culture encountered with dogmatic rationalist trends. First was the encounter with Syriac- and Arab-speaking Christian theologians.[8] Next came the encounter with the scholastic dogmatic rationalist trends developed within the Muʿtazilite and (to a lesser extent) Ashʿarite schools of the Muslim *kalām* (Islamic scholastic theology), as well as with the dogmatic rationalism of *falsafah*, an Arab philosophy that created an original synthesis between Aristotelian and Neoplatonic concepts.

In *The Kuzari*, Halevi presented the first significant and enduring reaction to the revolutionary step by which Judaism was defined in the spirit of dogmatic rationalism. The fact that this response was fideist in nature made Halevi the initiator of the fideist tendency in Jewish thought.[9] Halevi's fideism is not based on radical anti-rationalism, which attached no value at all to the human intellect, but rather on moderate fideism, which sought only to place limits on it. The catch in Halevi's fideist approach lay in the fact that important aspects of religious belief fall outside the limits of the human intellect. Halevi's moderate fideism was based on a series of hierarchical distinctions whose order is inverse to the values of his era's dogmatic rationalism. In each of the distinctions, the rationalist aspect receiving emphasis and preference in dogmatic systems loses this preference and becomes secondary to its arationalistic aspect. Because the manifestations of scepticism in *The Kuzari* are woven into the fabric of the work's far-reaching fideist approach, it would be appropriate to precede the detailed presentation of these manifestations with a brief general discussion about the hierarchical distinctions specific to *The Kuzari*.

One such hierarchical distinction is between "the rational political commandments" (*al-šarāʾiʿ al-ʿaqliyyah wa-l-siyāsiyyah*), commandments whose utilitarian aspects the human mind can comprehend, and "the divine commandments known through revelation alone" (*al-šarāʾiʿ al-ilāhiyyah al-samʿiyyah*), those whose purpose the human intellect cannot discern. Unlike the former, the latter are unique to the religion of Israel and are the means of realising the special relationship between the people of Israel and God. Halevi reopened the discussion of the distinction between the revealed-rational (*ʿaqliyyah*) and the revealed alone (*samʿiyyah*) commandments, which originated in the *kalām* literature of the *Muʿtazilite* school of

[*bitaḥon*] in God. […] Rabbinic faith is not a matter of conviction, but of loyalty; not assent but consent").

8 Stroumsa, "Saadya and Jewish *Kalam*," 75–78.

9 For example, Judah Halevi is the source of the sceptical-fideist argument found in the sermons of Judah Moscato (1532/33–90), who also wrote a lengthy commentary on *The Kuzari*. See Giuseppe Veltri, "Principles of Jewish Skeptical Thought: The Case of Judah Moscato and Simone Luzzatto," in *Rabbi Judah Moscato and the Jewish Intellectual World of Mantua in the 16th–17th Centuries*, ed. Giuseppe Veltri and Gianfranco Miletto (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2012), 20.

thought.[10] The identification of the revealed alone (*samʿiyyah*) commandments with the divine (*ilāhiyyah*) commandments is evidence of a turning point in the spirit of the fideist approach that Halevi was attempting to establish. The dogmatic rational theology, whose prominent spokesmen in Judeo-Arabic culture were Saʿadia Gaon and Maimonides, stressed the importance of rationalisation in the discussion of the purpose of the commandments. This emphasis was manifested not only in the greater significance that these thinkers attributed to the rational commandments, but also in their efforts to provide rational explanations even for the revealed alone commandments.[11] Halevi, by contrast, stressed the importance of the category of the revealed alone non-rationalistic commandments and placed it above that of the revealed-rational commandments.[12]

Another hierarchical distinction Halevi took from dogmatic rationalist Arab literature is that between the adoption of practices and opinions through reliance or imitation (*taqlīd*) and the establishment of practices and opinions through rational intellectual considerations (*qiyās*, *iğtihād*, *raʾy*). Just as Halevi inverted the usual hierarchy in Judeo-Arabic dogmatic rationalism regarding the relationship between revealed-rational and revealed alone commandments in the written Torah, he also inverted the accepted hierarchy in this dogmatism regarding the application of imitation and rational considerations in the oral law and core beliefs. Halevi speaks in favour of imitation and the preference for the "intuitive natural believer" (*al-saḏāğ al-maṭbūʿ*) in whom the core beliefs are embedded and who is therefore exempt

10 Richard M. Frank, "Several Fundamental Assumptions of the Baṣra School of the Muʿtazila," *Studia Islamica* 33 (1971): 14–15.

11 See Isaac Heinemann, *The Reasons for the Commandments in Jewish Thought: From the Bible to the Renaissance*, trans. Leonard Levin (Brighton, MA: Academic Studies Press, 2008), chapters 6, 8, and 11.

12 *The Kuzari* II, 48; III, 7. See the additional discussions in I, 79, 97–99; II, 56; III, 23, 53. There are two print editions of the original Judeo-Arabic text of *The Kuzari*: the first was edited by Hartwig Hirschfeld (*Das Buch al-Chazari des Abu-L-Hasan Jehuda Hallewi: Im Arabischen Urtext sowie in der Hebräischen Übersetzung des Jehuda ibn Tibbon* [Leipzig: O. Schulze, 1887]) and the second, improved edition is that of David H. Baneth and Haggai Ben-Shammai (*Kitāb al-radd wa-l-dalīl fī al-dīn al-ḏalīl – Al-Kitāb al-ḫazarī* [Jerusalem: Magnes, 1977]). A few years ago, an Arabic-Arabic edition based on Baneth and Ben-Shammai's Judeo-Arabic edition was published by Nabih Bashir: see *Al-Kitāb al-Ḫazarī – Kitāb al-radd wal-dalīl fī al-dīn al-ḏalīl*, transliterated into Arabic and edited by Nabih Bashir (Beirut and Freiberg am Neckar: Manšūrāt al-ğamal, 2012). Each reference to *The Kuzari* includes the part (indicated in Roman numerals) and the section in this part (indicated in Arabic numerals). In longer sections, I will indicate the location in the Hirschfeld edition (pages and lines, which were also incorporated into the Baneth and Ben-Shammai edition) and the corresponding pages in the Bashir edition. The English translations from *The Kuzari*, with modifications, are taken from the translation by Barry S. Kogan and Lawrence V. Berman scheduled to be published in the Yale Judaica Series.

from the rational intellectual effort needed to acquire them.[13] These statements were a clear challenge to the customary approach in the dogmatic rationalism of this era. This approach, whose leading articulations appeared in the Ashʿarite school of *kalām*, viewed tradition as the starting point of the naïve believer from which he must liberate himself in the course of his spiritual/intellectual process of growth when he reacquires the core beliefs by means of applying his own rational intellectual considerations.[14]

Halevi presents a third distinction: one between human wisdom (*al-ḥikmah al-insāniyyah*) and divine wisdom (*al-ḥikmah al-ilāhiyyah*). Human wisdom includes the fields of knowledge that may be definitively ascertained through intellectual inquiry. In the dialogue in *The Kuzari*, the Jewish rabbi notes that the sciences of mathematics and logic belong to this field of knowledge as in these sciences, intellectual inquiry leads to universally valid results. As for the reduction of the fields in which the human intellect is applicable in the distinction between human wisdom and divine wisdom, this is the distinction *par excellence* by which Halevi places his fideism on a collision course with the dominant dogmatic philosophy of his time: *falsafah*. Halevi locates the matters under discussion in the two uppermost fields of *falsafah* – much of physics (*al-ṭabīʿah*) and all of metaphysics (*mā baʿd al-ṭabīʿah*) – in the realm of divine wisdom in which "the light of prophecy," not intellectual inquiry, is relevant and determinant.[15]

A fourth hierarchical distinction Halevi makes is between the name *elohim* – the name representing the general attributes of the divine regarding the connections between the divine and the world; that is, properties that may be comprehended through intellectual inquiry – and the Tetragrammaton, the name of the divine whose attributes are connected to the special relationship between God and His chosen, above all the chosen group of the people of Israel. Here, too, Halevi conjures up an inversion in the preferences established in Judeo-Arabic rationalist literature: the unique attributes of God in relation to His chosen are primary and superior to the general and universal.[16] Epistemologically, the fideist catch in this inversion lies in the fact that as far as Halevi is concerned, the verification of the unique

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13 I, 65; III, 35–37, 47 (196, ll. 1–3 = Bashir, 398), 73 (220, ll. 15–18 = Bashir, 428); IV: 3 (230, ll. 1–4 = Bashir, 436; 232, ll. 21–24 = Bashir, 441), 17 (260, ll. 25–28 = Bashir, 474); V, 16, 21 (356, ll. 1–4 = Bashir, 564). See the discussion in Diana Lobel, *Between Mysticism and Philosophy: Sufi Language and Religious Experience in Judah Halevi's* Kuzari (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2000), 75–78.

14 Richard M. Frank, "Knowledge and *Taqlīd*: The Foundations of Religious Belief in Classical Ashʿarism," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 109, no. 1 (1989): 48–50.

15 IV, 13; V, 14. See the lengthy discussion in the next chapter.

16 IV, 1–3, in comparison with Baḥya ibn Paqudah, *Kitāb al-hidāyah ilā farāʾiḍ al-qulūb*, ed. and trans. Yosef Qāfiḥ (Jerusalem: ʿAqiva Yosef, 1973), 80–82 (= *The Book of Direction to the Duties of the Heart*, trans. Menahem Mansoor [London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973], 138–41); Abraham ibn Ezra, *Perushšei ha-Torah le-Rabbenu Avraham Ibn Ezra*, ed. Asher Weiser (Jerusalem: Mossad ha-Rav Kook, 1977), vol. 2, Šemot, 20, 2–3 (Long Commentary; see the discussion in the next chapter).

properties of the divine has nothing to do with intellectual realisation. Rather, it is connected to a sense experience (*ʿiyān*, *mušāhadah*) in the case of the mass of people belonging to the chosen group,[17] whereas in the case of the elites of the chosen group, such as the prophets and the saints (*awliyāʾ*), the recognition is also non-intellectual: a mystical, super-sensory experience. This recognition is described in terms borrowed from Ṣūfī vocabulary, such as "spiritual insight" (*baṣīrah*), "vision" (*mušāhadah*),[18] "the spiritual eye" or "the internal eye" (*al-ʿayn al-bāṭinah*, *al-ʿayn al-ruḥāniyyah*),[19] and "mystical taste/experience" (*ḏawq*).[20] The hierarchical distinction between the divine attributes of the name *elohim* and those of the Tetragrammaton is incorporated into Halevi's most significant fideist move in *The Kuzari*, which is found in a large portion of part IV, starting at its beginning. In this part of the book, Halevi's line of argument points to the lack of precision and clarity in the perception of God that relies on "the ways of seeking proof through inference" (*ṭuruq al-istidlāl*). Any debate relying on the production of rational evidence, even at its best, such as in philosophical deliberations, is incapable of achieving more than a sketch of a distant, passive figure of God (the one manifested by the name *elohim*). The way to achieve a clearer and deeper concept of God and His relationship with the world, one that describes His active side in relation to His creatures and His special connection to a chosen group of mankind (the one manifested by the Tetragrammaton), is only possible though non-rational, non-intellectual means. The height and conclusion of this central fideist move in *The Kuzari* is formulated by means of a distinction between the comprehension of God as "the God of Abraham" and the comprehension of Him as "the God of Aristotle." "The God of Abraham" is attained through mystical means. This comprehension arouses feelings of longing (*šawq*) and an experience of annihilation in His love (*al-istihlāk fī ḥubbihi*) in the one who experiences it. Faced with this total comprehension, "the God of Aristotle" – that is, comprehension attained through intellectual inquiry – is but a pale shadow, as it is incapable of motivating the believer to accept a profound commitment in his relationship with God.[21]

Alongside the hierarchical distinctions described above, Halevi's fideist approach in *The Kuzari* is noted for its prominent ambivalent character. Together with the many clear expressions of the inadequacy and inappropriateness of intellectual

17 I, 11–25, 83 (36, l. 22 = Bashir, 198), 109 (58, ll. 21; 60, ll. 7–8 = Bashir, 223–24); II, 48 (108, ll. 13–15 = Bashir, 290), 54 (114, ll. 8–11 = Bashir, 296); V, 14 (330, ll. 9–10 = Bashir, 540). See the lengthy discussion in the next chapter.

18 III, 1 (140, ll. 8–9 = Bashir, 330), 65 (214, l. 26 = Bashir, 423); IV, 3 (228, ll. 11–12; 230, ll. 1–2 = Bashir, 435, 436), 15 (258, ll. 17–19 = Bashir, 471–72), 16 (260, l. 7 = Bashir, 473).

19 IV, 3 (238, l. 28–240, l. 1; 240, l. 8–9; 242, ll. 18–25 = Bashir, 448, 451–52).

20 IV, 16, 17 (260, ll. 7, 14–15, 20 = Bashir, 473–74).

21 IV, 16 (260, ll. 5–8 = Bashir, 473) See the extensive discussion in Lobel, *Between Mysticism and Philosophy*, 89–111.

inquiry with regard to the essential matters of belief and religion in the work, the author devotes much space to discussions that involve many rationalistic explanations of these very matters. Below, I provide several examples of this ambivalent character that accompanies Halevi's fideist approach in *The Kuzari*.

In various places throughout the book, starting from its very first part, Halevi insists that the commandments categorised as "divine" (*al-šarāʾiʿ al-ilāhiyyah*), the most prominent of which are the commandments associated with the Temple rituals, cannot be rationally explained. However, despite this clear-cut declaration, in section 25 of the second part of the work, where the Khazar king is addressing his rabbi and complaining that the sacrifices are a matter that is "difficult for the intellects to accept" (*yašuqqu ʿalā al-ʿuqūl qubūluhu*), in section 26, the rabbi responds by presenting a long explanation in which he attempts to provide explanations for the Temple ritual commandments that are in the spirit of the rationalist approach. He concludes his long discussion of the matter with an apology, according to which the explanation he offered fails to plumb the depths of the matter being discussed, but adds that it is unnecessary in any case from the perspective of the non-sophisticated firm believer. The utility of such explanations is reserved for those who have diverted from this level towards intellectual inquiry.[22] Similarly, in a later section of the second part of the work, the Khazar king addresses the rabbi again, asking for a rational explanation of the Pentateuch's laws of *ṣaraʿat*,[23] included among the "divine commandments." In reply, the rabbi begins with a fundamental fideist declaration about the impossibility of providing such explanations. He reminds the Khazar king that he has already explained to him that "there is no correspondence between our intellects and the divine order" (*lā munāsabah bayna ʿuqūlina wa-l-amr al-ilāhī*). Afterwards, he apologises and begins to provide the Khazar king with rational explanations for these laws.[24]

The ambivalence in Halevi's fideism is perhaps most prominently displayed in the long third section of part IV of the work. At the beginning, the author puts decisive words into the rabbi's mouth about the errors to which "seeking proof through

22 II, 26 (98, ll. 22–28 = Bashir, 277): "I do not categorically assert, nor do I say with certainty – God forbid! – that the purpose of this service is simply this order of which I speak. On the contrary, it is something more mysterious and exalted, inasmuch as it is truly a Law from God. One who accepts it completely without engaging in intellectual speculation about it and without making himself the judge of it is better than someone who engages in intellectual speculation and investigates. However, for someone who slips from that exalted level to that of investigation, the most suitable course is to turn his attention towards some aspect of wisdom concerning it, rather than renounce it altogether because of evil opinions and doubts, which lead to disaster."

23 An unidentified ailment described in Leviticus and commonly translated as "leprosy."

24 II, 60 (118, ll. 16 ff. = Bashir, 303): "I have already told you that there is no correspondence between our intellects and the divine order and we ought not to look for an explanation of great things like these. Nevertheless, after first asking His forgiveness and also absolving myself of the charge that I am claiming categorically that it is all just like this, I will say that […]."

inference" (*istidlāl*) is prone to lead when it is aimed at metaphysical matters. When it comes to these, the rabbi extols the superiority of the knowledge acquired "by prophetic vision and spiritual insight" (*bi-l-mušāhadah al-nabawiyyah wa-bi-l-baṣīrah*).[25] However, later in the same section, the rabbi opts for an explanation which builds upon rational inferences (*istidlāl*) for the phenomenon of prophecy itself.[26]

In section 24 of part IV, the Khazar king addresses the rabbi and asks him to present something about "the remnants of the natural sciences" (*baqāyā al-ʿulūm al-ṭabīʿiyyah*) known to the Jews in ancient times and now mostly lost during the various exiles.[27] In response, the rabbi draws the Khazar king's attention to the short work *Sefer Yeṣirah* (*Book of Creation/Formation*), attributed to the patriarch Abraham. Subsequently, in section 25, the rabbi presents the Khazar king with an explanation of long passages of that work, relying mostly on the philosophical terminology used in Arabic culture. The spirit of the explanation and certain attitudes embedded in it are congruent with those of the philosophical rationalism common to that era.[28] When it comes to the words he places in the rabbi's mouth to explain *Sefer Yeṣirah*, Halevi's general tendency is to show that this work, as one of the remnants of the ancient Jewish sciences, proposes a kind of cosmology that is more persuasive than *falsafah*'s cosmology, which relies on the rebutted principle of the emanation of separate intellects.[29] However, immediately thereafter, in a direct continuation of the Khazar king and the rabbi's dialogue about *Sefer Yeṣirah*, Halevi manages another inversion, this time in the spirit of the fideist approach to the distinction between the sphere of "human wisdom" and the sphere of "divine wisdom" included in it. According to what Halevi attributes to the rabbi at this stage of the discussion (section 27), the cosmology *of Sefer Yeṣirah*, which he has already presented as being superior to that of *falsafah*, belongs to an early and immature stage

25 IV, 3 (228, l. 11 ff. = Bashir, 435): "Certainly, one can refer to Him by means of prophetic vision and spiritual insight because seeking proof through inference leads one astray. Moreover, both heresy and corrupt doctrines come into being by seeking proof through inference."

26 In the presentation of the rational explanation for prophecy in IV, 4, Judah Halevi used conjugations of the terms *istidlāl*: *bi-ṭarīq al-istidlāl* (236, l. 5), *yastadillu minhā al-ʿaql* (238, l. 1), *istadlalnā bihā* (238, l. 10), and *fa-yastadillu minhā al-ʿaql* (238, l. 19). Warren Zev Harvey has pointed to the evident discrepancy in the argumentation between the middle part of IV, 3, where Halevi presents this explanation (236, l. 6–240, l. 13 = Bashir, 444–48), and either the first part or the last part of the same section. The exceptionality of the part that contains the rational explanation of prophecy in IV, 3 has led Harvey to suggest that Judah Halevi added it while revising an earlier draft of this section. See Warren Zev Harvey, "Judah Halevi's Synthetic Theory of Prophecy and a Note on the 'Zohar'" [Hebrew], *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 12 (1996): 141–42.

27 Compare II, 63–68; III, 63; IV, 29–30.

28 See Raphael Jospe, "Early Philosophical Commentaries on the *Sefer Yezira*: Some Comments," *Revue des études juives* 149 (1990): 392–402.

29 IV, 25 (280, l. 4–282, l. 8 = Bashir, 496–97). Compare V, 14 (330, ll. 4–5 = Bashir, 540).

in Abraham's spiritual development, from which he distanced himself once divine revelation was granted to him. At the higher stage of his spiritual development, Abraham was instructed to stop engaging "with any doubtful natural science" (*kull ʿilm ṭabīʿī maškūk*).[30] Basing himself on a homiletical interpretation of the Talmudic sages, Halevi backs up this instruction with an anecdote attributed to Plato which contains a fideist message, according to which the path to the divine goes through the prophets and their revealed laws rather than through philosophical inquiry.[31]

In the fifth and last part of *The Kuzari*, the tension between the dogmatic rationalist and fideist perspectives and the frequent shuttling from one to the other are very obvious. At the beginning of this part, the Khazar king immediately confesses that "since the exalted level of pure belief without investigation is simply beyond me," he cannot help asking to provide him with a dogmatic presentation of his religion. He asks this in the form of "the religion's principles and core beliefs" (*al-uṣūl wa-l-ʿaqāʾid*) in the manner of the masters of *kalām*.[32] The rabbi diagnoses the Khazar king's desire for a dogmatic presentation of his religion as being caused by the mentality spread by different dogmatic currents that has infected everyone in present-day culture, except for a happy few.[33] He assures the Khazar king that he is ready to satisfy his dogmatic need, but then, instead of beginning a discussion in the spirit of the masters of *kalām*, he chooses to engage in a discussion about the concepts of the masters of *falsafah*. This discussion reaches its peak in section V, 12, where the rabbi presents a dogmatic formulation of the philosophical doctrine of the soul, a presentation that merely paraphrases several sections of Ibn Sīnā's work on the topic.[34] Subsequently, in section V, 14, the author veers sharply and excoriates the doctrine of the soul and another doctrine of *falsafah* (the theory of the separate intellects) in the name of a fideist distinction between "human wisdom" and "divine wisdom." Afterwards, in section V, 15, the Khazar king repeats the request

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30 IV, 26–27 (282, ll. 15–28 = Bashir, 498–99).

31 IV, 27 (282, l. 28–284, l. 3 = Bashir, 499): "[In this connection,] Plato has reported concerning the prophet who lived at the time of King Marinus that he told the philosopher who prided himself on [his] philosophy [the following] by means of a revelation from God: 'You will not reach Me in this way, but by means of whomever I have appointed as an intermediary between Me and My creatures,' meaning [here], the prophets and the true nomos." See Pines, "Shīʿite Terms and Conceptions in Judah Halevi's *Kuzari*," 236–39, for a parallel of this passage in the pseudo-Platonic *Kitāb al-nawāmīs*. See also the discussion in Lobel, *Between Mysticism and Philosophy*, 70–71.

32 V, 1.

33 V, 2 (294, ll. 11–15 = Bashir, 511–12): "But who among us has a steadfast soul that is not misled by the opinions that pass through it, such as those of natural scientists, astrologists, believers in talismans, magicians, materialists, those who devote themselves to philosophy, and others? One arrives at faith only after having come through many ranks of unbelievers. [...] [By contrast, having] faith by nature happens only to unique individuals."

34 See Abū ʿAlī ibn Sīnā, *Maqālah fī al-nafs*, in Samuel Landauer, "Die Psychologie des Ibn Sina," *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 29 (1875): 335–418.

he made at the beginning of this part, which has not yet been satisfied, for a presentation of the fundamentals of the religion according to the masters of *kalām*. In answering, the rabbi makes use of his fideist distinction regarding the superiority of the intuitive or natural believer (*al-saḏāğ, al-maṭbūʿ*) over the believer who acquires his belief through an intellectual inquiry in the manner of the masters of *kalām*. He concludes by averring that the path of *kalām* is useless, and perhaps even harmful, from the perspective of those who are not intuitive believers.[35] Nonetheless, as the discussion continues, he accedes to the Khazar king and lays out a dogmatic presentation of the fundamentals of his religion in the spirit of *kalām* in section 18.[36] Later on, in section 19, the Khazar king asks the rabbi to discuss "the question of [divine] predestination and [human] free choice" (*masʾalat al-qadar wa-l-iḫtiyār*), another of the issues of great concern to the masters of *kalām* and *falsafah*. In section 20, the rabbi again acquiesces to the request and offers the king an argument which, in its form and manner of presentation, is close to the argument over the issue in the Ashʿarite school of *kalām*, especially the formulations found in several of al-Ġazālī's writings.[37] The argument concludes with the rabbi's words being summarised in section 21 in the spirit of the fideist preference for the adoption of practices and opinions through faithful reliance or imitation (*taqlīd*) over inferences (*istidlāl*) when it comes to the fundamentals of belief.[38]

The ambivalence characterising Halevi's fideism, some representative examples of which I have cited above, is a fascinating, albeit perplexing, element of *The Kuzari*. This ambivalence is a central enigma in understanding the moves Halevi makes as someone rebutting the dominant trends of dogmatic rationalism in the Judeo-Arabic thought of his era. It has enabled some scholars to claim that despite the declarative tone in which the rejection of dogmatic rationalism is made, Halevi never succeeded in severing his own thought from it and remained caught in its

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35 V, 16. See the discussion in Lobel, *Between Mysticism and Philosophy*, 76–77, 173–75.
36 In the presentation of the principles of theology (*uṣūl*) in section V, 18, Judah Halevi draws from a *kalām* treatise by al-Ghazālī known as the *Jerusalem Epistle* (*al-Risālah al-qudsiyyah*). See Martin Schreiner, *Gesammelte Schriften: islamische und jüdisch-islamische Studien*, ed. Moshe Perlmann (Hildesheim: G. Olms, 1983), 105–9.
37 See Binyamin Abrahamov, "Will and Choice in the *Kuzari*" [Hebrew], in *Alei Asor: Proceedings of the Tenth Conference of the Society for Judeo-Arabic Studies*, ed. Daniel J. Lasker and Haggai Ben-Shammai (Beer-Sheva: Ben-Gurion University Press, 2008): 11–19.
38 V, 21 (354, l. 27–356, l. 4 = Bashir, 564): "Therefore, you must also relinquish the Karaites' [practice of] citing as a prooftext David's charge, *peace be upon him*, to his son, *And now, my son, Solomon, know the God of your father and serve Him* (1 Chron. 28:9), as well as the inference they draw from it that one needs true knowledge of God [first], and [only] then does worshipping Him become obligatory. On the contrary, he urged only faithful reliance upon the tradition of his father and his ancestors with regard to belief in the *God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob*."

web.[39] The main source of this ambivalence is, in my opinion, to be found in the fact that essentially, there is no connection between the experiential mystical "language" expressing the experience of God's revelations to His prophets and chosen – that is, the language at which Halevi's fideism mainly aims – and the discursive language characterising rational thought. The presence and the proximity of the divine, experienced by the prophets and saints (*awliyāʾ*), cannot be expressed or explained by means of rational discursive language. It is also impossible to clarify such an experience to someone who has never been granted it. Halevi exemplifies this teaching in a parable which stresses the fundamental difference between an expert in prosody and a natural poet. Compared to the expert, the poet might be ignorant of the science of prosody and unable to teach it to others. The poet's ability to compose a poem is based on his innate capacity, one that enables him to "taste" the required meters, lacking theoretical knowledge about them. Thus, the skills of the prosody expert and that of the poet are completely different from each other: one is theoretical and rational, the other is non-rational and impalpable. While the first relies on his theoretical knowledge, spelt out in discursive language, the second relies on his innate capacity for mystical perception (*ḏawq*)[40] and communicates with others who share the same capacity in an intuitive manner. Furthermore, for the poet, the expert's theoretical knowledge is superfluous. The same holds for the naturally inclined (*al-maṭbūʿ*) believer both individually and collectively, those people who are naturally inclined to live by the Law (*al-qawm al-maṭbūʿūn li-l-tašarruʿ*).[41]

39 This view is expressed in a straightforward and impressive manner by Herbert Davidson: see Herbert A. Davidson, "The Active Intellect in the *Cuzari* and Halevi's Theory of Causality," *Revue des études juives* 131 (1972): 381. See also Howard Kreisel, "Judah Halevi's *Kuzari*: Between the God of Abraham and the God of Aristotle," in *Joodse filosofie tussen rede en traditie*, ed. Reiner Munk and F. J. Hoogewould (Kampen: Kok, 1993): 24–34.

40 See Denis Gril, "*Dhawq*," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, THREE*, ed. Kate Fleet, Gudrun Krämer, Denis Matringe, John Nawas, and Everett Rowson (consulted online on 06 February 2020. http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_ei3_COM_26001), art. 5 (Ṣūfism).

41 V, 16 (330, l. 22–332, l. 3 = Bashir, 541–42): "Like those we see in connection with people who read treatises on prosody and pay close attention to their poetic meter. We hear [lots of] bluster and frightful speeches about a [kind of] knowledge that comes easily to the person who is naturally inclined to it (*al-maṭbūʿ*), who 'tastes' (*yaḏūqu*) the meter of the verses, and for whom crawling along little by little just won't do. Moreover, the ultimate goal of the former is to become like the latter, who seems to be ignorant of prosody because he cannot teach it, while those others can teach it. But, surely, this naturally inclined person can teach another naturally inclined person (*al-maṭbūʿ yuʿallimu maṭbūʿ āḫar*) with the slightest hint. And it is the same with the people who are naturally inclined to living by the Law (*al-qawm al-maṭbūʿūn li-l-tašarruʿ*) and drawing close to God, exalted be He. Sparks are kindled within their souls by the words of outstanding people and [their words] become lights for them within their hearts. But the person who is not naturally inclined (*wa-ġayr al-maṭbūʿ*) is the very one who needs the science of theological disputation, although sometimes it doesn't benefit him. On the contrary, it frequently harms him." See the discussion in Lobel, *Between Mysticism and Philosophy*, 175–76.

From this parable and its moral, we learn that there is an epistemological chasm between the fideist basing his belief on experiences of presence and the proximity of the divine and the dogmatic rationalist founding his belief on verifiable intellectual principles. This fundamental difference (*al-farq*) between the "God of Abraham" and the "God of Aristotle," which Halevi highlights in distinguishing between the divine name of the Tetragrammaton and the divine name *elohim*, cannot be bridged.[42] However, this consistent conclusion, derived from the fideist worldview Halevi formulates in Ṣūfī experiential-mystical terms, which he scatters in parts of *The Kuzari*, is a decree with which he himself cannot comply. The ambivalence in *The Kuzari* is a direct outcome of what Halevi viewed as the unavoidable necessity of maintaining a channel of discourse with his dogmatic rationalist colleagues. This necessity led him to give *The Kuzari* the most discursive literary format possible: that of a dialogue. In turn, the discursive dialogue format is what exposes this ambivalence and makes it so very explicit. As *The Kuzari* and its format make clear, Halevi was unwilling to abandon the possibility of a dialogue with the dogmatic rationalists, to whom most of his close associates and the Andalusian Jewish intellectuals – his immediate audience of readers – belonged. He therefore opted to enter the rationalist arena of debate and to argue with his colleagues and rivals in their own discursive language.[43] Moreover, the use of claims that are typical of sceptical philosophy is part of this way of confronting them. At the same time, Halevi had another tool by which he could give proper expression to his innermost perceptions. His poetical genius allowed him to express his experience of proximity to God and His presence in a language suited to that experience; namely, a lofty language moulded in poetic forms.[44]

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42 IV, 16 (260, ll. 5–7 = Bashir, 473): "The difference (*al-farq*) between *Elohim* and *YHVH* has become clear to me, and I have also understood the difference between the *God of Abraham* and the *God of Aristotle*. One longs for *YHVH, exalted be He*, by tasting and witnessing for oneself (*šawqan ḏawqan wa-mušāhadatan*), while one inclines towards *Elohim* by reasoning (*qiyāsan*)."

43 As part of this discourse, Halevi sometimes adopts the dialectic *ad hominem* (Arb. *ilzām*) method of argumentation; i.e., refuting the opponent's position by adopting his underlying assumptions for the sake of the debate. This, for example, is the method by which Halevi argues against the *falsafah* theory of separate intellects in IV, 25 (280, l. 22–282, l. 11 = Bashir, 497–98). As noted above, *ad hominem* argumentation is typical of ancient scepticism. For further discussion of Halevi's use of this device, see chapter 4 below.

44 See, in particular, the translations and commentary in Judah Halevi, *Ninety-Two Poems and Hymns of Yehuda Halevi*, orig. ed. Franz Rosenzweig, trans. Thomas Kovach, Eva Jospe, and Gilya Gerda-Schmidt, ed. Richard A. Cohen (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2000): 12–13 (4. "At Night"), 18–19 (7. "All My Bones"), 24–25 (10. "The Lovers"), 38–39 (15. "Your God"), 52–57 (18. "The Remote and Near One"), 70–73 (23. "Holy"), and 76–79 (24. "The Helper"). See also Isaac Heinemann, "The Philosopher-Poet: Commentary on a Selection of Judah Halevi's Poems" [Hebrew], in *Rabbi Judah Halevi – A Collection of Studies and Appraisals*, ed. Israel Zemora (Tel-Aviv: Maḥbarot le-Safrut, 1950), 176–91; Aaron Komem, "Between Poetry and Prophecy: Studies in Judah Halevi's Poems" [Hebrew], *Molad*, n.s., 11–12 (1969): 676–97; Raymond P. Scheindlin, *The Song of the Distant*

Religious poetry was the most appropriate medium for Halevi to express himself: in this genre, he was liberated from the shackles of discursive discourse, free of the need to speak in a way that would be intelligible to his learned dogmatic rationalist colleagues or to communicate with them using their concepts. Halevi was, first and foremost, a poet.[45] He composed his poetry in Hebrew, the only language he acknowledged as the divine tongue.[46] Halevi's Hebrew religious poetry was the tool he used to give free rein to his thought without compromising the full depth of his faith. An integrative examination of his work, one that encompasses both the discursive thought in *The Kuzari* and his poetry, engenders an understanding that Halevi's religious mentality is inclined to the non-intellectual, mystical, *numinous* feeling of awe of the divine and proximity to it.[47] Such an integrative perspective, which lies beyond the scope of this study,[48] would make it clear that Halevi was not held captive by concepts of rational thought, as scholars who have only considered his theoretical discursive thought have claimed.[49] A comparison between the discursive thought in *The Kuzari* and the non-discursive thought of Halevi's religious poetry would provide us with a different perspective, one that would show that Halevi aimed to elevate himself to heights of mystical proximity to God. From these heights, he tried, as it were, to let down a ladder to his colleagues left "down there" in the realm in which they are still tied to rational discourse.[50] The lower and middle rungs of that ladder are the ones manifested in *The Kuzari*. The lower rungs are the

Dove: Judah Halevi's Pilgrimage (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 70–93; Menachem Lorberbaum, *Dazzled by Beauty: Theology as Poetics in Hispanic Jewish Culture* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi Institute, 2011), 176–200.

45 Writing poetry was a life-long occupation for Halevi, while theoretical writing occupied him only towards the end of his life, at the time when he compiled *The Kuzari*.

46 II, 66–68. See Ilan Zim, "The 'Divine Order' in *The Kuzari* – Its Conceptual Meaning and Understanding" [Hebrew] (MA diss., Tel-Aviv University, 1989), 181–82.

47 For the theoretical background, see Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy: An Inquiry into the Non-Rational Factor in the Idea of the Divine and Its Relation to the Rational*, trans. John W. Harvey (London: Oxford University Press, 1923).

48 An integrative discussion of Halevi's work will be presented in a forthcoming study of mine devoted to Baḥya ibn Paqudah and Judah Halevi as radical thinkers (however, the treatment of this subject there is different from the one hinted at here).

49 See, in this context, Lorberbaum, *Dazzled by Beauty*, 188–89.

50 For the symbol of the ladder (Heb. *sullam*) as a symbol of spiritual/mystical ascension to God in Judah Halevi's poetry, see Rosenzweig, *Ninety-Two Poems and Hymns of Yehuda Halevi*, 38 ("And arise at midnight / to step into the footsteps of the great ones / Who, with a plethora of psalms on their lips / with thoughtful steadfast feeling / Spent their day fasting / and their night praying / God is a shaft in their heart / and they the planets who encircle His throne –/ May their way ascend powerfully / to Him, Your God [*darkam sullam la'alot 'ad Adonai Elohekha*]"). On the motif of the "ladder of ascension" in the philosophically inclined literature of Halevi's era, see Alexander Altmann, "'The Ladder of Ascension,'" in *Studies in Religious Philosophy and Mysticism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1969), 41–72.

stages of conversation in the dialogue where the rabbi responds to the king's requests and explains his positions to him in the spirit of the rationalist worldview. The fideist side of *The Kuzari*, the one in which Halevi shifts the debate's centre of gravity from rationalist explanations to critical assertions levelled at the limits and the second-tier status of intellectual inquiry when it comes to non-intellectual cognition, constitutes the middle rungs of the ladder. The upper rungs – the domain of the proximity to the divine – are to be found outside the scope of inquiry of *The Kuzari*[51] and belong to the non-discursive mystical experience that Halevi expressed in his religious poetry. The ladder is a metaphor for the gradual effort Halevi makes to help his colleagues – the members of his own circle – to escape their dogmatic entrenchment in the field of intellectual inquiry and redirect them towards the mystical non-intellectual proximity to the divine and the people who exemplify this proximity.[52]

From such a comprehensive, integrative point of view, the ideological moves into which Halevi weaves sceptical motifs, which I will discuss in the next part of this book, are connected to a transition from the lower to the middle rungs of the ladder of cognition. Halevi finds sceptical thought, as a rational alternative to dogmatic thought, to be suited to a critical engagement with his colleagues' dogmatic rationalism. As a fideist, Halevi moves from the realm of rationalist debate to the realm of arational belief, with the centre mass of his worldview being located in the realm of belief. In this context, the use of sceptical arguments fulfils an intermediate

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51 See, in this context, Zim, "The 'Divine Order' in *The Kuzari*," 270, 286–90.

52 Consider the following description in I, 103 (54, l. 28–56, l. 7 = Bashir, 219–20): "The children of Jacob came on the scene as the choicest and best part [of their father]. They differ from the [other] children of Adam by virtue of a special divine distinctiveness, which made them as though they were a different species and a different, even angelic, substance. All of them sought the level of prophecy, and most of them did attain it. Those who did not attain it nevertheless came close to it by means of actions that are pleasing, and sanctification, purification, and meeting the prophets. Know that a spiritual transformation comes over someone who meets a prophet at the time that he meets him and hears his divine words. He separates himself from his kind through the purity of his soul, its longing for those [prophetic] levels, and its adherence to humility and ritual purity." The second part of this description emphasises that those who do not attain the level of the prophets and who do not receive divine revelation can still be lifted up and experience a spiritual transformation by associating with the prophets and prophet-like people. The Ṣūfī background of this part is evident. Compare, for example, the following description by al-Ġazālī: "This is a state which one following the way leading to it will verify by fruitional experience. But one to whom such experience is not granted can acquire certain knowledge of that state through experience of others and hearsay, if he frequents the company of them [i.e., the prophets and the saints – E.K.] so as to have a sure understanding of that from observing the circumstances accompanying their ecstatic states. Whoever associates with them will derive this faith from them, for they are the men whose associate is never wretched." Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, *Freedom and Fulfillment: An Annotated Translation of al-Ghazālī's al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl and Other Relevant Works of al-Ghazali*, ed. and trans. Richard J. McCarthy (Boston: Twayne, 1980), 82, sec. 98.

function: the author needs them because he is debating in the rationalist realm, and, at the same time, their use is meant to strengthen and more firmly establish the arationalist, believing side of his worldview.

Chapter 3 Sceptical Motifs in *The Kuzari*

In this central section of the study, I will explore and explain Judah Halevi's use of motifs of the non-assent type of scepticism (i.e., the scepticism of the classical Hellenistic tradition) in his book. I will do so by engaging in a close reading and discussion of three sections of *The Kuzari* (I, 11–25; I, 67; V, 14) which, in my opinion, contain important examples of this kind of scepticism.

A *The Kuzari* I, 11–25

The dialogue in I, 11–25, which I will discuss below, is the introductory conversation between the Khazar king and the rabbi. The discussion between these two figures forms the bulk of *The Kuzari*, starting in I, 11 and going all the way to the end of the book. It is preceded by brief dialogues between the Khazar king and a philosopher (I, 1–4), the Khazar king and a Christian scholar (I, 4–5), and the Khazar king and a Muslim scholar (I, 5–10). As befits the beginning of an important dialogue, one that will last for the rest of the text, the introduction in I, 11–25 constitutes a vital move. In it, Halevi presents an initial and concentrated (though systematic) expression of his fideist approach. This is one of the most interesting and important moves not only in *The Kuzari* itself, but in medieval Jewish thought in general. Therefore, the assumption presented below – namely, that Halevi relies heavily on sceptical thought in formulating his opening move – may shine a new light on an important aspect of Halevi's thought.

Below, I will discuss the exchange between the Khazar king and the rabbi in I, 11–25, following the progression of the dialogue. Nonetheless, the discussion below is also selective, with the attention focused on those details that are relevant to the discussion of sceptical motifs. The starting point of the segment of dialogue in I, 11–25 is the Khazar king's earlier request that his new interlocutor provide a dogmatic presentation of his religion. This question appears in the transition between the dialogues with the Muslim scholar and the Jewish rabbi: "He then summoned one of the Rabbis of the Jews and asked him about his belief (*wa-saʾalahu ʿan iʿtiqādihi*)." The Arabic term *iʿtiqād* ("belief"), based on the root *ʿ.q.d.* like equivalent terms such as *ʿaqīdah* and *muʿtaqad*, concerns the dogmatic presentation of the religion's core principles.[1] The introductory question that Halevi places into the Khazar king's mouth implicitly relies on the assumption that the common method of identifying and understanding one religion in distinction to other religions is by means of a dogmatic definition, which was prevalent in Arabic culture from a relatively early stage of the development of Islam.[2] In the rationalist streams of this culture, espe-

1 See Frank, "Knowledge and *Taqlīd*," 42 n. 15.

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cially those of *kalām*, a dogmatic definition of a religion was one based on intellectual inquiry.[3]

The rabbi responds to the Khazar king's request for a dogmatic definition of his religion with the following words:

> I have faith (*anā muʾmin*) in the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, who brought the children of Israel out of Egypt with signs and miracles, provided for them in the wilderness, and gave them the territory of the Levant (*arḍ al-šām*) after they had miraculously crossed the sea and the Jordan. He sent Moses with His Law, and then thousands of prophets after him to support His Law by means of promises [of reward] to whoever observed it and threats [of punishment] to whoever disobeyed it. Our faith pertains to all that was included in the Torah, but the report is long (*wa-l-ḫabar ṭawīl*). [I, 11]

Because the rabbi begins with the formulation "I have faith" (*anā muʾmin*), it may be understood that what he is going to say next will include what he considers to be the *credo* of his religion. The presentation of Jewish belief here is based on an acceptance of the narrative of the biblical history of the people of Israel, a narrative that begins with the patriarchs and continues through the exodus from Egypt, the giving of the Torah through the mission of Moses, and the mission of the prophets who were faithful to it (whose estimated number here is far higher than the usual estimate in the Jewish tradition)[4] who succeeded him. The fact that the rabbi's definition of Judaism in I, 11 makes reference to events cited in the Bible shows that Halevi felt that it is the biblical narrative, rather than any dogmatic principles, that provides us with the definition of Judaism. And the definition provided by the Bible focuses on the relationship between God and His chosen: the patriarchs, the people of Israel, and the prophets.

From an epistemological point of view, the end of the rabbi's opening statement – "but the report is long" (*wa-l-ḫabr ṭawīl*) – is the key expression. He draws our attention to the fact that the epistemology of the concept of knowing, which underpins the rabbi's presentation of Judaism in I, 11 and the entire dialogue with the Khazar king in I, 11–25, is the traditionalist Muslim epistemology; that is, the doctrine regarding reports (*ḫabar*, pl. *aḫbār*).[5] The formative development of early Islam

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2 See Jon Hoover, "Creed," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, THREE*, ed. Kate Fleet, Gudrun Krämer, Denis Matringe, John Nawas, and Everett Rowson (consulted online on 06 February 2020. http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_ei3_COM_25587). The Christian scholar in I, 4 and the Muslim scholar in I, 5 have already provided the Khazar king with dogmatic descriptions of their religions.

3 Frank, "Knowledge and *Taqlīd*," 44–45.

4 See Babylonian Talmud, *Megillah* 14a: "Forty-eight prophets and seven prophetesses prophesied to Israel."

5 See Arent Jan Wensinck, "Khabar," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, vol. 4, ed. Emeri van Donzel, Bernard Lewis, and Charles Pellat (Leiden: Brill, 1978), 895. See also Aron Zysow, *The Economy of Certainty: An Introduction to the Typology of Islamic Legal Theory* (Atlanta, GA: Lockwood Press, 2013), 7–8; Shady Hekmat Nasser, *The Transmission of the Variant Readings of*

was extensively reliant on reports attributed to Muḥammad, the prophet of Islam. These reports were passed orally through a chain of transmitters, the first of which consisted of the witness who was physically present at the event being reported. Such reports were the cornerstone that shaped the oral tradition of Islam: "the good example of the prophet" (*sunnat al-nabī*).[6] The traditionalist concept of knowledge, at whose core lies the notion of the report (*ḫabar*), differs from the rationalist one. The traditionalist concept emphasises the absolute commitment to reporting exactly what can be apprehended by the senses in the case of the witness who is the first link in the chain of the transmission of the report and absolute fidelity to the precise verbal contents of the orally transmitted report in the case of the subsequent transmitters. This fidelity to the contents of the report requires its transmitters to avoid inserting their own opinions and judgments into the process of transmission, including their own rational considerations.[7] Significantly, the concept of traditionalist knowledge lacks the component of verification/assent (*taṣdīq*) in its rationalist sense, in which the one who attains knowledge is required to verify it by means of the procedures and considerations of intellectual inquiry.[8] In the context of the traditionalist concept of the transmission of reports, the evidence of the senses, transmitted orally at the highest level of transmission known as "concurrent transmission" (*tawātur*), ensures a certain and immediate knowledge, making assistance from intellectual inquiry redundant.[9] Confirmation that the dialogue in I, 11–25 refers to the traditionalist epistemology is provided by the manner in which Halevi interweaves two terms that are typical of this approach into the rabbi's words: *ʿiyān*, which relates to the direct perception of the eyewitness of the report in which he is the first link in the chain of transmission, and *tawātur*, which relates to the manner of the report's transmission at various other stages. In the traditionalist Muslim ap-

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the Qurʾān: The Problem of Tawātur *and the Emergence of* Shawādhdh (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 65. On the traditionalist stream in Islam, see Binyamin Abrahamov, *Islamic Theology: Traditionalism and Rationalism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998), chapters 1–3.

6 Gautier H.A. Juynboll, "*Sunna*," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, vol. 9, ed. Clifford Edmund Bosworth, Emeri van Donzel, Wolfhart P. Heinrichs, and G. Lecomte (Leiden: Brill, 1997): 878–81.

7 Nasser, *The Transmission of the Variant Readings of the Qurʾān*, 68–69. Binyamin Abrahamov classifies the Muslim traditionalists who denied any involvement of rational considerations in the acquirement of religious knowledge as belonging to "pure traditionalism." See Abrahamov, *Islamic Theology: Traditionalism and Rationalism*, x.

8 On *taṣdīq* in the rationalistic frameworks of *kalām* and *falsafah*, see Damien Janos, "Al-Fārābī, Philosophy," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, THREE*, ed. Kate Fleet, Gudrun Krämer, John Nawan and Everett Rowson (consulted online on February 6, 2020. http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_ei3_-COM_26962). Frank, "Knowledge and *Taqlīd*," 38–42. See also Jonathan A.C. Brown, *Hadith: Muhammad's Legacy in the Medieval and Modern World* (Richmond: Oneworld, 2009), 177.

9 Zysow, *The Economy of Certainty*, 14–15; Nasser, *The Transmission of the Variant Readings of the Qurʾān*, 69–70.

proach, *tawātur*, as a process of transmission which relies on a large number of witnesses and many chains of transmission, absolutely ensures the reliability of the report.[10] While "concurrent transmission" (*tawātur*) serves as a key term for the religious epistemological system as a whole in both the traditionalist Muslim approach and Halevi's approach, in the Muslim philosophical tradition, the role of this term is secondary, as it is restricted to the verification of specific empirical pieces of geographical and historical information and not to general universal truths.[11]

At the theological level, this epistemological approach is, for Muslim traditionalists, an alternative to the rationalist approach of *kalām*. While *kalām* scholars base the attributes of God on a rationalistic process centred on "inferences about the concealed from the manifest" (*al-istidlāl bi-l-šāhid ʿalā al-ġāʾib*), traditionalist scholars base the attributes of God on reports going back to the prophet of Islam whose reliability is ensured by the oral process of "concurrent transmission" (*tawātur*).[12] Given all of this, the common assumption among many of the Muslim *mutakallimūn* scholars, sages of the *kalām* schools, that the knowledge acquired through human intellectual inquiry and the knowledge acquired through revelation and the transmission of tradition were congruent[13] allowed them to assimilate the epistemology posited by the traditionalist scholars into their own method as a channel of cognition that matched the intellectual one. According to these *kalām* scholars, the two channels together cement "necessary knowledge" (*ʿilm ḍarūrī*); that is, knowledge that is certain and binding from a rational perspective. This syntactic attitude was most conspicuously implemented by the *mutakallimūn* in the field of "principles of jurisprudence" (*uṣūl al-fiqh*), as well as in the polemical genre of the "signs of prophecy" (*aʿlām/dalāʾil al-nubuwwah*).[14]

This historical background regarding the essential gap between the traditionalist and rationalist epistemologies in Islam helps us to understand the Khazar king's disappointed reaction to how the rabbi presents the principles of Jewish belief:

10 See the diagram and explanations in Nasser, *The Transmission of the Variant Readings of the Qurʾān*, 67–70. See also Zysow, *The Economy of Certainty*, 7 ff.; Lobel, *Between Mysticism and Philosophy*, 220 n. 9.

11 Thus, we find that Ibn Sīnā treats "concurrent tradition" (*tawātur*) as a demonstrative proof of empirical truths that we have not witnessed ourselves (such as the existence of Mecca, Galen, and Euclid, in the examples provided by Ibn Sīnā). See Deborah L. Black, *Logic and Aristotle's* Rhetoric *and* Poetics *in Medieval Arabic Philosophy* (Leiden: Brill, 1990), 99; Black, "Epistemology in Philosophy," in *Encyclopedia of Islam, THREE*, ed. Kate Fleet, Gudrun Krämer, Denis Matringe, John Nawas, and Everett Rowson (consulted online on 06 February 2020. http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_ei3_COM_26198), sec. 4.

12 Abrahamov, *Islamic Theology: Traditionalism and Rationalism*, 34, 87 n. 19.

13 Abrahamov, 49–51.

14 See Nasser, *The Transmission of the Variant Readings of the Qurʾān*, 69–70 n. 136; 71–72 n. 138; David E. Sklare, *Samuel Ben Ḥofni Gaon and His Cultural World: Texts and Studies* (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 158, 161–62; Stroumsa, *Freethinkers of Medieval Islam*, 22–36.

> The Khazar said: I had originally decided not to ask a Jew because I knew about the destruction of their traditions and the inferiority of their opinions, since their misfortune has not left them anything worth praising. Why, then, didn't you say, O Jew, that you have faith in the Creator of the world, who orders it and governs it (*wa-nāẓimihi wa-mudabbirihi*), and in Him who created you and provided for you, and [use] similar such descriptions, which constitute proof for everyone who has a religion (*al-awṣāf alatī hiya ḥuǧǧat kull ḏī dīn*)? Because of descriptions (*awṣāf*) like these, people pursue truth and justice in order to imitate the Creator with reference to His wisdom and justice (*li-l-tašabbuh bi-l-ḫāliq fī ḥikmatihi wa-ʿadlihi*). [I, 12]

The Khazar king's disappointment with the rabbi's presentation of the Jewish faith in I, 11 stems from the fact that it is based not on any of God's universal descriptions or attributes[15] that touch on His relationship with the universe as the one who created, orders, and governs the world, but rather on His particular attributes in a relationship with humanity's chosen. The Khazar king's assertion that the descriptions of God as the one who created, orders, and governs the world "constitute proof for everyone who has a religion" (*al-awṣāf alatī hiya ḥuǧǧat kull ḏī dīn*) is indeed borne out by the earlier parts of *The Kuzari*. Both the Christian scholar and the Muslim sage introduce their religions to the Khazar king with descriptions that are, to a great extent, aligned with his claim about God's universal attributes.[16] This is particularly evident in the Christian's *credo*:

> [The Christian scholar] said to him: I have faith in the complete innovation of created things and in the eternity of the Creator, exalted be He. He created the world in its entirety in six days. [...] God has providential concern for creation, and contact with the rational beings (*al-nāṭiqīn*). [I, 4]

The Khazar king's assertion regarding "proof for everyone who has a religion" is not only backed by the Christian and Muslim interlocutors in *The Kuzari* itself. The two most systematic and influential rabbinic theological works in Judeo-Arabic culture prior to Halevi's era – *The Book of Beliefs and Opinions* (*Kitāb [al-Muḫtār fī] al-amānāt wa-l-iʿtiqādāt*) by Saʿadia Gaon and *The Book of Direction to the Duties of the Heart* (*Kitāb al-hidāyah ilā farāʾiḍ al-qulūb*) by Baḥya ibn Paqudah – also devote much space to depicting the principles of Judaism as being founded on the universal link between God and the world with God as the one who created, orders, and governs it.[17] Therefore, the Khazar king's disappointment reflects a similar disap-

15 Compare the Khazar king's utterance regarding God's descriptions (*awṣāf*) here (I, 12) with his utterance regarding God's attributes (*ṣifāt*) at a later stage of this part of the dialogue between him the rabbi (I, 24).

16 I, 4 (8, ll. 23–26 = Bashir, 160); 5 (12, ll. 6–7 = Bashir, 164).

17 In the case of Saʿadia's *The Book of Beliefs and Opinions*, the whole work can be considered as a presentation of this kind (especially the first five of the work's ten parts). In the case of Baḥya's *The Guide to the Duties of the Heart*, the first two parts (out of ten) can be considered as this kind of presentation.

pointment that the typical readers of the book – the literates of the Judeo-Arabic culture – would surely also have experienced.[18] Such learned people would have expected Halevi to present a description of Judaism whose introductory universal principles were close to those of Saʿadia Gaon, Baḥya ibn Paqudah, and other dogmatic rationalist Jewish thinkers of that time. This expectation demonstrates that in the context of Arabic culture, the dogmatic discussions that writers put forth to explain their religions were close to and in the spirit of parallel discussion within the other religions of the same culture. Despite their differing religious loyalties, writers in this culture had much in common when it came to the manner in which they provided universal explanations for their different religions in the spirit of the dogmatic rationalist approach.[19]

The exchange between the rabbi and the Khazar king in I, 11–12 is a preface to the appearance of sceptical motifs in the discussion. From the Khazar king's reaction in I, 12, it is clear that the rabbi's presentation of Judaism in I, 11 falls outside the realm of understanding of those who, like the king, support the dogmatic rationalist attitude to religion. The rabbi's subsequent manoeuvres bring him into the orbit of rationalist discussion, which is critical in order to make a connection with the Khazar king's rationalist worldview. However, the rabbi shapes this manoeuvre not in accordance with the perspective of the common dogmatic approach, but rather from a perspective that is close to the sceptical version of rationalism:

> The Rabbi said: What you are referring to is the syllogistic, governmental religion to which speculation leads (*al-dīn al-qiyāsī al-siyāsī yuʾaddī ilayhi al-naẓr*), but it contains many {doubtful points}.[20] Ask the philosophers about it, and you will not find them agreeing on a single action or a single belief because they are [merely] claims. Some of them, they can demonstrate (*yubarhinūʾ ʿalayhā*). Some of them, they can support persuasively (*mā yuqniʿūna fīhā*); but

18 Written in Judeo-Arabic, works such as the above-mentioned ones by Saʿadia, Baḥya, and Halevi were exclusively directed to a Jewish audience. At the same time, those authors made abundant use of terminology borrowed from the great variety of Arabic schools of thought in this era. This measure limited the intelligibility of their works (in their original language) to the small percentage of Jewish readers who had mastered Arabic and who were learned in the many facets of Arabic culture. See Eliyahu Ashtor, *The Jews of Moslem Spain* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Qiryat Sefer, 1966), 2:246–47, 300.

19 This phenomenon is clearly manifested in Abraham ibn ʿEzra's response to the question posed to him by Judah Halevi: "Why did [the Scripture] mention 'I am the Lord thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt' rather than 'who made the heavens and the earth and you'?" Ibn ʿEzra's response to this key question displays the dogmatic rationalistic attitude to religion that was current among the Judeo-Arabic *intelligentsia* as well as among the like-minded Muslim *intelligentsia* (see the discussion later in this chapter).

20 The words inserted in curly brackets by the editors of the critical edition indicate places where the Oxford manuscript can be amended by other "text witnesses" such as the Medieval Hebrew translation.

> some of them they cannot even support persuasively (*mā laysa yuqniʿūna fīhā*), let alone establish by demonstration (*al-burhān*). [I, 13]

The last words of the Khazar king in I, 12 – "people pursue truth and justice in order to imitate the Creator with reference to His wisdom and justice" – provide the rabbi with an opportunity to forge a link between the religion that relies (as the Khazar king says) on those issues that "constitute proof for everyone who has a religion" and the "syllogistic, governmental religion." This religion is yoked to the structural and planning interests of a socio-political body. A central source through which Halevi could have become familiar with this interpretation of religion is the writings of al-Fārābī and his and other writers' interpretations of Plato's doctrine of political philosophy. In the politico-philosophical thought of Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī (Alfarabius, d. 950), known as "the Second Teacher" (*al-muʿallim al-ṯānī*) after Aristotle in the Arabic philosophical tradition and the father figure of the *falsafah* school, the imitation ideal is a political and religious one. According to al-Fārābī, the philosopher is simultaneously a legislator, a king, and the supreme religious leader (*imām*). As such, he is commanded to institute a political society whose orders, which he sets, are an imitation of God's: the one who orders and governs the world. In al-Fārābī's view, expressed in his *The Opinions of the Citizens of the Virtuous City* (*Ārā' ahl al-madīnah al-fāḍilah*) and elsewhere, in the ideal regime where the philosopher-*imām* legislates and governs, the orders of the political society and the orders of religion are inextricably intertwined. Al-Fārābī sees the *imām*, the one whose perfect attributes make him capable of leading the perfect politico-religious order, as being eligible to govern the entire inhabited part of the world.[21]

This Arabic political philosophy, with its religious flavour as presented by al-Fārābī, had a considerable influence. Within Judeo-Arabic thought, the work of Maimonides was especially affected by this doctrine.[22] Moses ibn Ezra (d. c. 1138), the noted poet and literatus who was the patron of the young Halevi, was familiar with al-Fārābī's above-mentioned work and cited it in his own work *The Book of Conversation and Discussion* (*Kitāb al-Muḥāḍarah wa-l-muḏākarah*).[23] In that text, he quoted passages from an essay attributed to Aristotle about a political vision of a world-state in which the universal uniform law affords inhabitants such peace and security that they are able to spend a great deal of time dealing with the ultimate

21 Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī, *Ārā' ahl al-madīnah al-fāḍilah*, ed. Albert N. Nader, 7th ed. (Beirut: Dār al-Mašriq, 1996), 127 (*wa-huwa al-ra'īs al-ummah al-fāḍilah wa-ra'īs al-maʿmūrah min al-arḍ*).

22 See Lawrence V. Berman, "The Political Interpretation of the Maxim: The Purpose of Philosophy Is the Imitation of God," *Studia Islamica* 15 (1961): 53–61; Nadja Germann, "Al-Farabi's Philosophy of Society and Religion," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Summer 2018 Edition, ed. Edward N. Zalta, https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/al-farabi-soc-rel/ (last visited 30.05.2019).

23 Moses Ibn Ezra, *Kitāb al-muḥāḍarah wa-l-muḏākarah*, ed. and trans. Abraham Solomon Halkin (Jerusalem: Mekize Nirdamim, 1975), 108–9.

purpose of wisdom.[24] Ibn Ezra's innovative addition, as someone who favoured a political religion of this sort, is the identification of this philosophical vision of the ideal future political and religious order with the eschatological messianic visions of the biblical prophets.[25]

Halevi, who is opposed to the "the syllogistic, governmental religion," has the rabbi utter the classical sceptical claim regarding disagreements. In antiquity, Hellenistic sceptics applied this claim against the dogmatic philosophers to virtually every debate, regardless of the issue. Cicero, as the representative of Academic scepticism, makes great use of it in his polemic against his Stoic dogmatic rivals as a leitmotif in his speech in the *Lucullus* dialogue,[26] while Pyrrhonian sceptics placed this assertion into a systematic framework as the "mode" related to "dispute" or "disagreement" (*diaphōnia*), the first of the five "modes" attributed to the sceptic Agrippa.[27]

In the context of Arabic culture, a discourse incorporating components stemming from scepticism generally tended to focus on the phenomenon of the disagreement among religions and their followers and the sceptical ramifications arising from this disagreement.[28] In comparison, in the transition from I, 12 to I, 13, Halevi approaches the spirit of classical Hellenistic sceptical discourse when he shifts the weight of the argument related to dispute or disagreement from the religions to the philosophers.[29] This shift in the debate's focus stems in part from the fact that Halevi has already mentioned the lack of agreement among religions earlier in the composition, in a section of the dialogue between the Khazar king and the philosopher:

> The Khazar said to him: […] Otherwise, [consider the fact] that the Christian and the Muslim, who have divided up the whole world between themselves, wage war against one another, although each of them has already directed his intention sincerely towards [pleasing] God. Each has taken up the monastic life. Each has practiced asceticism. {Each} has fasted and prayed. Yet each has gone off determined to kill his counterpart, believing that the greatest good and

24 *Kitāb al-muḥāḍarah wa-l-muḏākarah*, 270–71. See also Samuel M. Stern, *Aristotle on the World State* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1970), 79.
25 See Stern, 36, 84 n. 1.
26 See, for example, Cicero, *On Academic Scepticism*, 68–69, 72, 78, 83 (*Lucullus*, sec. 117–18, 124, 133, 143).
27 Diogenes Laertius, *Pyrrhonian Skepticism in Diogenes Laertius*, 33 (sec. 88); Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines of Scepticism*, 40–41 (I, 164–65). See also Jonathan Barnes, *The Toils of Scepticism* (Cambridge, University Press, 1990), 1–35.
28 Heck, *Skepticism in Classical Islam*, 15–16, 75, 79–81; Moshe Perlmann, "Ibn Ḥazm on the Equivalence of Proofs," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 40, no. 3 (1950): 279–90; Joel L. Kraemer, *Humanism in the Renaissance of Islam: The Cultural Revival during the Buyid Age* (Leiden: Brill, 1986), 15, 189–91.
29 For the Hellenistic sceptics' focus on the disagreement among philosophers in general, see Barnes, *The Toils of Scepticism*, 8 n. 8. For the claim of disagreement among philosophers in issues of religion, see Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines of Scepticism,* 200–201 (III, 218–19).

> [the best way to achieve] closeness to God lies in killing the other. And so, they are both killed, while each of them believes that his journey leads to the Garden [of Eden] and Paradise. But it is rationally impossible for both of them to be right (*wa-taṣdīquhumā muḥāl ʿind al-ʿaql*). [I, 2]
> The philosopher said: There is no killing of [either] one of these people according to the religion of the philosophers (*dīn al-falāsifah*), since they follow the intellect. [I, 3]

At the end of the Khazar king's words in I, 2, Halevi inserts the assertion that wars between the followers of the religions of revelation – Christianity and Islam, in this case – in the name of their respective religions are absurd when considered from a rationalist perspective. In response, the philosopher legitimises the Khazar king's argument, using the opportunity to point to the superiority of the "religion of the philosophers" over the others mentioned, as it avoids the absurdity of those other religions. The "religion of the philosophers" is here described as a religion whose unifying intellectual foundation is capable of preventing violence and bloodshed caused by loyalty to the religions of revelation such as Christianity and Islam.[30] Now, if we return to the rabbi's words in I, 13, we can interpret the shift of attention to the lack of agreement among philosophers as a response to the philosopher's words in I, 3. The conclusion is that not only are the adherents of the revelatory religions unable to agree with one another, but also the philosophers, for whom the human intellect is the only beacon that is worth following, are incapable of agreement either on the general tenets of belief or on the specific commandments of their religion. In the view of philosophy under discussion, the "syllogistic, governmental religion," like all other "intellectual *nomoi*" (*al-nawāmīs al-ʿaqliyyah*), is tied in a Gordian knot to a political association: the primary factor in the use of organised violence.[31] The ramifications of the disagreement among philosophers when it comes to both the generalities and the specifics of their religion on the possibility of violent clashes among societies based on a rational political religious order are clear (even though they are not spelt out here). In the absence of any such agreement among philosophers, they are incapable of establishing a uniform or compatible political order that can resolve the intractable problem of violent clashes between different politico-religious societies, the problem noted by the Khazar king in I, 2. The insertion of the classical sceptical assertion about disagreement among philosophers allows Halevi to point to the false pretention embedded in the philosopher's words in I, 3. Indirectly, however, the use of the assertion here serves to point out

30 For the background of this claim in the legacy of the so-called freethinkers of the classical Islamic period, see Sarah Stroumsa, "Prophecy versus Civil Religion in Medieval Jewish Philosophy: The Cases of Judah Halevi and Maimonides," in *Tribute to Michael: Studies in Jewish and Muslim Thought Presented to Professor Michael Schwartz*, ed. Sara Klein-Braslavy, Binyamin Abrahamov, and Joseph Sadan (Tel-Aviv: Tel-Aviv University, 2009): 89*–93*.

31 See I, 80–81. Compare Iḫwān al-Ṣafāʾ, *The Case of the Animals versus Man Before the King of the Jinn: An Arabic Critical Edition and English Translation of Epistle 22*, ed. and trans. Lenn. E. Goodman and Richard McGregor (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 262–66 (Arabic), 301–6 (English).

the delusional dimension inherent in the vision of world peace that Moses ibn Ezra cites in Aristotle's name as a vision relying on a uniform consensual politico-intellectual order. The inability of intellectual inquiry to establish such an order is reflected in the inability of philosophers – charged with a dogmatic rationalist approach – to reach an agreement on the components of the "syllogistic, governmental religion."

Moreover, the second part of the statement that Halevi has the rabbi say in I, 13 is evidence of the limitations of the sceptical discourse in his thought. Here, the rabbi is revealed as someone who does not favour scepticism in all things. Unlike the Hellenistic sceptics, he does not question the capacity of philosophical logic to prove demonstratively certain claims. Yet in the statement voiced by the rabbi in I, 13, Halevi, focusing on the issue of "the syllogistic, governmental religion," claims that the philosophers' disagreement on the matter is a consequence of their inability to base this religion solely on proofs of the demonstrative order, hence their need to also establish it on proofs of the dialectical order as well as on the lessermost proofs of the sophistic and rhetorical orders. The rabbi's argumentation here is strictly rational and philosophical,[32] yet behind it lurks a fideistic orientation. As we have seen in the previous chapter, in Halevi's fideistic approach, the philosophers' failure is inherent because of the limitations of the human intellect. Their inability to achieve an agreement regarding the rules of religion that is based on demonstrative proof is a direct outcome of the fact that this matter lies outside the scope of "human wisdom" (*al-ḥikmah al-insāniyyah*), belonging instead to the realm of "divine wisdom" (*al-ḥikmah al-ilāhiyyah*). Consequently, their inability to agree on the actions of a religion is a direct outcome of the fact that many of these actions belong to the sphere of "the divine commandments known through revelation alone" (*al-šarā'iʿ al-ilāhiyyah al-samʿiyyah*), which also lie outside the scope of intellectual considerations.

The positive tone of the Khazar king's subsequent response (I, 14) to the rabbi's comments in I, 13 is conspicuous given the intensely negative tone that marked his previous response (in I, 12) to the rabbi's opening statement in I, 11:

> The Khazar said: I think your speech now, O Jew, is more likely [to persuade me] than the opening part of it was before, and I would like additional proof. [I, 14]

The basis for this more appreciative response lies in the fact that in I, 13, the rabbi moved the debate onto a rationalist track. The Khazar king identifies the generally

32 See the discussion in Ariel Malachi, "'On The Soul' by Ibn Sina: A Remark to the Hebrew Translation and Its Implication for Yehuda Halevi" [Hebrew], *Daʿat* 81 (2016): 111–21. See also Harry A. Wolfson, *Crescas' Critique of Aristotle: Problems of Aristotle's Physics in Jewish and Arabic Philosophy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1929), 397; Barry S. Kogan, "Judah Halevi and His Use of Philosophy in the *Kuzari*," in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Jewish Philosophy*, 118.

rationalist tone of the rabbi's words and connects with it. The rationalism that the rabbi presents in 1, 13, although it is a rationalism that involves a sceptical argument, sounds just familiar enough for the Khazar king to overcome his previous reservations and awaken his interest in the rabbi's course of argumentation.

The rabbi's next words mark another turning point. Throughout the dialogue in I, 11–25, the rabbi's general orientation is not to gratify the Khazar king by demonstrating a proclivity for rationalist discourse, but rather to challenge him by confronting him with a definition of Judaism that is contrary to the way in which rationalist writers would tend to define it. Accordingly, the rabbi now acts to steer the debate away from the rationalist direction:

> The Rabbi said: On the contrary, the opening part of my speech is the demonstration (*al-burhān*). What is more, it is [based on] eyewitness perception (*al-ʿiyān*) and doesn't need proof and demonstration (*dalīl wa-burhān*). [I, 15]

In this brief passage, Halevi juxtaposes and contrasts the two epistemological tracks through which he conducts the debate in I, 11–25, the main track being that of the traditionalist Muslim epistemology based on the testimony recorded by the senses and thereafter transmitted through a chain of transmission. The term *ʿiyān* ("eyewitness perception") is the key term of this epistemology which touches on this side of the initial stage of sensory input. In addition, the rabbi makes two references to the term *burhān*. These references are based on the dual significance of *burhān* in Arabic literature in general and in Judeo-Arabic literature in particular: in the rationalist, philosophical track, the term *burhān* denotes the level of "demonstrative proof," the highest and most certain order of rational proofs.[33] In the other track, that of the translated literature and the Judeo-Arabic interpretations of the biblical text, such as in the writings of Saʿadia Gaon, *burhān* is the Arabic term parallel to the biblical divine "sign" (Heb. *mofet*) in the sense of a miraculous event perceived by the senses. In Saʿadia Gaon's thought, the two meanings of *burhān* join together as part of a dogmatic rationalist approach that Harry Wolfson called the "double faith theory":[34] the concrete miraculous "sign" is intended to strengthen belief in the principles of the religion given to a prophet through divine revelation, though these principles are also validated through intellectual inquiry. However, in Halevi's thought, as someone taking a fideist approach, the relationship between the two meanings of *burhān* takes a completely different form: *burhān*, as a sign of a concrete miracle

33 The rabbi refers to this meaning of the term *burhān* in the second half of his previous comment (I, 13).

34 Harry A. Wolfson, "The Double Faith Theory in Clement, Saadia, Averroes and St. Thomas, and Its Origin in Aristotle and the Stoics," *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 33, no. 2 (1942): 230–43. For the shift in the meaning of the term *burhān* from its *Qurʾānic* denotation as a miraculous sign to its philosophical sense of "demonstrative proof," see Mark N. Swanson, "Proof," in *Encyclopedia of Quran*, ed. Jane Dammen McAuliffe (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 4:286–87.

perceived by those who were present, who experienced it as a direct sensory occurrence, removes those witnesses' complementary need for *burhān* as a certain logical proof: the highest achievement of intellectual inquiry. In a manner that is typical of his fideist approach, in the context of the *credo* of the Jewish faith – that is, the miraculous revelatory events of the people of Israel – Halevi grades cognition based on direct sensory eyewitness perception (*ʿiyān*) far above cognition based on intellectual inquiry. Furthermore, the rabbi's words in 1, 15 are a refinement of what he said in the second half of 1, 13. The earlier passage created the impression that the philosophers' problem in formulating their religion is based on the fact that philosophers are incapable of validating the entirety of their religion by means of the highest order of proof, that of demonstrative proof (*burhān*). The rabbi's words in I, 15 now come to clarify that when it comes to the *credo* of the Jewish faith – a *credo* relying on direct sense perception – intellectual proofs, even of the demonstrative order, are unnecessary.[35]

The following brief exchange between the Khazar king and the rabbi functions as a transition which moves the discussion to the next stage:

> The Khazar said: How is that possible? [I, 16]
> The Rabbi said: Permit me to make some preliminary comments, because I see that you are showing disdain for my statements and making light of them. [I, 17]
> The Khazar said: Make your preliminary comments so that I may hear [them]. [I, 18]

The rabbi's feeling, which he expresses in I, 17, that the Khazar king is scorning what he said in I, 15 is the result of his assessment based on his experience with the Khazar king's response to I, 11; namely, that the Khazar king cannot tolerate the rabbi's statements when they deviate from rationalist discourse. This comment precedes and hints at the fact that the rabbi is putting the discussion back onto the rationalist track, a move which he explains this time by means of a parable:

> The sage said: If you were told that the ruler of India is a virtuous ruler, whom you should revere, whose name you should praise, and whose signs (*āṯārihi*) you should recount because

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35 Consider the rabbi's assertion at the end of I, 25: "I answered you in terms of what is compelling for me and for the community of the children of Israel for whom that [which I have described] is well-established on the basis of eyewitness perception (*al-ʿiyān*) and, subsequently, through concurrent tradition (*al-tawātur*), which is as valid as eyewitness perception (*ka-l-ʿiyān*)." From this assertion, we learn that eyewitness perception (*al-ʿiyān*) must be completed by concurrent tradition (*al-tawātur*). Herein lies a fundamental difference between the traditional and rational-philosophical epistemological systems. Whereas in the traditional system, concurrent tradition (*al-tawātur*) serves as the complementary procedure for direct sense perception, in the rational-philosophical system, conceptualisation (*taṣawwur*) and verification/assent (*taṣdīq*) function as complementary procedures for sense perception. In relying on direct sense experience here, Halevi, like the traditionalists, avoids the procedures of conceptualisation (*taṣawwur*) and verification/assent (*taṣdīq*). See Black, "Epistemology in Philosophy," sec. 2.

> of what had come to your attention about the justice (*ʿadl*) of the people of his country, [signifying] both the excellence (*faḍl*) of their character traits and the justice (*ʿadl*) of their conduct towards one another, would this oblige you [to obey him] (*hal kāna haḏā yulzimuka*)? [I, 19]

The words spoken by the rabbi in I, 15 were meant to create the impression that intellectual proof of the demonstrative order (*burhān*) is unnecessary for the concrete, observable, non-intellectual definition of Judaism, whereas in the next exchange with the Khazar king (I, 19–20), Halevi returns the discussion to the rationalist track to show that providing demonstrative proofs is beyond the ability of those who claim to base their belief on intellectual inquiry. To do so, he focuses the discussion in these lines on the proof that was most common and best known in dogmatic rationalist discourse in the reservoir of proofs for the existence of God. Historically, this claim did in fact constitute the "proof for everyone who has a religion" that the Khazar king had in mind in I, 12, and it was used by a very wide spectrum of rationalists in this and other periods.[36] The popularity of the argument under discussion and the widespread distribution it achieved forced Halevi to be especially careful in presenting his own critical appraisal of it. We therefore find him discussing it by means of a parable whose meaning is not spelt out. However, the reference is not to anything esoteric; any intellectual of that time would immediately have grasped what the parable was trying to communicate.[37]

The intellectual proof manoeuver at the basis of the parable of the king of India in I, 19 is the one known in philosophical literature as the "argument from design" or the teleological argument. In the list of attributes the Khazar king ascribes to God in I, 12, the teleological argument relates to God being the one who designs and governs the world (*wa-nāẓimihi wa-mudabbirihi*). This argument is based on the claim that the contemplation of the world and its intricacy impresses the observer with the signs of design, coordination, and sophistication inherent in reality and the rela-

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36 Binyamin Abrahamov, "Al-Ḳāsim ibn Ibrāhīm's Argument from Design," *Oriens* 29/30 (1986): 266–77; Diana Lobel, *A Sufi-Jewish Dialogue: Philosophy and Mysticism in Baḥya ibn Paquda's "Duties of the Heart"* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 117–45.

37 Throughout *The Kuzari*, Halevi takes a discreet attitude, not an esoteric one. He does not wish to conceal his positions, yet he chooses to take some discreet measures in order to avoid a head-on clash with the dogmatic rationalist positions deeply rooted in the minds of his associates and colleagues in the Judeo-Arabic *intelligentsia*. In the specific case of I, 19–21, the discreet attitude is achieved by the omission of the referent part of the parable. In a wider context, *The Kuzari*'s historicisation, locating the plot of the work far away in both place and time, in the land of Khazaria during the eighth century, functions as another means of achieving the same purpose. This discreet attitude was part and parcel of the rules of the courtesy (*adāb*) that was typical of Arabic culture, where people who belong to the same milieu avoid criticising each other in a confrontational manner. For another example of Halevi's discreet attitude, see the discussion of his use of the figure of Socrates in V, 14 below.

tionships and compositions of all its existents.[38] This insight leads to the conclusion that there is an external higher entity that dictates, directs, and preserves the order of reality. In the monotheistic versions of this proof, this external higher entity is identified with the one God of the monotheistic religions. The argument and its many forms constituted an important link connecting ancient Hellenistic philosophy with the thought of the church fathers and Muslim, Christian, and Jewish thought in Arabic culture.[39]

Addressing the parable in I, 19, relating to its meaning level that is left non-explicit by the author, the ruler of India hints at God, the land of India hints at the world in general, the people of India are the existents in the world, the justice (*ʿadl*) and excellence (*faḍl*) of the people of India hint at the well-planned order of the world's existents that arranges their actions, and the ruler's signs (*āṯārihi*) by which the justice and excellence of his subjects are known stand for the explicit signs of the divine intelligent design in the world available for contemplation by humans. Based on such a contemplation or observation, all human beings can use their minds to acknowledge God as the initiator and preserver of the design of the world's existents.[40]

The question the rabbi poses to the Khazar king at the end of the parable – "would this oblige you?" (*hal kāna haḏā yulzimuka*) – is short for "would this oblige you *to obey him*?"; namely, the ruler of India in the parable and God in the referent. This is inferred from a comparison with the full parallel formulation of the concluding question in I, 21: "Would you be obligated to obey him?" (*hal kunta taltazimu ṭāʿatahu*). The fact that the discussion between the rabbi and the Khazar king in I, 19–21 concentrates on a parable whose non-explicit referent is the teleological argument for the existence of God does not only stem from this proof being the most commonplace in the rationalist discourse of the time, as *The Kuzari* contains other rationalist arguments for the existence of God: in I, 1, the philosopher mentions the cosmological argument, which concerns God as the first cause in the causal order of existence.[41] The rabbi hints at Ibn Sīnā's ontological argument in IV, 25,[42] and in V,

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38 In Arabic literature, there are two synonymous terms commonly used to describe this mode of rationalistic contemplation: *iʿtibār* and *tafakkur*. See Warren Zev Harvey, "Averroes and Maimonides in the Obligation of Philosophic Contemplation (*iʿtibār*)" [Hebrew], *Tarbiz* 58, no. 1 (1988): 75–83; Lobel, *A Sufi-Jewish Dialogue*, 120 ff.

39 Herbert A. Davidson, *Proofs for Eternity, Creation and the Existence of God in Medieval Islamic and Jewish Philosophy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 213–36.

40 Halevi may be hinting here at the first two parts of Baḥya ibn Paqudah's *The Guide to the Duties of the Heart*, where the author constantly refers to the "argument from design" as an argument which relies on one's intellectual ability to contemplate "the signs of [divine] wisdom" (*āṯār al-ḥikmah*) in the world.

41 I, 1 (4, ll. 8–12 = Bashir, 154).

42 IV, 25 (278, l. 27–280, l. 3 = Bashir, 495).

18, he spells out the argument from the creation of the world.[43] However, none of these proofs stresses God's involvement in the existence of the world found in the argument referenced in the parable in I, 19. Therefore, the teleological argument, more so than the others mentioned, is what seemingly provides a stable intellectual foundation for the obligation to accept God's dominion and worship Him.

The Khazar king's reply to the question the rabbi posed at the end of I, 19 brings the reader into the very heart of the sceptical manoeuvre in the discussion in the dialogue of I, 11–25:

> The Khazar said: How would it compel me, when there is doubt (*wa-l-šakk*) as to whether the justice of India's people (*ʿadluhum*) derives from themselves and they have no king, or [whether in having one,] their justice (*ʿadluhum*) is due to their king, or [whether] the fact derives from both causes taken together? [I, 20]

The key word in the parable of the ruler of India is the word "justice" (*ʿadl*). It appears twice in both the rabbi's initial presentation in I, 19 and in the Khazar king's response in I, 20. The word, which relates to the justice prevailing in all Indian affairs, is seen at the level of the (implicit) moral as referring to the design and order that characterises the world and its existents from which one may infer the existence of the divine designer. The assertion that Halevi has the Khazar king voice in I, 20 revolves around this term. The cause of this "justice" – that is, the design characterising the existents of this world – could perhaps be the world's existents themselves (the people of India in the parable), or God (the king in the parable), or the existents and God together. Thus, according to the Khazar king's assertion, the argument from design – that is, the claim that the order among the world's existents is the result of God's organising and steering hand – is in fact only one of three possible ways to make logical inferences as to the existence of such a design. The three possibilities are presented in the Khazar king's words here as three possible alternatives whereby none of the three seems to supersede or outweigh the others. The doubt (*wa-l-šakk*) that the Khazar king casts on the rabbi's explanation of the world's design here results from his arrival at two other equally compelling explanations of the same phenomenon. This non-assent set-up fits the basic set-up of claims in Hellenistic sceptical thought called the "equipollence of counter-arguments" (*isostheneia*). During the Hellenistic period, the teleological proof was especially prevalent among the Stoic thinkers. In response to the Stoics' assertion that observing the world requires the observer to recognise God or divine thought as the primary mover of the design of nature, the sceptics quoted other Hellenistic thinkers who claimed that the design perceived in the world is the result of the harmonious relationships among the world's existents. From the sceptics' viewpoint, this form

43 V, 18 (332, l. 7–334, l. 7 = Bashir, 542–44).

of arguing makes it clear that the claims are equivalent in weight.[44] Compared to this classical sceptical discussion, in Halevi's writing, the weight of the teleological argument and its presentation in the parable goes from the intellectual aspect of proving the existence of God to the normative aspect of the obligation to obey God and accept His dominion. Against this background, we can understand the addition of the third combined possibility. From a viewpoint focused on proving the existence of God, which preoccupied the sceptics in their debates with the Stoics, the first two possibilities that the Khazar king mentioned in I, 20 distil the issue into a binary choice: the argument from design either can or cannot prove the existence of God as the one who designed it. By contrast, in Halevi's viewpoint here, the third combined possibility the Khazar king offers also has its place, because the combination weakens the aspect of God's sovereignty over the world and its existents, thereby raising questions about the obligation to obey Him. This shift of emphasis in the sceptical set-up of the argument from order is what enables Halevi to present three equally weighted options for this subject in comparison to Cicero's two.

From another comparative historical direction, one should note that in Hellenistic culture, global sceptical thought had its niche as a recognised philosophical tradition and was an integral part of that culture. The sceptical questioning of the teleological argument reported in Cicero's writings is unavoidable and is consequent to its position as a niche of global scepticism. Compared to this, in Arabic culture – a world that lacked a tradition of global scepticism, on the one hand, and in which the teleological argument represented a rare consensus, on the other – the implied sceptical critique Halevi levels against this proof is highly unusual and daring.[45]

The sceptical manoeuvre in I, 20 includes the central classical sceptical claim of the "equipollence of counter-arguments" (*isostheneia*).[46] In this passage, the purpose of this sceptical assertion is to expose the pretensions to certainty in the teleological argument for the existence of God and the obligation to obey Him. The assertion in the Khazar king's statement that the indecision among the various claims, which are neither complementary nor matching when it comes to the argument from design, precludes the attribution of certainty to the proof of God's existence and the obligation to obey Him. In a historical context, it seems that Halevi's polem-

44 Cicero, *On Academic Scepticism*, 70–71, 74 (*Lucullus*, sec. 120–21, 126); Cicero, *On the Nature of the Gods* (*De natura deorum*), in *On the Nature of the Gods. Academics*, trans. Harris Rackham (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1933), 124–27 (II, 2), 308–9 (III, 9–10), 312–13 (III, 11).

45 See Davidson, *Proofs for Eternity*, 216 and n. 21. According to Davidson, among all the medieval Islamic and Jewish literary sources that he checked, *The Kuzari* I, 20 contains the only criticism of the teleological argument.

46 Supportive evidence for my claim that the Khazar king's concise remarks in I, 20 contain the sceptical argument of the "equipollence of counter-arguments" can be found in I, 67, where Halevi explicitly articulates this argument. See the discussion below.

ical sting in this sceptical manoeuvre was particularly aimed against his elder contemporary, Baḥya ibn Paqudah.[47]

A comparison between the use of the "disagreement" (*diaphōnia*) sceptical argument in I, 13 and the use of another one, the "equipollence of counter-arguments" (*isostheneia*) in I, 20, reveals that while the former is voiced by the rabbi, the latter is voiced by the Khazar king. This is of great significance. In I, 20, the use of the sceptical argument is a sort of self-liberating development. The Khazar king, in speaking as he does, extricates himself from the grasp of dogmatic thought that characterised his approach when he first embarked on the dialogue with his Jewish interlocutor in I, 12. The placement of the sceptical position in terms of its validity and the binding nature of "the argument from design" in the Khazar king's speech is a successful demonstration of the emancipatory quality inherent in the sceptics' manner of argumentation. This quality is embedded in the argument's capacity to open the mind's field of vision in several directions. This opening is characteristic of sceptical thought, a development that frees its thinker from the hold of a reductionist tendency towards only one direction that is characteristic of the dogmatic approach.[48] The Khazar king's words in I, 20 are a fine example of the emancipatory strength of classical scepticism. He abandons the dogmatic rationalism which reduces him to thinking that in every matter, there is one single assertion that may exclusively be considered to be certain. He exchanges this reductionist rational thought for sceptical rationalist thought, which recognises disparate or even contradictory arguments as striving for the truth without taking the reductionist step of trying to decide between them. This point also embodies the essential difference between Halevi's fideist thought and the rationalist approach characterising the classical sceptic. For the latter, remaining with disparate claims and examining them is his permanent intellectual state of being, the state of the sceptical "suspension of judgment" (*epochē*). By contrast, in the dialogue in I, 11–25, the Khazar king's tran-

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47 As already hinted above, Halevi's focus on the argument from design can be seen as a response to the most serious theological product of his own Jewish-Andalusian milieu: Baḥya ibn Paqudah's *The Book of Direction to the Duties of the Heart*. While in Saʿadia Gaon's work, the focus is still on the argument from creation, in Baḥya's work, we find the centre of gravity shifting towards the argument from design. Furthermore, the issue of the connection between the contemplation (*iʿtibār*) of God's "signs of wisdom" (*āṯār al-ḥikmah*) in the world which points to Him as the supreme designer and the obligation to obey Him (*iltizām ṭāʿat Allah*) is central to the discussion in parts 2 and 3 of Baḥyah's work, as well as to Halevi's dialogue in I, 19–21. For the suggestion that Maimonides's parable about the small, weak moneychanger and the big, strong, impoverished individual standing before him (in *Dalālat al-ḥāʾirīn*, ed. Solomon Munk and Isaschar Joel [Jerusalem: Y. Yunovits, 1929], I, 46) functions as a sort of counterblast to the parables in *The Kuzari* I, 19–21, see Shlomo Pines, "Translator's Introduction," cxxxiii.

48 On the non-reductionist approach as the approach of the sceptics, who favour several directions, vis-à-vis the reductionist approach of the dogmatists, who seek one direction, see Cicero, *On Academic Scepticism*, 6 (*Lucullus*, sec. 8).

sition from dogmatic rationalism to sceptical rationalism is viewed as a desirable intermediate step *en route* to the readers' liberation from the need to define their Jewish beliefs in rationalist terms altogether. This fact, which characterises Halevi's approach at this point, is elucidated in the following lines of dialogue:

> The Rabbi said: But then, if his messenger came to you with [typically] Indian gifts, about which you have no doubt (*lā tašukku*) that they are found only in India, in the palaces of kings, along with a message in which it is attested that it is from him [i.e., the king] and accompanied by medicines that cure you of your illnesses and preserve your health, as well as poisons for your enemies and those who wage war against you, with which you may confront them and kill them without preparation or [adequate] number [of soldiers], would you be obligated to obey him (*hal kunta taltazimu ṭāʿatahu*)? [I, 21]

The rabbi does not respond to the sceptical exposition of the argument from design expressed by the Khazar king in I, 20. Instead, in I, 21, he presents another parable. The lack of response may indicate the rabbi's silent agreement with the Khazar king and that the rabbi considers the Khazar king's exposition to be appropriate. At the same time, in the transition to the parable in I, 21, Halevi parts ways with classical scepticism. He overlooks the stage of "suspension of judgment" in favour of continuing to develop the manoeuver whose starting point is the *credo* that the rabbi formulated in his introduction in I, 11. The rabbi's words in I, 21 are a reframing of the *credo* in I, 11 in the form of a parable. The unstated referent of the parable in I, 21 is closely tied to the assumptions underlying that *credo*: that the impressions of God on which it is necessary to base and accept His dominion are not the impressions of nature's design or other designs pointing to a God leading the world as a whole, but rather the impressions of God's involvement as manifested in the unique history of the people of Israel. The hypothetical experiences that could occur to the Khazar king according to the parable's literary descriptions in I, 21 are the real events experienced by the people of Israel during the biblical era according to the historical descriptions in I, 11 and elsewhere in *The Kuzari*.[49]

Furthermore, the capacity of the parable in I, 21 to move and persuade relies on the expressive, concrete descriptions that characterise it. The parable is a good example of the fact that to Halevi's mind, the power of a parable lies in its concrete rather than its allegorical nature. His omission of the allegorical aspect of the parable's lessons in both I, 19 and I, 21 is therefore an advantage. This omission stresses that the parable's persuasive advantage lies in the concrete aspect of this genre and dovetails with the definition of Judaism that the rabbi presented in I, 11 as a definition based on the concrete rather than the abstract. The parable in I, 21 echoes the definition of Judaism provided in I, 11: what instils awe of God and acceptance of

49 See, for example, I, 109.

His word is direct experiences of His presence in history and the added value of the benefits conferred on those who participated in those experiences.[50]

In these brief concrete parables, Halevi positioned two alternate options for defining Judaism and its binding validity: the dogmatic rationalist option of intellectual observation and inquiry and the historic option based on direct experience of the unique events that occurred to the people of Israel. The Khazar king's response in I, 22 reflects progress away from the sceptical stance of non-assent in which he placed himself in I, 20, moving towards the stance of the believing man, a position requiring an assent, according to Halevi's non-sceptical approach:

> The Khazar said: Yes, of course. My previous doubt (*al-šakk al-qadīm*) as to whether India has a king or not would have vanished, and I would believe (*wa-kuntu aʿtaqidu*) that his dominion and his imperative (*mulkahu wa-amraru*) extend to me. [I, 22]

The Khazar king's response here clearly demonstrates that the discussion, at the level of the parable of the argument from design, is encompassing two matters. The first is proving the existence of God, presented in the parable by the question of whether India has a king or not. The second is the submission of oneself to God's authority, which is presented in the parable with the statement "his dominion and his imperative (*mulkahu wa-amraru*) extend to me." As I explained earlier, in the context of Judeo-Arabic literature, the link between these two matters was expressed most forcefully in the opening rational-oriented parts of Baḥya ibn Paqudah's work.[51]

The Khazar king's words in I, 22 represent the closing of a circle and his confirmation of the claim that the rabbi presented to him in I, 15. His sceptical response to the argument from design that the rabbi presented in I, 19 led him to the exposition of the "equipollence of counter-arguments" in I, 20, an exposition that contains doubt regarding the definition and binding nature of a religion that relies on an argument of this sort. By contrast, the Khazar king's response to the argument based on the direct historical sense evidence that the rabbi presents to him in the parable

50 Elsewhere, in IV, 13, Halevi stresses that seeking non-theoretical concrete material benefits distinguishes the adherent of a revealed Law from the adherents of philosophy: "The difference between the adherent of a revealed Law and the adherent of philosophy is far-reaching because the adherent of a revealed Law seeks out the Lord for the sake of great benefits, quite apart from the benefit of knowing Him. But the person who devotes himself to philosophy seeks Him out only for the purpose of describing Him according to His true character" (252, ll. 18–20 = Bashir, 464).

51 In my forthcoming study on Baḥya and Halevi as radical thinkers, I will demonstrate at length that while the first three parts of Baḥya's *The Book of Direction to the Duties of the Heart* (*Kitāb al-hidāyah ilā farāʾiḍ al-qulūb*) encapsulate the non-radical rationalistic directions of his thought, the other seven parts present a radical Ṣūfī-oriented direction which constitutes his major contribution to Judeo-Arabic literature.

in I, 21 removes the doubt and leads him to accept both God's existence and the yoke of His revealed religion.

The transition to the next exchange between the Khazar king and the rabbi in I, 23–24 focuses the discussion on the attributes of God. The rabbi steers the discussion to this topic by means of the question he poses to the Khazar king in I, 23. In his introduction to the dialogue with the rabbi, the Khazar king uses the more general phrase "descriptions" (*al-awṣāf*) when referring to "descriptions, which constitute proof for everyone who has a religion" (I, 12). However, in the present and more advanced stage of the discussion between them, he uses the accepted technical term in the literature of Arabic culture – that of "attributes" (*ṣifāt*):[52]

> The Rabbi said: If you were asked about him, how would you describe him? [I, 23]
> The Khazar said: By means of those attributes (*bi-l-ṣifāt*) that, in my opinion, were well-established on the basis of direct eyewitness perception (*ʿiyānan*). Then I would follow them up with those that were doubtful (*maškūka*)[53] for me and have become evident by means of these last ones. [I, 24]

The attributes (*al-ṣifāt*) of God that the Khazar king refers to in I, 24 as being validated by "direct eyewitness perception" (*ʿiyānan*) – that is, by the direct evidence of the senses – are the attributes of God's sovereignty in His unique relationship with the people of Israel, its patriarchs, and its prophets. These attributes were noted by the rabbi in his *credo* in I, 11 – "the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel" – and all that was added to this description there, whereas the doubtful attributes (*maškūkah*) are the descriptions of God's sovereignty over the world and its existents, the same descriptions of the religion based on the dogmatic rationalist approach mentioned by the king in his first response to the rabbi's *credo* in I, 12 ("you have faith in the Creator of the world, who orders it and governs it, and in Him who created you and provided for you, and [use] similar such descriptions"). In I, 24, the Khazar king reaches a stage where he can acknowledge the primacy and superiority of the unique attributes of God, which, epistemologically speaking, rely on direct eyewitness perception (*ʿiyānan*), compared to God's general-universal attributes,

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52 See Claude Gilliot, "Attributes of God," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, THREE*, ed. Kate Fleet, Gudrun Krämer, Denis Matringe, John Nawas, and Everett Rowson (consulted online on 06 February 2020. http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_ei3_COM_0163).

53 The text of the Baneth–Ben-Shammai edition reads (11 and n. 18, 3) *mašhūrah* ("famous," "generally accepted") here. Herschfeld, in his edition, reads *maškūkah* ("doubtful") in accordance with Ibn Tibbon's medieval Hebrew translation (*hayu safeq eṣli*). The context shows that Ibn Tibbon's version is the correct one: in his two previous utterances, in I, 20 and I, 22, the Khazar king referred to his doubt ("when there is doubt" [*wa-l-šakk*] and "my previous doubt" [*al-šakk al-qadīm*] respectively) in relation to the attributes of the people of India and their king on the allegorical level of the fable. In I, 24, he refers to the same subject (i.e., God's attributes in His relation to the world).

which have no verification by means of direct sense impressions. Furthermore, he now considers the first kind of attributes to be the basis for the validity of the second kind. This argument is only hinted at in I, 24; it receives detailed elucidation later in the book, especially in the rabbi's words in II, 54. There, the validation is learned from an observation of history: the first historical era, which preceded the emergence of the people of Israel, was characterised by the flawed and failed intellectual attempts on the part of all groups and schools of thought (including the philosophers) to reach a true acknowledgement of God's attributes and His governance of the world.[54] The change occurred with the emergence of the people of Israel onto history's stage. The unique history of the people of Israel, whose striking events involved miracles and manifest changes to the natural order of things, was the reason why the "entire inhabited world" began to correctly acknowledge God's general-universal attributes and how the way in which He governs the world became known to all.[55] Thus, Halevi's claim, presented in full in II, 54, is that the different religions and groups attained the correct understanding of God's attributes and His governance of the world not by taking any intellectual measures, but by surrendering themselves to the lessons of the unique history of the people of Israel.

The most interesting and important point in the context of our discussion relates to the fact that the Khazar king's conclusion in I, 24 regarding the verification of God's general-universal attributes based on His particular attributes was made possible because of a move he made earlier, in I, 20, which expresses his shift from dogmatic to sceptical rationalism. The dogmatic rationalist approach, which requires deciding among contradictory arguments on any given issue, entails two implications. The first is the validation of one of the arguments. The second is the refutation of all the other arguments, thus bringing the discussion of the issue to its conclusion. In contradistinction, in classical sceptical rationalism, there is an open-ended lack of conclusion. Accordingly, just as it does not validate an argument on a particular issue or adopt it as certain, nor does it reject the competing arguments or

54 II, 54 (112, l. 25–114, l. 9 = Bashir, 295–96). Halevi asserts here (112, ll. 25–26 = Bashir, 295) that at the pre-Israelite stage of history, only a few unique chosen individuals – the same individuals to whom God revealed His signs (see III, 53 [204, ll. 9–10 = Bashir, 408]) – were able to properly grasp God's attributes and His governance of the world. See the discussion in Krinis, *God's Chosen People*, 75–78.

55 II, 54 (114, ll. 9–16 = Bashir, 296): "[This is how things were] until that group, which was worthy of the light coming to it, miracles being decreed for it, and the customary course of events being disrupted [for its sake], became pure, and it became obvious from experience (*wa-ẓahara ʿiyānan*) that this world has a Ruler, a Preserver, and an ultimate Authority, who knows what is small and what is great and also requires good and evil. Thus, there came to be proper guidance for the hearts of men. No one who came after it was able {to} isolate himself from its fundamental principles, so that today the entire inhabited world acknowledges the eternity of God and the world's coming into being as a complete innovation. Their demonstration of that is the children of Israel themselves and both what He decreed on their behalf and what was decreed against them."

take them off the table. The sceptical rationalist approach is reflected in the Khazar king's assessment in I, 24 that the general-universal attributes "were doubtful for me." The doubt that the Khazar king is talking about here is the outcome of him positioning the issue of God's attributes in the sceptical arrangement of the "equipollence of counter-arguments" in I, 20. The adoption of the sceptical stance which neither validates nor disproves the claim regarding God's attributes on the rational level of argument is portrayed as a temporary and intermediate station in the Khazar king's reorientation. Taking off from the dogmatic stance in I, 12, where the ability of the rational inquiry to establish God's universal attributes was taken for granted, in I, 24, he finally hits in on the conclusion that those attributes can only be firmly based on God's particular attributes (i.e., His attributes as "the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel," etc.). So, according to the message conveyed by the full-scale dynamic of the opening part of the dialogue between the rabbi and the Khazar king, the reorientation of a dogmatic rationalist and his transformation into a believer includes a midway stop at the sceptical station. Thus, while Halevi acknowledged scepticism as a rationalistic remedy for the disease of the dogmatic rationalist (or as a measure needed to awake him from his "dogmatic slumber"), he acknowledged it not from the point of view of the sceptic, but from that of the believer.[56]

Turning to I, 25, the rabbi presents a broader epistemological criterion for the Jewish *credo*: direct eyewitness perception (*al-ʿiyān*), already acknowledged by the Khazar king in I, 24, is here supplemented by "concurrent tradition" (*al-tawātur*):

> The Rabbi said: Well, I answered you in the same way when you [first] questioned me; and Moses began addressing Pharaoh in the same way, too, when he told him, "The God of the Hebrews has sent me to you,"[57] meaning, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, since their story was well-known among the nations as well as [the fact] that a divine order accompanied them, took interest in them, and performed wonders for them. He did not tell him, "The Lord of heaven and earth" or "My Creator and your Creator sent me." And God also began His address to the multitude of the children of Israel in the same way: "I am [the] God, whom you worship, who brought you out of the land of Egypt."[58] He did not say, "I am the Creator of the world and your Creator." Accordingly, I opened the conversation with you in this way, O commander of the Khazars, when you asked me about my faith (*imānī*). I answered you in terms of what is compelling for me and for the community of the children of Israel for whom that [which I have described] is well-established on the basis of eyewitness perception (*al-ʿiyān*) and, subsequently, through concurrent tradition (*al-tawātur*), which is as valid as eyewitness perception (*ka-l-ʿiyān*). [I, 25]

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56 That is why the end goals of scepticism, such as the Pyrrhonian "tranquillity" (*ataraxia*), are irrelevant for Halevi.

57 This quotation is a translation (in Arabic in original) of part of the verse in Exodus 7:16.

58 This quotation is a translation (in Arabic in original) of part of the verse in Exodus 20:2.

This passage makes two references to the opening declaration of the rabbi's *credo* in I, 11 ("Well, I answered you in the same way when you [first] questioned me," "Accordingly, I opened the conversation with you in this way"). Yet the new formulation Halevi gives that *credo* here takes into account the development of the discussion from its starting point to its current position. It is therefore appropriate to view this section as a conclusion of the opening part of the dialogue between the rabbi and the Khazar king.

Below, I make no attempt to exhaust the discussion of this conclusion and its richness of meaning and aspects. Instead, I shall concentrate on one aspect that is central to the issue under discussion here: Halevi's clash with the dogmatic rationalism of his Andalusian Jewish compatriots and the epistemological aspect that constitutes the core of this clash.

Abraham ibn Ezra (d. 1164), a close colleague of Halevi, provided highly valuable evidence for this issue in a section of his exegesis of the first of the ten commandments (Exodus 20:2). The section begins with a question that Ibn Ezra quotes in Halevi's name: "Rabbi Judah Halevi, of blessed memory, once asked me: Why did [the Scripture] mention 'I am the Lord thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt' rather than 'who made the heavens and the earth and you'?" In the rabbi's words in I, 25, Halevi himself gives a completely different answer from Ibn Ezra's reply to the exegetical question Halevi posed to him. Ibn Ezra reduces the theological importance of the direct sense experience perceived by the people of Israel to signs of God's governance of the people during the exodus from Egypt, evidence expressed in the Scripture as "who brought thee out of the land of Egypt." According to Ibn Ezra, this articulation is secondary in importance to the beginning of the verse, "I am the Lord thy God." He explains this opening phrase in the spirit of the dogmatic rationalist approach as a reference to God's general-universal attributes that man can learn about or infer from an observation of His governance of the world and its order and design ("from the ways of God can the learned man know Him"). According to Ibn Ezra's exegesis, the intellectual cognition of these general attributes is beyond the grasp of the masses; it is available only to the learned among them. Because of this fact, it was necessary to add "who brought thee out of the land of Egypt," an addition adapted to the limited sensory perception of the masses.[59]

Compared to Ibn Ezra's interpretation, Halevi – via the words he has the rabbi speak in I, 25 (a conclusion of the dialogue in I, 11–25 as a whole) – turns the tables on understanding the importance and advantage of the second half of Exodus 20:2. According to him, the significance of the ending of the verse is that during the for-

59 Abraham ibn Ezra, *Šemot*, 131–32. See also the discussion in Warren Zev Harvey, "The First Commandment and the God of History: Halevi and Crescas vs. Ibn Ezra and Maimonides" [Hebrew], *Tarbiz* 57 (1988): 205–9.

mative event in which God revealed Himself to the people of Israel at Mount Sinai, He was made known to the people through His particular attributes as the one who redeemed them from captivity and exile in Egypt. The formulation of the verse is thus meant to stress the primacy of these attributes (here, Halevi includes "the God of the Hebrews" and "the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob") over the general-universal attributes (here, he includes "the Lord of heaven and earth," "my Creator and your Creator," and "I am the Creator of the world and your Creator") as part of the *credo* that is binding on "the community of the children of Israel."

Epistemologically, in Halevi's approach, the first commandment is formulated this way to show that cognition of God in Jewish belief is based on the eyewitness perception (*ʿiyān*) of those who left Egypt and stood at Mount Sinai. The alternate formulation of the commandment – "I am the Creator of the world and your Creator" – is disqualified because it is based not on this unique historical sense experience, but rather on general intellectual observation and inference. From the epistemological perspective, the concluding sentence of I, 25 is very important: "[This]is well-established on the basis of eyewitness perception (*al-ʿiyān*) and, subsequently, through concurrent tradition (*al-tawātur*), which is as valid as eyewitness perception (*ka-l-ʿiyān*)." The rabbi repeats this idea using different language elsewhere in the book.[60] In the concluding claim, Halevi points to the close connection between *iyān* and *tawātur*, which shows that Halevi is relying on the epistemological terminology of traditionalist Islam throughout the opening dialogue between the rabbi and the Khazar king in I, 11–25. In that traditionalism, *ʿiyān* as direct eyewitness perception never stands on its own. It is connected to and understood through *tawātur*, a procedure ensuring the trustworthiness of the transmission of the witnessing to those who did not directly experience it with their own senses.[61]

While the rabbi has repeatedly referred to the term *ʿiyān* in parts of the dialogue (I, 15; I, 24), this is the first time that the term *tawātur* is used. This term is so unique to the special doctrine of cognition in the Muslim tradition that it cannot be adequately translated from Arabic into other languages. The main sense of *tawātur* is the reporting of a large number of witnesses (*ẖabar mutāwatir*) about an event at which they were present and which they experienced first-hand through their

60 V, 14 (330, ll. 9–10 = Bashir, 540): "But we must accept what has been witnessed [by our ancestors in direct sense testimony] as well as the concurrent tradition [that reports it], which is as valid as what has been witnessed (*wa-naḥnu yalzimuna qubūl al-mušāhadah wa-l-tawātur alaḏī huwa ka-l-mušāhadah*)." For the terms *ʿiyān* and *mušāhadah* as synonyms, see II, 48 (108, ll. 12–15 = Bashir, 290): "They [i.e., the people of Israel – E.K.] did not know how it happened that the *glory of YHVH* descended among them, how the *fire of YHVH consumes* their sacrifices, how they heard the Lord's address to them, and how everything that happened to them took place with respect to those things that [human] intellects can{not} concede to as possible were it not for eyewitness perception (*al-ʿiyān*) and the direct sense testimony (*wa-l-mušāhadah*) [they saw], which cannot be rejected."
61 See Abrahamov, *Islamic Theology: Traditionalism and Rationalism*, 69 n. 14.

senses (*bi-l-ʿiyān*, *bi-l-mušāhadah*). Subsequently, many of those witnesses, each on his own, report the event to others who did not witness it. Further still, the same report is transmitted from one generation to the next by a large number of reporters in many separate chains of transmission, each of which is independent of the others.[62] The epistemological assumption underpinning the certainty of *tawātur* is that the many witnesses to the original event and the many separate chains of transmission by which the report of it is transmitted from one individual to another and from one generation to another preclude the possibility of distortion or falsification of that knowledge conveyed in that report.[63] As I have noted, while the matter of the doctrine of rationalist awareness concerns the extraction of new knowledge from the knowledge of the senses, the doctrine of traditionalist Muslim awareness is opposed to any addition to what the witnesses to the event experienced with their senses. As a consequence, *tawātur* does not integrate any intellectual consideration requiring the use of the rules of logical inference. When the (evidentiary) choices of knowledge are validated by *tawātur*, the knowledge immediately and spontaneously becomes fixed in the recipient's consciousness, making it independent of the conditions of the rules of logic.[64] The rabbi's claim at the end of his statement in I, 25, according to which the epistemological status of knowledge received through "concurrent tradition" (*tawātur*) is equal to the epistemological status of the "eyewitness perception" (*ʿiyān*) of the witness to the reported event (*al-tawātur alaḏī huwa ka-l-ʿiyān*), is a claim that is congruent with the traditionalist Muslim approach, according to which the acceptance of knowledge with *tawātur* status about tradition from the prophet of Islam is equal to that of direct sense experience. Epistemologically, there is no difference. Through *tawātur*, the recipient of the tradition is in direct contact with the prophet, parallel to the direct connection of the witnesses who were near him and who transmitted their testimony of his words and deeds.[65] This concluding assertion Halevi has the rabbi voice at the end of I, 25,

62 Arent Jan Wensinck and Wolfhart P. Heinrichs, "*Mutawātir*," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, vol. 7, ed. Clifford Edmund Bosworth, Emeri van Donzel, Wolfhart P. Heinrichs, and Charles Pellat (Leiden: Brill, 1993): 781–82; Gautier H.A. Juynboll, "*Tawātur*," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, vol. 10, ed. Peri Bearman, Theirry Bianquis, Clifford Edmund Bosworth, Emeri van Donzel, and Wolfhart P. Heinrichs (Leiden: Brill, 2000): 381–82.

63 Binyamin Abrahamov, "Necessary Knowledge in Islamic Theology," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 20, no. 1 (1993): 22 n. 15; Zysow, *The Economy of Certainty*, 7–17. At several other points in *The Kuzari*, Halevi refers to this same epistemological assumption while using additional terms that were typical in the above-mentioned traditionalist Muslim discourse: conspiracy (*iṣṭilāḥ*) and collusion in forgery (*tawāṭuʾ*). See I, 48; III, 24, 31, 39 (188, ll. 27–28 = Bashir, 391), 41 (192, ll. 10–11 = Bashir, 395), 73 (220, l. 17 = Bashir, 428), IV, 3 (242, l. 22 = Bashir, 441), 11 (252, l. 13 = Bashir, 463). See also the discussion in Krinis, "The Arabic Background of the *Kuzari*," 49.

64 Al-Ġazālī, Halevi's famous older contemporary, explained *tawātur* in this manner. See Bernard Weiss, "Knowledge of the Past: The Theory of *Tawātur* According to Ghazālī," *Studia Islamica* 61 (1985): 92. See also Nasser, *The Transmission of the Variant Readings of the Qurʾān*, 65–76.

which is repeated at the end of V, 14, is a clear indication that an epistemology that is unique to the worldview of traditionalist Islam forms the foundation of the dialogue in I, 11–25.[66]

From a fideist point of view, the use of scepticism – in its classical version, that of non-assent – in the overall manoeuvre of I, 11–25 allows Halevi to maintain God's general-universal attributes. He thereby avoids falling into an extreme version of fideism, one that tends to invalidate any assumption upheld by the dogmatic rationalists. On the one hand, his sceptical non-assent enables Halevi to deny the certainty of God's general-universal attributes insofar as they rely on dogmatic rationalistic arguments such as the "argument from design" (I, 20). On the other hand, the same sceptical non-assent enables Halevi to restore those same attributes: because sceptical non-assent does not invalidate any argument (insofar as it does not validate it either), it does not prevent Halevi, the moderate fideist, from re-establishing those general-universal attributes on a given arational epistemological basis as secondary and subordinate to the particular attributes (I, 21–25).

To conclude the discussion in this sub-chapter, I would like to emphasise Halevi's originality in his conflation of traditionalist Islamic epistemology with fideist scepticism in I, 11–25. In their *summae theologicae*, the two most important rabbinic *mutakallimūn*, Dāwūd al-Muqammaṣ (*fl.* first half of the ninth century) and Saʿadia Gaon, stressed the issue of the reliability of tradition by incorporating some of the assumptions and terms that were prevalent in the traditional Islamic epistemological framework. Yet for both writers, tradition is defined as knowledge based upon revelation as recorded and transmitted in Scripture. The aim of al-Muqammaṣ's and Saʿadia's adaptations of this epistemological framework is to secure the reliability of God's revelation to the Hebrew prophets (first and foremost to Moses) against the Muslim anti-Jewish (and anti-Christian) accusations of the falsification (*taḥrīf*) of God's revelation in the Jewish tradition of the Scripture (i.e., the Hebrew Bible). In this framework, which is closely related to the genre of the "signs of prophecy" (*aʿlām/dalʾāil al-nubuwwah*) typical of the Arabic culture of this period, the complementary condition for "eyewitness perception" (*ʿiyān*) is not "concurrent tradition" (*tawātur*), but rather immunity from conspiracy to falsification (*tawāṭūʾ*) in the process of documenting the revelation in the Scripture.[67] Thus, the centrality of orality in the transmission of revelatory events and contents forms a cornerstone of the Islamic traditionalist worldview and is accepted and adapted by Halevi in I, 11–25.

65 Zysow, *The Economy of Certainty*, 15.

66 For further discussion, see chapter 4 below.

67 Immunity from conspiracy to falsification or collusion in forgery (*tawāṭūʾ*) serves as one of the conditions or characteristics of "concurrent tradition" (*tawātur*). See Pavel Pavlovitch, "Ḥadīth," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, THREE*, ed. Kate Fleet, Gudrun Krämer, Denis Matringe, John Nawas, and Everett Rowson (consulted online on 06 February 2020. http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_ei3_COM_30163), sec. 7.1.1.

However, it is of negligible importance in the adaptations of the traditional approach in al-Muqammaṣ's and Saʿadia's *summae*.[68] Another notable Jewish *mutakallim*, Samuel Ben Ḥofni Gaon (d. 1013), did present an elaborate discussion of the concept of "concurrent tradition" (*tawātur*). He did so as part of his effort to develop a rabbinic science of "the principles of jurisprudence" (*uṣūl al-fiqh*). In Samuel Ben Ḥofni Gaon's case, this development went hand in hand with his anti-Karaite polemic.[69] Yet these cases are in accordance with the rationalistic *Muʿtazilite kalām*'s usage of the traditionalist framework: in al-Muqammaṣ's and Saʿadia's cases, the direction is that of the genre of the "signs of prophecy"; in Samuel Ben Ḥofni Gaon's case, it is that of the science of "the principles of jurisprudence" (*uṣūl al-fiqh*). Halevi's case is altogether different. The insertion of components of fideist scepticism into I, 11–25 enabled Halevi to turn the traditionalist framework against the rationalistic *Muʿtazilite* assumption regarding the compatibility of knowledge acquired through human intellectual inquiry and the knowledge acquired through revelation and the transmission of tradition.[70]

B *The Kuzari* I, 67

I devoted the previous sub-chapter of this study to a discussion of the appearance of sceptical motifs in *The Kuzari* by analysing all of the dialogue in I, 11–25. By contrast, in the current sub-chapter, I shall focus on a single section: the rabbi's statement in I, 67, which constitutes a conclusion and summary of another section of dialogue between the rabbi and the Khazar king beginning with the rabbi's statements in I, 43. To this end, I must first say a few words about the contents and development of the dialogue in I, 43–67 and how it relates to the contents of I, 67, the focus of this sub-chapter of the study.

At the heart of the dialogue in I, 43–67 is the Arabic term *taʾrīḫ*, a word with different denotations: one refers to the date, a particular point in time, another to the enumeration of time from a certain starting point, and a third refers to the chronological or historical span of time. In the exchange that develops between the rabbi and the Khazar king in I, 43–44, Halevi uses the semantic field between two of the

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68 Dāwud al-Muqammiṣ, *Dāwud ibn Marwān al-Muqammiṣ's Twenty Chapters ('Ishrūn Maqāla')*, ed. and trans. Sarah Stroumsa (Leiden: Brill, 1989), 262–65; Saʿadia Gaon, *al-Muḫtār fī al-amānāt wa-l-iʿtiqādāt*, 130–31 (= *The Book of Beliefs and Opinions*, 156–57). See the discussion in Stroumsa, *Freethinkers of Medieval Islam*, 22–36 (especially 27, 33–34).

69 Sklare, *Samuel Ben Ḥofni Gaon and His Cultural World*, 158–63. We also find Halevi utilising traditionalist terms and patterns in his anti-Karaite polemic in the third part of *The Kuzari*. See Lobel, *Between Mysticism and Philosophy*, 56–58, 60–69; Krinis, "The Arabic Background of the *Kuzari*," 50–52.

70 For further discussion, see chapter 4 below.

above-mentioned meanings of the word *taʾrīḫ*. In the concluding sentence of I, 43, the rabbi speaks of the chronology [of the human race] from Adam onward (*wa-l-taʾrīḫ min Ādam ilā halumma ǧarā*). Here, it seems correct to read *taʾrīḫ* as referring to history and its events, given the overall context of the rabbi's words in this section, which concern historical events and aspects of the development of humanity since the inception of time, as known to the people of Israel through the words of the prophet (i.e., Moses). The Khazar king's response in I, 44 – "It would be extraordinary if you had a reliable date (*taʾrīḫ mutaḥaqqaq*) for the creation of the world" – shifts the readers to another meaning of *taʾrīḫ* and the issue that is going to be the focus of the discussions between the Khazar king and the rabbi in the dialogue in I, 43–67: the issue of the specific enumeration of time from a certain starting point, which forms the reckoning of time in the Jewish tradition, and the reliability of this reckoning.

The epistemological foundation for the dialogue in I, 43–67 is generally the same as the foundation for the rabbi's statements in I, 11, which was the starting point of the dialogue in I, 11–25 discussed above. This is an epistemology that is typical of Muslim traditionalism, at whose core is the concept of reporting (*ḫabar*, pl. *aḫbār*) and the conditions for word-of-mouth transmission. This epistemological foundation links two meanings of *taʾrīḫ*, that of the date of the beginning of the world (i.e., how long the world had existed) and that of historical events. The classical works of the early Muslim historiographical tradition began with the creation of the world and Adam as their starting point and continued with a description of historical events in chronological order up to the author's own time.[71] In this Muslim historiographical tradition, a common genre was patterned in correlation with the accepted form of the oral tradition of Muslim literature; that is, a form consisting of reports (*aḫbār*) passed on from transmitter to transmitter as stand-alone units of separate, independent items, each of which was devoted to one particular historical episode.[72]

From the starting point of the connection between these two meanings of *taʾrīḫ* and the traditionalist Muslim epistemology that characterises it, the debate in this section of the dialogue moves towards an issue that is also of great relevance from the dogmatic rationalist perspective. This is a clash of two contradictory claims about the origin of the world: the claim that the world has always existed and is

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71 The rabbi's closing remark in I, 43 (22, l. 4 = Bashir, 179), "as well as the chronology [of the human race] from Adam onward (*wa-l-taʾrīḫ min Ādam ilā halumma ǧarā*)," resembles the framework of the Muslim historiographical tradition.

72 See Franz Rosenthal, *A History of Muslim Historiography*, 2nd rev. ed. (Leiden: Brill, 1968), 66–71; Fred McGraw Donner, *Narratives of Islamic Origins: The Beginnings of Islamic Historical Writing* (Princeton: Darwin Press, 1998), 255–60.

eternal, a claim known as the claim of eternity *a parte ante* (*qidam*),[73] versus the claim that God created the world *ex nihilo* at the point when time and its counting began. This claim was known as the claim of innovation (*ḥadaṯ*). In I, 60, the dialogue shifts to the eternity-versus-innovation issue when the Khazar king asks the rabbi, as someone defending the Jewish chronology of the world, about "what is reported (*mā yuḫbar*) in the name of the people of India to the effect that they have historical relics and buildings that they determine to be a million years old?" When it is the Khazar king's turn to speak again in I, 62, he continues to press the rabbi on the issue, this time from the philosophers' point of view, saying "they have reached agreement on the eternity of the world *a parte post* (*al-azaliyyah*) as well as its eternity *a parte ante* (*wa-l-qidam*)." In his next statement in I, 64, the Khazar king assumes a more focused approach, identifying the eternity claim not only with philosophers in general, but also with Aristotle in particular, the philosopher *par excellence* in the rationalist tradition of Arabic culture. Responding to the Khazar king's comment on Aristotle in I, 65, the rabbi says that Aristotle "in his rational deliberations, decided in favour of the claim of eternity by means of his thinking alone" (*rağaḥ qiyāsātahu al-qāʾilah bi-l-qidam bi-muğarrad fikrihi*). Later in the same section, the rabbi complains that Aristotle focused his intellectual inquiry on proving the claim of eternity, thus inevitably neglecting to study the opposite claim of innovation. This criticism implies an underlying assumption identified with sceptical intellectual inquiry according to which it is possible and necessary to provide proofs of all the conflicting claims on the issue at hand. Just as it is possible to focus intellectual efforts to establish one claim, so is it possible to focus them on other contradictory claims. In his response in I, 66, the Khazar king wants to know if the rabbi can present a demonstrative proof (*al-burhān*) that would enable one to assent (*tarğīḥ*) to one of the opposite arguments concerning the origin of the world. This request for an assent offers the rabbi the opportunity to provide what Halevi considers to be the summarising and concluding answer to the debate:

> The sage said: Who, indeed, could provide us with the demonstration (*al-burhān*) on this question (*al-masʾalah*)? God forbid that the Law should teach something that repudiates [the testimony of] eyewitness perception (*ʿiyānan*) or [the conclusion of] a demonstration (*burhānan*)! However, it does report miracles and the disruption of the customary workings [of things] (*bi-muʿizāt wa-ḫarq ʿādāt*) by the creation of [entirely new] substances (*bi-iḫtirāʿ aʿyān*) or by turning one substance into another (*qalb ʿayn ilā ʿayn*) to furnish proof for the [existence of the] Creator of the world (*muḫtariʿ al-ʿālam*) and His power to do whatever He wishes, whenever He wishes. The question (*masʾalat*) of the [world's] eternity *a parte ante* (*al-qidam*) and of [its] innovation (*al-ḥadaṯ*) is profound (*ġāmiḍah*), and the proofs [in favour] of the two counter-arguments are equipollent/equivalent (*wa-dalāʾil al-ḥuğğatayin mutakāfiʾah*). In that case, then, the tradition (*al-naql*) from *Adam*, *Noah*, and *Moses*, peace be upon them, based on prophecy,

73 A claim which can be distinguished from the claim that the world will continue to exist for ever (eternity *a parte post*).

> which is more trustworthy than reasoning (*al-qiyās*), tips the balance in favour of [its] innovation (*yuraǧiḥu al-ḥadaṯ*). But even if (*wa-baʿda an*)[74] an adherent of the Law (*al-mutašarriʿ*) is forced to concede and acknowledge the existence of prime matter (*hayūlā qadīma*) and many worlds prior to this world, this should not count as a deficiency in his belief (*laysa fī ḏalika maṭʿan fī iʿtiqādihi*) [as long as he holds] that this world came into new existence (*ḥādiṯ*) at a specific time in the past (*munḏu muddah muḥaṣṣalah*) and that its first human inhabitants (*wa-awwal nāsuhu*) were *Adam* and *Noah* (var. *Adam* and *Eve*). [I, 67][75]

The rabbi's words are notable for their density and complexity. This is, in fact, one of the most problematic passages in *The Kuzari*. Scholars have found it difficult to parse and have proposed different, even contradictory explanations for it. I shall hereby present my own attempt to provide an understanding of it. It differs from previous explanations in that it sees the sceptical component as a key to understanding Halevi's intention in the words he has the rabbi speak.

The rabbi begins with a question: "Who, indeed, could provide us with the demonstration (*al-burhān*) on this question (*al-masʾalah*)?" The question (*al-masʾalah*) is unspecified here, being elucidated only later on: "The question (*masʾalat*) of the [world's] eternity in the past (*al-qidam*) and of [its] innovation (*al-ḥadaṯ*)." The rabbi is answering the question the Khazar king posed in the previous section, which included the request for a demonstrative proof (*al-burhān*) allowing for an assent (*tarǧīḥ*) and the settlement of the issue. The question that the rabbi posits in response to the Khazar king's query is rhetorical. In the discussion of the rabbi's words in I, 15 above, I noted the double meaning of the term *burhān*: it can mean a sign, in the sense of a concrete miraculous occurrence, but it can also mean an intellectual proof of the highest order of logic. The two meanings of *burhān* relate to two separate epistemological channels: in the sense of a miraculous occurrence, *burhān* relates to the recognition of an eyewitness perception (*ʿiyān*), whereas *burhān* in the sense of logical proof relates to abstract intellectual cognition. The formulation of the opening question in I, 67 as a rhetorical question hints at the answer: no one can provide demonstrative intellectual proof (*burhān*) that provides assent (*tarǧīḥ*) to one of the positions in the question of the origin of the world. In other words, the rabbi's opening statement in I, 67, phrased as a rhetorical question, hints at the sceptical answer to this particular question which he will explicitly

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74 See Joshua Blau, *Dictionary of Mediaeval Judaeo-Arabic Texts* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem: The Academy of the Hebrew Language – The Israeli Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 2006), 45 (s.v. *baʿda*).

75 See, in this context, Daniel J. Lasker, "Adam and Eve or Adam and Noah? Judaeo-Arabic and Hebrew Versions of the Same Books," in *Pesher Nahum: Texts and Studies in Jewish History and Literature from Antiquity through the Middle Ages Presented to Norman (Nahum) Golb*, ed. Joel L. Kraemer and Michael G. Wechsler (Chicago: Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 2012), 141–48.

declare further on: it is impossible to provide demonstrative proof for either the eternity or the innovation of the world.

The major Judeo-Arabic writers distinguished between three sources of human cognition: the senses (*ḥawāss*), the intellect (*al-ʿaql*), and "a faithful tradition/report and truthful transmission" (*al-ḫabar al-ṣādiq wa-l-naql al-ṣaḥīḥ*). This division can be traced back to Saʿadia Gaon's *The Book of Beliefs and Opinions* ([*al-Muḫtār fī*] *al-amānāt wa-l-iʿtiqādāt*), a model of dogmatic rationalism. But Saʿadia spoke of four sources, the third of which he called "necessary knowledge" (*ʿilm al-ḍarūriyyāt*).[76] The more relevant formulation relating to the three-part division above appears in Baḥya ibn Paqudah's *The Book of Direction to the Duties of the Heart* (*Kitāb al-hidāyah ilā farāʾiḍ al-qulūb*)[77] and forms the framework for the rabbi's inquiry into the origin of the world in I, 67. The inquiry begins by examining the two epistemologies related to the word *burhān* – the experience of the senses and the cognition of the mind – and only then arrives at the third source of knowledge, that of tradition.

Unlike the answer embedded in the rhetorical question Halevi formulates at the outset of the rabbi's words in I, 67, the declaration he makes immediately thereafter – "God forbid that the Law should teach something that repudiates [the testimony of] eyewitness perception (*ʿiyānan*) or [the conclusion of] a demonstration (*burhānan*)" – leaves an immediate impression of a dogmatic rationalist line. According to this widespread approach, the opinions expressed in the Torah, including the innovation of the world, are corroborated by sources of human cognition.[78] However, as mentioned earlier in our discussion of *The Kuzari* I, 11–25, while rationalists of Saʿadia Gaon's type recognise the legitimacy of only one type of rationalism – the dogmatic kind – Halevi recognises the legitimacy of an additional form of rationalism: the sceptical kind.[79] As I demonstrate below, the rabbi's remonstration – "God forbid" – must be read not in a dogmatic rationalist context, but in a sceptical rationalist one.

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76 Saʿadia Gaon, *al-Muḫtār fī al-amānāt wa-l-iʿtiqādāt*, 14–15 (= *The Book of Beliefs and Opinions*, 16–18).

77 Baḥya ibn Paqudah, *Kitāb al-hidāyah ilā farāʾiḍ al-qulūb*, 82–83 (=*The Book of Direction to the Duties of the Heart*, 141).

78 See, for example, Saʿadia Gaon, *al-Muḫtār fī al-amānāt wa-l-iʿtiqādāt*, 24–25 (= *The Book of Beliefs and Opinions*, 27–28).

79 Saʿadia Gaon did have what seems to be a vague idea regarding one of classical scepticism's main tenets. We can adduce this from his fierce criticism of "the school [of those who espouse] suspension" (*maḏhab al-wuqūf*). The term *wuqūf* and his derivations stand here, as well as in some other instances in Arabic and Judeo-Arabic literature, for the basic sceptical notion of the "suspension of judgment" (*epochē*). See Saʿadia Gaon, *al-Muḫtār fī al-amānāt wa-l-iʿtiqādāt*, 69–71 (= *The Book of Beliefs and Opinions*, 80–82). See also Heck, *Skepticism in Classical Islam*, 30, 38; Crone, *Islam, the Ancient Near East and Varieties of Godlessness*, 125; Stern, *The Matter and Form of Maimonides'* Guide, 85 n. 18.

The rabbi first addresses the part of his assertion, which says that the Torah's claim about the innovation of the world is not denied by human eyewitness perception (*ʿiyānan*). Continuing on this point, the rabbi speaks of the "miracles (*muʿǧizāt*) and the disruption of the customary workings [of things] (*muʿǧizāt wa-ḫarq ʿādāt*) by the creation of [entirely new] substances (*bi-iḫtirāʿ aʿyān*) or by turning one substance into another (*qalb ʿayn ilā ʿayn*) to furnish proof for the [existence of the] Creator of the world (*muḫtariʿ al-ʿālam*)." In Halevi's thought, the Arabic terminology based on the verb *iḫtaraʿ*, which appears twice in this section (*bi-iḫtirāʿ aʿyān*, *muḫtariʿ al-ʿālam*), is closely related to creation *ex nihilo* and the concept of innovation (*al-ḥadaṯ*).[80] In Saʿadia Gaon's introduction to his discussion of the origin of the world, God's miracles – signs and [miraculous] demonstrations (*bi-l-āyāt wa-l-barāhīn*), as he calls them – are considered to be decisive proof of the Torah's claim that the world was created (as well as of all the other claims in the Torah).[81] The situation for Halevi is different because of the special importance he attributes, both here and elsewhere, to the criterion of eyewitness perception (*ʿiyān*) as something belonging to a separate arational epistemological order.[82] From this perspective, there is an essential difference between the innovation of the world and miracles: while miracles can be accessed by the channel receiving direct sense experience, the innovation of the world cannot.[83] This is why the rabbi, in I, 67, cannot satisfy the request he has the Khazar king make in I, 66 on the basis of miracles. Thus, for Halevi, miracles are corroboration for the Torah's claim of the innovation of the world, but not decisive proof of it.

Halevi now proceeds to the second source of knowledge of human cognition – the intellect – in which assent to one position is attained on the basis of demonstrative proof (*al-burhān*). When the rabbi speaks of this source, the congruence with the sceptical method surfaces. The rabbi's statement – "The question (*masʾalat*) of the [world's] eternity *a parte ante* (*al-qidam*) and of [its] innovation (*al-ḥadaṯ*) is profound (*ġāmiḍah*), and the proofs [in favour] of the two counter-arguments are

80 See I, 8 (12, ll. 25–28 = Bashir, 167–68); 91 (42, ll. 13–17 = Bashir, 205); V, 14 (324, ll. 25–28 = Bashir, 535).

81 Saʿadia Gaon, *The Book of Beliefs and Opinions*, 40 (= *al-Muḫtār fī al-amānāt wa-l-iʿtiqādāt*, 35): "Furthermore thou hast over (*tarağğuḥ*) them the advantage of being in possession of signs and [miraculous] demonstrations (*bi-l-ayāt wa-l-barāhīn*) that have been established for thee [as trustworthy]."

82 See the discussion in the previous sub-chapter.

83 Saʿadia Gaon had already dealt with the impossibility of there having been an eyewitness account of the innovation of the world (*ʿiyān*) in *The Book of Beliefs and Opinions*, 38 (= *al-Muḫtār fī al-amānāt wa-l-iʿtiqādāt*, 33):"The author of the book said: 'This treatise [titled: *Concerning the Belief That all Things Were Created* – E.K.] starts out with the preliminary observation that whoever ventures into it is seeking [light on] something that has never been beheld with human eyes nor been perceived by the senses (*lam yaqaʿu ʿalaihi al-ʿiyān wa-lā adraktuhu al-ḥawāss*), but can nevertheless ascertain by means of rational inferences (*yarūmu iṯbātahu min ṭarīq al-istidlāl).*"

equipollent/equivalent (*wa-dalāʾil al-ḥuǧǧatayin mutakāfʾiah*)" – is the most conspicuous evidence in all of *The Kuzari* of Halevi's familiarity with sceptical terminology. The beginning of the statement – "The question of the [world's] eternity *a parte ante* (*al-qidam*) and of [its] innovation is profound (*ġāmiḍah*)" – is an entrée to classical scepticism, a way of thought that stresses the difficulties facing anyone attempting to deal with theoretical questions.[84] Accordingly, sceptical thinkers often point to the quality of rashness – *propeteia* – as being typical of the method of argument used by their dogmatic rivals.[85] The dogmatic thinkers' tendencies to prefer one claim over others and to take a side on any given issue is considered frivolous by the sceptical thinkers, given the difficulties that these questions pose. The end of the rabbi's speech – "the proofs [in favour] of the two counter-arguments are equipollent/equivalent" (*wa-dalāʾil al-ḥuǧǧatayin mutakāfiʾah*) – brings us directly to the heart of classical scepticism. Here, Halevi also inserts a variation on a fundamental concept of sceptical thought, the most prominent concept (and one of only a few) to have received a clear and consistent translation in Arabic literature of the classical Islamic period: *isostheneia* (the equipollence/equivalence of counter-arguments), rendered in Arabic literature as *takāfuʾ al-adillah*.[86]

As for the historical background of the rabbi's statement, it is especially important to point to its similarity, both in content and in formulation, to the claim which, in Arabic culture, was recognised as having been made by Galen, the famous Hellenistic physician and writer. In his writing, Galen argued a great deal with sceptics and medical schools that applied the sceptical approach to the practice of medicine.[87] At the same time, in several places, Galen himself adopted a sceptical approach to the question of the world's innovation or eternity.[88] The importance of these facts is linked to the possibility that Galen, many of whose voluminous medi-

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84 In other places in the book, derivations of the Arabic verb *ġ.m.ḍ* appear in the context of issues that are either inaccessible or very difficult to understand. See I, 91 (42, l. 13 = Bashir, 205); IV, 25 (274, l. 12 = Bashir, 490); 31 (292, l. 22 = Bashir, 510); V, 21 (353, l. 18 = Bashir, 562).

85 See Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines of Scepticism*, index, s.v. "rashness, Dogmatic" (246); Cicero, *On Academic Scepticism*, glossary, s.v. "rashness" (141). See also Richard H. Popkin and José R. Maia Neto, eds., *Skepticism: An Anthology* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2007), 23.

86 Perlmann, "Ibn Ḥazm on the Equivalence of Proofs"; Van Ess, "Skepticism in Islamic Religious Thought," 90; Kraemer, "About the Arabic Sceptical Philosophy," 212; Kraemer, *Humanism in the Renaissance of Islam*, 15, 180–81, 189–91; Heck, *Skepticism in Classical Islam*, 14–15, 75–81, 197–98; Crone, *Islam, the Ancient Near East and Varieties of Godlessness*, 126. While "equipollence of counter-arguments" is the translation used for the Greek term *isostheneia* by scholars of Hellenistic thought, scholars of Arabic thought translate the Arabic term *takāfuʾ al-adillah* as "equivalence of counter-arguments."

87 See De Lacy, "Galen's Response to Skepticism."

88 De Lacy, 304; Barnes, *The Toils of Scepticism*, 4–5.

cal and philosophical tracts were translated into Arabic,[89] served as a channel whereby those familiar with Arabic culture were exposed to the opinions of the Hellenistic sceptics. In his commentary on Aristotle's *Topics*, al-Fārābī (d. 950) noted the connection between Aristotle's discussion of the difficulty posed by a question such as the world's innovation or eternity (*Topics* 104b) and Galen's comments on the same.[90] In this context, al-Fārābī polemically argued that Galen's own failure to reach a demonstrative proof in this question was the reason why he had argued for the equipollence/equivalence of the counter-arguments in this case.[91] Unlike al-Fārābī, al-Ġazālī, in *The Incoherence of the Philosophers* (*Tahāfut al-falāsifah*), notes the possibility that Galen arrived at the state of non-assent regarding the innovation/eternity question not because of his lack of intellectual capacity, but because the question itself lies outside the scope of the intellect's grasp.[92] Halevi, who was a physician by trade, was familiar with Galen's scientific works, which had been translated into Arabic, and he mentions him and a few of his works and opinions in *The Kuzari*.[93] All of the above would indicate that it is very possible that Halevi was either directly or indirectly relying on Galen in his sceptical assessment of the equipollence/equivalence of counter-arguments in the question of the world's eternity or innovation, which he places in the rabbi's mouth in I, 67.

From the apologetic perspective, whose starting point would be the rabbi's earlier declaration "God forbid that the Law should teach something that repudiates [the testimony of] eyewitness perception (*ʿiyānan*) or [the conclusion of] a demonstration (*burhānan*)," we see that the defence Halevi chose to give the Torah – which, according to him, maintains the world's innovation – does not rely on the dogmatic rationalist approach. A detailed example of the way in which a dogmatic rationalist would tackle this issue may be found in the first chapter of Saʿadia Gaon's dogmatic work *The Book of Beliefs and Opinions*, where the author defends

89 See Véronique Boudon-Millo, "Galen," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, THREE*, ed. Kate Fleet, Gudrun Krämer, Denis Matringe, John Nawas, and Everett Rowson (consulted online on 06 February 2020. http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_ei3_COM_27365).

90 Georges Vajda, "A propos d'une citation non identifiée d'al-Fārābī dans le 'Guide des Egarés,'" *Journal Asiatique* 253 (1965): 43–50. Vajda, who located and identified al-Fārābī's commentary, also recognised it as the source for Maimonides's citation in *The Guide of the Perplexed* II, 15.

91 "Therefore, because Galen the physician failed in achieving a demonstrative proof for this certain issue, he assumed there is no demonstrative proof for it, and that [the different] proofs related to it are equipollent" (*ẓanna innahu lā burhān ʿalayhi wa-inna al-barāhīn fīhi mutakāfiʾah*). See Vajda, "A propos d'une citation non identifiée d'al-Fārābī dans le 'Guide des Egarés,'" 48.

92 Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, *The Incoherence of the Philosophers*, trans. Michael E. Marmura (Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1998), 12 (Arabic and English). See also Frank Griffel, "*Taqlīd* of the Philosophers: Al-Ghazālī's Initial Accusation in the *Tahāfut*," in *Ideas, Images, and Methods of Portrayal: Insights into Classical Arabic Literature and Islam*, ed. Sebastian Günther (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 291.

93 IV, 31 (288, l. 6 = Bashir, 404); V, 8 (= Bashir, 517); 21 (354, ll. 4–6 = Bashir, 562).

the opinion that the world was innovated as a claim asserted by the Torah using the apodictic mode of argumentation; namely, using proofs that he considered to be decisive for the innovation argument. Later in the chapter, Saʿadia Gaon refutes all variations of the opposite claim of the world's eternity. Unlike that approach, Halevi's concise argumentation defending the rationalism of the *ex nihilo* claim in I, 67 is aligned with the classical sceptical approach, according to which, as a result of being equipollent, the innovation argument has, rationally speaking, an identical status to the eternity argument. The possibility that the innovation argument is true holds, though not because its veracity has been demonstratively proven, but rather because it remains undetermined by the competing eternity argument and has therefore also not been refuted.

In defending the rational status of the innovation of the world in the spirit of sceptical rationalism by declaring the rationality of non-assent to any conflicted position instead of defending it apodictically as dogmatic rationalists would, Halevi placed himself in an essentially different position from the dominant stance in Judeo-Arabic thought. In the aftermath of Saʿadia Gaon, the apodictic mode of argumentation was also adopted by Andalusian Jewish writers who were contemporaries of Halevi, including Baḥya ibn Paqudah and Joseph ibn Ṣaddiq (d. 1149).[94] This position provided unequivocal backing for the human intellect's ability to provide decisive proofs in favour of the claim that the world was created *ex nihilo*, which simultaneously also served to refute the claim of the world's eternity. The statement Halevi has the rabbi voice regarding the equipollence of proofs on the eternity-versus-innovation question is meant, with one terse, carefully considered expression, to land a stunning blow on the optimistic climate of Judeo-Arabic dogmatic rationalism that preceded the author's era. This dogmatic rationalism generally sought to find the cornerstone for its theological method precisely in such intellectual proofs for the innovation of the world. Thus, by undermining this cornerstone, Halevi was in fact undermining the entire theological structure built upon it. In doing so, he anticipated Maimonides, who, two generations later, would turn the claim of a lack of decisive proofs in the eternity-versus-innovation question (a claim which he explicitly linked to Galen via al-Fārābī)[95] into the focus of his discussion of the issue in his *Guide of the Perplexed*.[96]

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94 Baḥya ibn Paqudah, *Kitāb al-hidāyah ilā farāʾiḍ al-qulūb*, 52–58 (= *The Book of Direction to the Duties of the Heart*, 116–21); Joseph ibn Ṣaddiq, *The Microcosm of Joseph Ibn Ṣaddiq*, ed. Saul Horovitz, trans. Jacob Haberman (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2003), 48–49 (Hebrew text), 111–12 (English text).

95 Maimonides, *Dalālat al-ḥāʾirīn* II, 15 (203, l. 27–204, l. 2) (= *The Guide of the Perplexed*, 292).

96 Maimonides, *Dalālat al-ḥāʾirīn* I, 71 (124, ll. 19–21); II, 16 (204, ll. 12–19); II, 22 (223, l. 22–224, l. 7); II, 25 (230, ll. 20–24) (= *The Guide of the Perplexed*, 180, 293, 320, 330). See Sara Klein-Braslavy, "Maimonides's Interpretation of the Verb 'Bara' and the Creation of the World" [Hebrew], *Daʿat* 16 (1986): 43–48, 53–55. See also the discussion in the next chapter.

From the second source of human knowledge, the intellect, Halevi transitions to the third – tradition (*al-naql*):

> In that case, then, the tradition (*al-naql*) from *Adam*, *Noah*, and *Moses*, peace be upon them, based on prophecy, which is more trustworthy than reasoning (*al-qiyās*), tips the balance in favour of [its] innovation (*yuraǧǧiḥu al-ḥadaṯ*).

This assertion – that the issue under discussion is to be settled by tradition based on prophecy – bears an explicit fideist message. With this fideist judgment, stressing the superiority of tradition over reasoning, Halevi sets his approach apart from the common approach in the Judeo-Arabic dogmatic rationalism of his time. The latter championed a harmonistic approach whereby tradition backs and supports the findings of reasoning and intellectual inquiry, and vice versa. The rabbi's words in I, 67 make it clear that of the three sources of knowledge he mentions in this paragraph – namely, proofs from miracles, proofs from reasoning, and proofs from tradition – in this case, he considers the decisive source of cognition in the theological question at stake to be tradition (*al-naql*): the transmission of reports about the event by those who experienced it first-hand through their senses in a chain of oral history. In the case at hand, the transmission started with Adam and continued through other transmitters, including Noah and Moses.

The message we may elicit from the rabbi's statement regarding the decisive role reserved for tradition in determining the question of the world's innovation versus its eternity makes it suitable to serve as the rabbi's final concluding statement in this affair. It seems that the answer to the Khazar king's request for assent (*tarǧīḥ*) in I, 66 has finally been satisfied. But instead of ending here, the rabbi continues and adds the following clarification to this seemingly decisive message:

> But even if an adherent of the Law (*al-mutašarriʿ*) is forced to concede and acknowledge the existence of prime matter (*hayūlā qadīma*) and many worlds prior to this world, this should not count as a deficiency in his belief (*laysa fī ḏalika maṭʿan fī iʿtiqādihi*) [as long as he holds] that this world came into new existence at a specific time in the past and that its first human inhabitants (*wa-awwal nāsuhu*) were *Adam* and *Noah* (var. *Adam* and *Eve*).

The rabbi's clarification seems to remove much of the sting from his earlier words on the decisive role reserved for tradition. The difficulty in understanding what he is getting at here and in bringing these words into line with his previous statement lies in the meaning of the term "came into new existence" (*ḥādiṯ*). According to Saʿadia Gaon's approach, which greatly influenced Judeo-Arabic thought, "new existence" in the sense of God's innovation of the contents of the world necessarily implied creation *ex nihilo*. To quote Saʿadia: "Our Lord, exalted be He, made it known to us that all things were created (*muḥdiṯah*), and that He had created them out of nothing (*aḥdaṯahā lā min šayʾ*). Thus Scripture says: *In the beginning God cre-*

ated the heaven and the earth (Gen. 1:1)."[97] According to this standard understanding, it is impossible to agree with what the rabbi says here; that is, that it does not constitute a flaw in a fundamental tenet of belief *(iʿtiqād)* of "an adherent of the Law" (*al-mutašarriʿ*) if he only partially adheres to the meaning of the term "came into new existence" (*ḥādiṯ*), in a way that incorporates an assumption of eternity into the concept of innovation, even though this eternity is not consisted with the best-known philosophical sense to which the Khazar king referred earlier in I, 62. From the perspective of a rationalist theological understanding *à la* Saʿadia Gaon, any stance that does not include an unequivocal recognition of creation *ex nihilo* represents a major flaw in the beliefs of that "adherent of the Law."

However, even in this case, as in others, Halevi shows himself to be conceptually independent, paving his own way when it comes to the phrase "innovation," a way that significantly differs from the understanding of Saʿadia Gaon and the Jewish dogmatic rationalists who followed in his wake. The creation of the world, in the sense Halevi gives it, means "that this world came into new existence (*ḥādiṯ*) at a specific time in the past and that its first human inhabitants (*wa-awwal nāsuhu*) were *Adam* and *Noah* (var. *Adam* and *Eve*)." This original definition Halevi provides via the rabbi is notable for the fact that its chronological aspect overshadows its ontological-cosmological one. In the standard definition of "came into new existence," that of the world having been created *ex nihilo*, the ontological-cosmological aspect is essential, whereas in the rabbi's definition – one that tolerates the possibility of the existence of a prior substance and/or previous worlds – the ontological-cosmological aspect loses its essential core status. In this definition, the centre of gravity is shifted to the stance whereby the world "came into existence at a specific time in the past (*ḥādiṯ munḏu muddah muḥaṣṣalah*)" – that is, in accordance with the reckoning of years in the traditional Jewish sources – and "that its first human inhabitants (*wa-awwal nāsuhu*) were Adam and Noah"; that is, the figures the rabbi mentioned earlier in the section as having played a key role in the transmission of the tradition (*al-naql*) reaching to Moses. From a broader perspective, we see that the rabbi's definition at the end of I, 67 is an apt conclusion and summary of the dialogue between the rabbi and the Kuzari in I, 43–67, because with this definition of "came into new existence," the rabbi returns the discussion to his central issue of this section: that of the chronology and reckoning of years (*taʾrīḫ*) in the Jewish tradition and its reliability.

The novel definition of "came into new existence" with which Halevi concludes the rabbi's words in I, 67 sheds light on the meaning of the rabbi's previous declaration about the decisive role reserved for tradition (*al-naql*) in the context of the innovation/eternity debate. The kind of decisive role that the rabbi mentioned is valid

97 See Saʿadia Gaon, *al-Muḫtār fī al-amānāt wa-l-iʿtiqādāt*, 35 (= *The Book of Beliefs and Opinions*, 40).

only for the chronological definition presented in his subsequent statement and is an assent equivalent to a decision in favour of the veracity of the reckoning of years in the Jewish tradition.[98] At the same time, this assent does not apply to the ontological-cosmological definition of "came into new existence" *ex nihilo*. Consequently, an assent that is dependent on tradition rules out only one particular understanding of eternality, one whose chronological aspect contradicts the chronological characterisation of the reckoning of years in the Jewish tradition. Through the words he places in the rabbi's mouth at the end of I, 67, Halevi is willing to accommodate some versions of the eternity argument, such as the one assuming the existence of a prime matter, whose assumptions do not necessarily lead to a clash with the fundamental assumptions of Jewish chronology. However, he cannot show a similar flexibility towards the version of eternity espoused by *falsafah*, which denies innovation before "a specific time in the past" and also the existence of "first human inhabitants" (i.e., the biblical *Adam* and *Noah* [var. *Adam* and *Eve*]). This is the version of eternity that Halevi put into the mouth of the philosophers' spokesperson who presented his view to the king in I, 1: "In fact, He did not create man at all because the world is eternal; and man has never ceased coming into being out of a man before him."[99]

Various statements in *The Kuzari* would seem to indicate that Halevi himself tended towards the *ex nihilo* view, seeing it as a most proper and desirable opinion.[100] Thus, his willingness to compromise with some other positions at the end of I, 67 implies that even though the *ex nihilo* understanding of the world's innovation is correct and desirable, it is not, in Halevi's approach, a core tenet of Jewish belief. This is backed by the rabbi's last words in I, 67 and the connection Halevi makes between the "adherent of the Law" (*al-mutašarriʿ*) and what should be regarded as

98 From the context in I, 67, it seems that it is the component of prophecy mentioned here ("the tradition from *Adam*, *Noah*, and *Moses*, peace be upon them, based on prophecy") that safeguards the veracity of the tradition of the chronology of the world. However, elsewhere in *The Kuzari*, both in I, 47 and I, 95, Halevi makes it clear that the veracity of this chronology derives from the special status of its transmitters, the "unique individuals" (*afrād*).

99 I, 1 (4, ll. 5–6 = Bashir, 154). See also V, 14 (324, l. 20–21 = Bashir, 535). Compare with the rabbi's words at the end of I, 61, where the universal chronology reflected in the *Book of the Nabatean Agriculture* (*Kitāb al-falāḥah al-nabaṭiyyah*) is rejected on the grounds that it specifies the names of people who were *Adam*'s predecessors.

100 See IV, 3 (228, l. 24 = Bashir, 436): "This confirms for him that He is the one who created the world after its [prior] non-existence"; V, 14 (324, ll. 24–28 = Bashir, 535): "As for the opinion of the Law, it is that God created the world as it is, with its animals and plants fully formed so that there is no need for the pre-existence of simple elements and the formation of compounds. By affirming the complete innovation of the world every difficulty becomes easy [to resolve]. Moreover, every impossibility can be removed, if you were to imagine that this world did not exist and then came to be through God's wish, at the time He wished and in the manner He wished." See also I, 91 (42, ll. 13–18 = Bashir, 205); V, 18 (332, ll. 7–27 = Bashir, 542–43).

a core tenet (*iʿtiqādihi*) of one such "adherent of the Law." The "adherent of the Law" – in this case, an adherent of the Mosaic Law[101] – is bound by the *credo* of his religion. The fact Halevi states here that it is possible for an "adherent of the Law" to accept the existence of a prime matter or that other worlds preceded this one and that "this should not count as a deficiency in his belief" (*laysa fī ḏalika maṭʿan fī iʿtiqādihi*) teaches us that from his perspective, the belief in the world's innovation *ex nihilo* is not a core tenet of the Jewish *credo*, one that is incumbent upon a Jewish "adherent of the Law" without any exceptions. By contrast, a binding belief that does reach the level of a core tenet is the belief in the chronological facts "that this world came into new existence at a specific time in the past and that its first human inhabitants (*wa-awwal nāsuhu*) were *Adam* and *Noah*."

The conclusion that Halevi draws at the end of I, 67 that belief in the world's innovation *ex nihilo* is excluded from the Jewish *credo* is completely in keeping with the course of the dialogue in I, 11–25 analysed above. Innovation *ex nihilo* – that is, the innovation of the world in the ontological-cosmological sense – cannot be directly apprehended by the human senses and therefore fails the criterion of eyewitness perception (*ʿiyān*) which the rabbi introduced in I, 11–25 as the fundamental epistemological criterion upon which the core tenets of the Jewish *credo* rest. By contrast, belief in innovation in the chronological sense – that is, "the belief that this world came into new existence at a specific time in the past and that its first human inhabitants were Adam and Noah" – *does* meet the fundamental epistemological criterion of eyewitness perception (*ʿiyān*). This direct sense experience is then transmitted in a chain of transmitters from those who directly experienced the innovation of the world (i.e., Adam and Noah), being, in a sense, each in his own era, its "first human inhabitants (*awwal nāsuhu*)."[102] Thus, this core tenet dovetails

101 This can be adduced from the fact that the tradition (*al-naql*) to which the rabbi is referring here is a tradition that goes as far as Moses ("the tradition from *Adam*, Noah, and Moses").

102 Consider the earlier exchange between the rabbi and the Khazar king in the same section of dialogue (I, 43–67): "The sage said: Have you heard of a nation that diverges from the well-known week, which begins with Sunday and ends with the Sabbath? Is it possible, then, that the inhabitants of China could agree with the inhabitants of the western islands on that [seven-day week] without a [common] beginning as well as meeting together and [reaching] an agreement? The Khazar said: That [kind of common institution] is possible only with the agreement of everyone. But this is unlikely, unless all people are descendants of Adam, or descendants of Noah, or of someone else. Then, the [seven-day] week would be transmitted, according to them, from their [common] ancestor. The sage said: This is what I meant. Furthermore, men in the East and the West agree on [the mathematical importance of] the number ten. What peculiar feature prompts their stopping at ten, if not the fact that it was taken from a [common] beginning?" (I, 57–59). Halevi's arguments in I, 57–59 about the universal usage of the seven-day week and the decimal system are in line with his argument in I, 67. All of them are directed to establish the innovation of the world in the sense of Adam and Noah's position as the "first human inhabitants."

with the second and complementary criterion that Halevi posited in I, 25, that of trustworthy tradition.[103]

In Halevi's approach, the description of God in I, 25 as "the Creator of the world" (*ḫāliq al-ʿālam*) is certainly correct and true, yet he did not make it in the rabbi's *credo* in I, 11. In I, 25, he also explained why this description was not included when God introduced Himself in the first of the ten commandments. Those articulations explain why the belief in creation *ex nihilo*, despite the fact that it is true and correct, is not obligatory for an "adherent of the Law" as a core tenet of belief *(iʿtiqād)*. Halevi uses the same arguments and the same theological innovation in both I, 11–25 and I, 67. In both discussions, this daring innovation relies on Halevi's acceptance of a sceptical distinction which dogmatic rationalists, bound by the search for determination, are incapable of accepting. In both discussions, Halevi uses the unique sceptical rationale of non-assent as a tactical tool for uprooting the pretensions of dogmatism from certain key principles that the dogmatic rationalists viewed as Judaism's most intrinsic doctrines. As part of the discussion in I, 67, Halevi's tactical use of sceptical rationalism helps him to place creation *ex nihilo* in a sort of midway position: this opinion has not been refuted by the counter-argument of the world's eternity, allowing the Jewish believer to point to its rationalism, even though it does not meet the sensual epistemological criteria that would make it into a core tenet of belief, making it absolutely binding on a Jewish "adherent of the Law."[104]

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103 The absence of a tenet concerning the reliability of the Jewish chronology and reckoning of years (*taʾrīḫ*) from the rabbi's *credo* in I, 11 can be explained (from an epistemological point of view) by the fact that it is backed by the transmission of only one chain of transmitters and not by the concurrent transmission (*tawātur*) of many chains of transmitters required by the rabbi in I, 25. However (as already noted), the rabbi's assertions in I, 47, and I, 95 (22, ll. 10–18; 44, ll. 11–19 = Bashir, 181–81; 208–9) gives the impression that the reliability of the Jewish chronology and reckoning of years is guaranteed by the fact that each of its transmitters belongs to the chosen unique individuals (*afrād*) of the early historical eras.

104 The failure of previous scholars to fully address the nuances in Judah Halevi's treatment of the question at hand in I, 67, nuances that included the *ad hoc* implementation of the sceptical version of rationalism, has yielded misinterpretations such as the two conflicting interpretations by David Kaufmann and David Neumark. These interpretations are both built on the incorrect assumption that Halevi is dogmatically committed to one of the two positions under discussion in I, 67: either he is committed to the position of the innovation of the world *ex nihilo* (as Kaufmann interprets it) or he is committed to the position of the existence of prime matter (as Neumark interprets it). The possibility that Halevi avoids the trap of being dogmatically committed to one of those conflicting positions by incorporating a sceptical stance was left unnoted by those two scholars (as well as by many others). See David Kaufmann, *Studies in the Hebrew Literature of the Middle Ages*, trans. Israel Eldad (Jerusalem: Mossad ha-Rav Kook, 1962), 208–11 [Hebrew]; David Neumark, *Judah Hallevi's Philosophy in Its Principles* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1908), 24–25.

Finally, when we turn to the Khazar king's immediate reaction to the rabbi's discussion of the question of the world's innovation versus its eternity, we find it to be very illuminated:

> The Khazar said: These persuasive arguments (*al-ḥuǧaǧ al-muqniʿah*) are enough for me on the subject [for now]. If my companionship with you should last, I will assign you the task of presenting me with arguments that are conclusive (*al-ḥuǧaǧ al-qāṭiʿah*). [I, 68]

Above, we saw that in the dialogue between the Khazar king and the rabbi in I, 11–25, the insertion of the sceptical exposition of the issue under discussion there (the argument from design) serves as a turning point in the discussion between the two interlocutors. This is particularly striking because in this part of the dialogue, the sceptical exposition was spelt out by the Khazar king (I, 20) and met with tacit approval from the rabbi (I, 21). On the other hand, in the course of the discussion between these two interlocutors, when they turn to the question of the world's innovation or eternity, the sceptical argumentation is articulated by the rabbi. In this case, the Khazar king finds himself unable to internalise it. His expectation that he will later receive "arguments that are conclusive" (*al-ḥuǧaǧ al-qāṭiʿah*) from the rabbi in I, 68 stands as a stark misunderstanding or rejection of the rabbi's straightforward sceptical clarification that no such conclusive arguments can be adduced on behalf of either side of the innovation/eternity conundrum. Therefore, when it comes to the Khazar king (as an imaginative representative of Halevi's real interlocutors in his circle of friends and associates), we can locate two very different scenarios regarding his ability to absorb and accept the sceptical mode of argumentation. The first is the optimistic scenario in I, 11–25, where the king takes an active role in the process of deliberation aiming to shake up dogmatic rationalistic assumptions with the aid of sceptical rationalistic ones. The second is the pessimistic (albeit more realistic) scenario in which this kind of process fails as a result of the Khazar king's inability to acknowledge the emancipatory power of sceptical argumentation to awake him from his "dogmatic slumber." The Khazar king's response in the opening of I, 68 exposes him as someone who is still very much immersed in the state of "dogmatic slumber," unable to awake in spite of the rabbi exposing him to a sceptical argument about the issue at hand.

C *The Kuzari* V, 14

The passage near the end of V, 14, the focus of my discussion now,[105] is one of the most important passages of *The Kuzari* in terms of understanding the fideist trend that characterises Halevi's thought throughout this work, a general feature that I

105 V, 14 (328, ll. 5–26 = Bashir, 538–39).

discussed in the previous chapter of this study. The passage is unique in that it provides excellent support for the fact that despite the significant changes Halevi made to these sceptical motifs, their origins in the world of ancient Hellenistic philosophy are more explicit here than in any other part in *The Kuzari*.

At the beginning of the passage under discussion, Halevi briefly restates one of the conspicuous assertions of his thought, according to which our world – as God created and organised it – contains an unchangeable and unbridgeable essential ontological difference between humans who are “flesh and blood” (*al-bašar*) and those who are of a level called “the choicest of creation” (*ṣafwat al-ḫalq*). In addition to their normal human nature, the chosen ones were also given a supra-human nature. This supra-human nature is what allows the existence of a special channel of communication between God and the chosen. The historical revelations of this special channel of communication exclusively occurred in the sphere of the history of the chosen group – the people of Israel – and in the sphere of unique individuals (*afrād*) in the era that preceded the appearance of the people of Israel. The revelations from this channel apply to the individuals receiving this divine inspiration, first and foremost the prophets. These individuals arose from the ranks of the people of Israel, a nation whose individuals were all granted a supra-human nature *in potentia*. Halevi presents this assertion in detail at different points earlier in *The Kuzari*, especially in its first and second parts. Here, in a passage from the last part of the work, he repeats it in a concise, instructive manner:

> Surely, you have let yourself be deceived by corrupt imaginings and sought what your Creator did not make it possible for you [to grasp]. Neither was the ability to apprehend it by reasoning put within the natural disposition of flesh-and-blood (*ġarīzat al-bašar*). However, that [kind of ability] was put within the natural disposition of those who are chosen from among the choicest of creation (*ġarīzat al-muṣṭafīn min ṣafwat al-ḫalq*) in keeping with the conditions we have mentioned. They come to have those very {souls} that conceive of the world in its entirety. They see their Lord and His angels. They see one another, and they know one another’s innermost thoughts, just as it says, *I know it, too; be silent* (2 Kings 2:3, 5). [V, 14 (328, ll. 5–11 = Bashir, 538)]

In another study, I dealt extensively with the hierarchical-ontological claim to which Halevi briefly returns here.[106] For the current study, this claim is relevant in that it serves as an introduction and foundation for presenting the central fideist distinction in Halevi’s thought: the distinction between divine wisdom and human wisdom to which I alluded earlier. Focusing the discussion on this part of the rabbi’s statement in V, 14 allows me to add a clarification on this topic. Halevi’s fideism contains the unusual assertion that prophecy and divine inspiration are not fundamentally human phenomena. The prophets and the divinely inspired were those who were granted a supra-human nature from birth that is distinct to the chosen

106 Krinis, *God’s Chosen People* (especially 137–39, 169–70, 175–76, 295–96).

group (*al-ṣafwah*) and therefore, they cannot help but emerge from the ranks of this group. Accordingly, the rabbi, directly continuing his earlier speech on the hierarchical-ontological distinction between the chosen and the non-chosen, takes pains to stress the ontologically lower status of the philosophers (identified with the Hellenistic ethnic group) as ones who share "the natural disposition of flesh-and-blood" (*ġarīzat al-bašar*) compared to the elevated "natural disposition of those who are chosen from among the choicest of creation" (*ġarīzat al-muṣṭafin min ṣafwat al-ḫalq*), such as the prophets:

> We do not understand how that happens or by what means, except that it comes to us by way of prophecy. If the philosophers' knowledge regarding that was true, they would surely have attained it themselves, since they talk about souls and prophecy [a great deal], but they are like the rest of flesh-and-blood (*ka-sāʾir al-bašar*). To be sure, they have excelled in human wisdom (*bi-l-ḥikmah al-insāniyyah*), as Socrates used to say to the people of Athens, "O people! I do not deny your divine wisdom (*ḥikmatakum al-ilāhiyyah*); rather, I say that I am not conversant with it (*lastu aḥsunuhā*). On the other hand, I am wise with regard to human wisdom (*bi-ḥikmah insāniyyah*)." Actually, they should be excused because they took refuge in their reasoning due to the absence of prophecy and the divine light among them (*li-ʿadam al-nubuwwah wa-l-nūr al-ilāhī ʿindahum*). Even so, they brought the demonstrative sciences (*al-ʿulūm al-burhāniyyah*) to a [level of] perfection that cannot be surpassed, and in that respect they were unique. There is no difference [of opinion] between any two individuals concerning those sciences; but there is almost no agreement between any two individuals about what they undertook [to explain] beyond that with respect to [their divergent] opinions concerning metaphysics (*mā baʿd al-ṭabīʿah*) and, yes, concerning many things in physics (*al-ṭabīʿa*) as well. [V, 14 (328, ll. 11–21 = Bashir, 538–39)]

The transition from the introduction that Halevi places in the rabbi's mouth, based on the above-described hierarchical-ontological claim, to what follows in this passage is a transition from a claim that has absolutely nothing to do with a sceptical discourse to several further claims in which the classical sceptical discourse plays a central role.[107]

In terms of its sceptical background, in these lines, Halevi once again interweaves the argument about the lack of agreement among the philosophers. We have already seen him making this point in the opening dialogue between the rabbi and the Khazar king in I, 13. According to this classical sceptical claim of "dispute"

107 The two parts of this passage do not fit together convincingly. If, as emphasised in the first part of it, "divine wisdom" is restricted to those with the "natural disposition of those who are chosen from among the choicest of creation," how can it be ascribed to a non-chosen group such as the "people of Athens": the addressees of Socrates's speech here? One may agree with Leo Strauss that "Halevi noticed Socrates' irony" and that saying "that he does not grasp the divine wisdom of the people to whom he is talking […] is evidently a polite expression of his rejection of that wisdom." Yet when it comes to divine wisdom as Halevi perceives it – i.e., as a revelatory knowledge bestowed upon the chosen group – Halevi himself is far from being ironic. See Leo Strauss, *Persecution and the Art of Writing*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 107 n. 23.

or “disagreement” (*diaphônia*), the philosophers’ lack of agreement is a clear sign of their lack of knowledge: the absence of an agreement among those debating a certain issue reflects their inability to reach true knowledge of that issue.[108] In I, 13, the rabbi applies this claim to the philosophers who cannot agree “on a single action or a single belief” of a “syllogistic, governmental religion.” Moreover, in V, 14, the rabbi applies it to metaphysics (*mā baʿd al-ṭabīʿah*) as a scientific discipline in which “there is almost no agreement between any two individuals” (i.e., philosophers). Immediately afterwards, he also applies the claim of the lack of agreement among philosophers, though in a more reserved manner, to the discipline of physics (*al-ṭabīʿah*). Although he relies heavily on the sceptical claim of the philosophers’ lack of agreement, the rabbi’s manoeuver here does not reflect the global sceptical approach typical of the Academic and Pyrrhonian sceptics of antiquity. Beforehand, the rabbi invokes a non-sceptical claim that in “the demonstrative sciences” (*al-ʿulūm al-burhāniyya*) – that is, the disciplines the rabbi identifies with mathematics and logic (*al-riyāḍiyya wa-l-manṭiq*) at the start of V, 14[109] – there actually is agreement among the philosophers and scientists engaged in them (“There is no difference [of opinion] between any two individuals concerning those sciences”).

In this context, it is highly instructive to compare these statements with some statements made by the famous Hellenistic scientist Claudius Ptolemy in the introduction to the most important Hellenistic scientific treatise on astronomy, the *Almagest*:

> From all this we concluded, that the first two divisions of theoretical philosophy should rather be called guesswork than knowledge, theology because of its completely invisible and ungraspable nature, physics because of the unstable and unclear nature of matter; hence there is no hope that philosophers will ever be agreed about them; and that only mathematics can provide sure and unshakeable knowledge to its devotees, provided one approaches it rigorously.[110]

In its broad strokes, Halevi’s claim parallels that of Ptolemy. It is not inconceivable that he relied on the *Almagest* outright, either directly or indirectly through some mediating text.[111] In fact, it is highly likely that Halevi knew Ptolemy’s ideas and

108 Barnes, *The Toils of Scepticism*, 6.
109 V, 14 (322, ll. 22–25 = Bashir, 533–34).
110 Ptolemy, *Ptolemy’s Almagest*, trans. Gerald. J. Toomer (New York: Springer, 1984), 36.
111 Consider the rabbi’s immediate response to the Khazar king’s praise of the philosophers in V, 13 (322, ll. 22–25 = Bashir, 533–34): “This is exactly what I was afraid of concerning you – that you would let yourself be deceived and calmly accede to their opinions. After their demonstrations in the mathematical sciences and logic turned out to be sound, according to them, people willingly accepted everything they said about physics and metaphysics.” This response at the very beginning of V, 14 is in the spirit of al-Ġazālī’s critique of metaphysics. However, al-Ġazālī, unlike Halevi, treated physics as a largely valid science. See al-Ghazālī, *Deliverance from Error*, 65–66 (sec. 45–46); al-Ghazālī, *The Incoherence of the Philosophers*, 4. See also Griffel, “*Taqlīd* of the Philosophers,” 288–89, 290 n. 55.

used them, because the *Almagest* was one of the best-known and most common ancient texts in Arabic culture.[112] In the statements he voices through the rabbi in V, 14, Halevi follows the selective scepticism that Ptolemy articulated in the introduction to the *Almagest*. According to both authors, the lack of agreement among philosophers in matters of a field of cognition as ungraspable as metaphysics (the parallel to theology in Ptolemy) and in a somewhat clearer, though still difficult to grasp field such as physics is proof that these fields lie beyond the scope of human intellectual perception, whereas the mathematical fields lie within the grasp of the human mind. The main difference between the two authors is that for Ptolemy, this selective sceptical approach serves as a justification for focusing his scientific work on mathematics, which "can provide sure and unshakeable knowledge to its devotees." By contrast, for Halevi, the selective sceptical approach serves a very different purpose; namely, a fideist purpose that stresses that the superior knowledge that the philosophers include in the disciplines of metaphysics and physics falls outside of their intellectual scope "due to the absence of prophecy and the divine light among them" (*li-ʿadam al-nubuwwah wa-l-nūr al-ilāhī ʿindahum*). This knowledge falls within the scope of the "divine wisdom" attained by God's chosen, who merited prophecy and the divine light. Thus, according to Halevi, the knowledge that belongs to this realm of wisdom is not unavailable to mankind, as one might think when reading Ptolemy's thoughts on the matter. Mankind reaches this type of knowledge through the mediation of those prophets whose knowledge is a divinely inspired, non-intellectual knowledge. Elsewhere in *The Kuzari*, Halevi stresses this lesson, which, in his fideist approach, requires that one abandon "doubtful natural science" (*ʿilm ṭabīʿī maškūk*)[113] by means of an anecdote that he attributes to Plato:[114]

> Now Plato had already spoken [in this connection] about the prophet who lived at the time of King Marinus [reporting] that he told the philosopher who let himself be deceived by false hope about philosophy [the following] by means of a revelation from God: "You will not reach Me in this way, but only through those whom I have made intermediary between Myself and My creatures," meaning, the prophets and the true *nomos* [IV, 27 (282, l. 28–284, l. 3 = Bashir, 499)]

To the incisive claim he makes in V, 14 about the lack of agreement among philosophers in metaphysics and physics, the rabbi immediately adds a second claim explaining the formation of philosophical schools of thought, a phenomenon whose

112 On the reception of the *Almagest* in Arabic culture, see Paul Kunitzsch, "*Almagest*: Its Reception and Transmission in the Islamic World," in *Encyclopaedia of the History of Science, Technology, and Medicine in Non-Western Cultures*, ed. Helaine Seler, 2nd ed. (Dordrecht: Springer, 2008): 1:140–41.
113 IV, 27 (282, ll. 27–28 = Bashir, 499).
114 See Pines, "Shīʿite Terms and Conceptions," 236–39, for a parallel of this anecdote in the Pseudo-Platonic *Kitāb al-nawāmīs*.

existence would seem to require at least a measure of agreement among some of them:

> Even if you did find a group [of philosophers] agreeing on a single opinion, that is not due to an investigation [they conducted] and a conclusion at which their [collective] opinion arrived. On the contrary, the fact is that they are followers of one of the dialecticians (*al-mutakallimīn*) who engaged in such discussions, whom they follow in the way of imitation (*yuqallidūnahu*), like the followers of Pythagoras, the followers of Empedocles, the followers of Aristotle, the followers of Plato, and others, as well as the Stoics (*aṣḥāb al-miẓallah*), and the Peripatetics (*al-maššāʾīn*), namely, those who belong to the followers of Aristotle. [V, 14 (326, ll. 21–26 = Bashir, 539)]

Earlier in the dialogue of *The Kuzari*, in the conclusion to the long section IV, 25, Halevi had already had the rabbi say something similar, though more concise. The rabbi's previous statement points to the same explanation of the transition from a lack of agreement among the philosophers to the emergence of schools of philosophical thought:

> Beyond that, there is no agreement between any two of them, except for the imitators who subordinated themselves (*al-muqallidūn alaḏīna yuqallidūn*) to a single master, whether that be Empedocles, or Pythagoras, or Aristotle, or Plato, as well as numerous others besides them. Not one of them [fully] agrees with his fellow. [IV, 25 (282, ll. 11–14 = Bashir, 498)]

The way in which Halevi uses conjugations of the Arabic root *q.l.d.* in the second verbal form in these two segments to mean "imitation," "conformism," or "subordinating oneself to the opinion of" is reminiscent of a claim al-Ġazālī directs at contemporaneous adherents of philosophy in several places in his writings where he asserts that the successful apodictic foundation of the mathematical sciences on logical proofs has made such an impression on these adherents that it causes them to adopt the philosophers' opinions on metaphysics as well. However, they do this not through independent, unbiased intellectual inquiry, as rationalism would demand, but rather through *taqlīd*: blind reliance lacking examination or study.[115] This corrupt path taken by the adherents of philosophy prevents them from realising that when it comes to metaphysics, the knowledge that the philosophers purport to have lacks any of the demonstrative, apodictic foundations that they achieved in the mathematical sciences.[116] Al-Ġazālī's assertion here and the assertion that Halevi formulates in IV, 25 and V, 14 are similar both in terms of content and in their

115 For the background to Al-Ghazālī's approach to *taqlīd* in Ashʿarite theology, see Richard M. Frank, "Al-Ghazālī on *Taqlīd*: Scholars, Theologians and Philosophers," *Zeitschrift für Geschichte der Arabisch-Islamischen Wissenschaften* 7 (1991/92): 246 n. 76; Frank, "Knowledge and *Taqlīd*," 44 n. 19.

116 Al-Ghazālī, *Deliverance from Error*, 63–64 (sec. 38–39); Al-Ghazālī, *The Incoherence of the Philosophers*, 2–3, 8.

use of terminology based on the root *q.l.d.* At the same time, there is a striking difference between the two thinkers: Halevi uses the root *q.l.d.* to explain the emergence of ancient Hellenistic philosophical schools of thought, whereas al-Ġazālī uses it to explain why some of his contemporaries follow the philosophers' conclusions in the realm of metaphysics in general, without reference to divisions into schools.[117] Thus, al-Ġazālī's statements on *taqlīd* in the philosophical context lack the stress that is so central to the use Halevi makes of the word's root in the same context, the stress regarding the connection between the philosophers' disagreements and their groupings into schools of thought.[118]

In addition to the connection between the rabbi's words in the parallel segments of IV, 25 and V, 14 and the assertions of al-Ġazālī, it is necessary to note the connection between the rabbi's claims and the claims made by Cicero in his introduction to *Lucullus*, his major Academic sceptical dialogue. In a passage of this introduction, Cicero notes the advantages of the sceptics compared to the followers of the dogmatic philosophical methods. According to him, the sceptics are freer in their opinions than the dogmatics, because the sceptics, as people who always rely on their independent considerations, are exempt from the burden of obligation borne by the dogmatics to defend a set of positions imposed on them by someone else, that someone else being the founder or teacher of the school of thought to which they belong. Later on, Cicero provides a somewhat sociological explanation of the circumstances in which the dogmatic schools of thought came into being: at the outset of their intellectual path, people tend to be influenced by the doctrine and authority of the particular scholar that they happen to encounter first. From that stage onwards, they simply continue to subordinate themselves to that particular scholar and doctrine, without independently investigating any other opinions or positions.[119] With these claims, reflecting a sceptical, anti-dogmatic point of view, Cicero provides a polemical explanation for the existence of different philosophical schools that is quite similar to Halevi's polemical explanation embedded in the rabbi's statement on the matter. Both authors criticise the philosophers and their supporters for having aligned themselves with one school or another not as the result of a process of intellectual inquiry on their part, but simply as the result of their inclination to subordinate their own opinions to the authority of a figure representing one of these schools. Using this polemical explanation, Cicero seeks to highlight the advantage of the sceptical path. He describes the sceptics' conduct as consistent and rationalistic, which, unlike that of the dogmatists, does not negate the spirit of independent inquiry in the face of an obligation to the principles of the doctrine of a teacher or the founder of a school of thought. For Halevi, however, the same type

117 See the discussion below on Halevi's use of the device of historicisation in this context.
118 See Frank, "Al-Ghazālī on *Taqlīd*," 244–50; Griffel, "*Taqlīd* of the Philosophers."
119 Cicero, *On Academic Scepticism*, 6–7 (*Lucullus*, sec. 8–9).

of polemical explanation is meant to clarify that the groupings and agreements among philosophers and their supporters around consensual positions in physics and metaphysics do not constitute a counter-argument to the claim of the lack of agreement among philosophers that he noted earlier. Subsequently, it cannot provide authentication for the philosophers' claims in these fields. Their groupings do not constitute a full agreement of the kind found among the prophets, according to Halevi;[120] they are merely factional groupings around schools of thought. Furthermore, these groupings are, rationalistically speaking, the result of an invalid act of subordination to the authority of a teacher or the founder of a school lacking the basic rationalistic condition of independent thought or consideration. With this rationalistic claim, the criticism that Halevi levels against the philosophical schools of thought overlaps with the rationalistic claim that Cicero, the spokesman of scepticism, levels against them.

The third component of the passage of the rabbi's words in V, 14 under discussion that relates to Hellenistic scepticism is how the character of Socrates is introduced. The words attributed to Socrates – which also appear, with slight variations, in IV, 13 – are a paraphrase of a passage from Plato's *Apology* (20d–e).[121] In both places, Socrates's words support the fideist stance that Halevi's rabbi takes; namely, the stance according to which the most elevated fields of knowledge considered divine wisdom (*al-ʿilm al-ilāhī*) lie outside the scope of cognition of the philosophers, who, when addressing these fields, rely on "the way of reason" (*ṭarīq al-qiyās*).[122] The fideist component is stressed here by how Socrates distinguishes himself from

120 Concerning the prophets, see V, 14 (328, ll. 10–11 = Bashir, 538): "They see their Lord and His angels. They see one another, and they know one another's innermost thoughts, just as it says, *I know it, too; be silent* (2 Kings 2:3, 5)"; IV, 3 (238, ll. 22–26 = Bashir, 447): "Thus, it [i.e., the prophets' "inner eye" – E.K.] sees great and awesome forms, which point to realities about which there is no doubt; and the greatest proof for their reality is the agreement of that entire class, I mean, all of the prophets, about those forms. For in fact, they witness things that mutually attest to one another, just as we do with regard to the things we perceive with our [external] senses."

121 There are considerable similarities between the paraphrasing of Socrates's statement in al-Fārābī's *Book of Demonstration* (*Kitāb al-burhān*) and Halevi's two variations on it (especially the one in V, 14). Those similarities make it likely that al-Fārābī's paraphrase, or a source used by al-Fārābī, served as the source for Halevi's paraphrases. See the discussion in Yehuda Halper, "Socrates and Socratic Philosophy in Judah Halevi's *Kuzari*," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 107, no. 4 (2017): 466–68.

122 IV, 13 (254, ll. 4–9 = Bashir, 464–65): "However, even though [the philosophers] have gone this far [from the truth], they may nonetheless be excused because they were not in a position [to grasp] divine science except by way of reason, and this is what their reasoning has brought them to. Those among them who are fair-minded say to those who follow a revealed Law what Socrates said: 'O people, I do not deny this divine wisdom of yours. Rather, I say that I don't comprehend it. I am wise only in human wisdom.'"

the rest of the people of Athens as someone who remains within the scope of human wisdom without pretensions to the divine wisdom that they supposedly possess.[123] The Socrates of V, 14 differs from the other philosophers mentioned in the passage by not having founded or belonged to any school of thought. The fact that Socrates did not found a school is consistent with the humble, limited philosophical approach to which he was committed, according to the words attributed to him. Socrates, as someone who did not claim to have divine wisdom, avoided the path of the other Greek philosophers listed (Pythagoras, Empedocles, Aristotle, Plato, and the Stoics) who attempted to formulate systematic, orderly philosophies that included the higher fields of science; namely, physics and metaphysics. The impression created by the rabbi's statements in V, 14 is that Socrates, in his humble philosophical approach, kept his thought from becoming an authoritative pole of attraction for adherents and followers through whom he would have become the founder of a school. This would seem to indicate that Socrates is exempt from the charge aimed at the founders of the philosophical schools whose adherents follow them through imitation and self-subordination to their founders' authority instead of making their own way through independent thought.[124]

In the context of the Arabic culture in which Halevi lived and worked, his emphasis on the uniqueness of Socrates who, as a Greek philosopher, nonetheless steered clear of divine wisdom and did not found a school of thought, is quite striking and differs markedly from the common characterisation of Socrates as a philosopher in the Arabic literature of that era.[125] For example, al-Ġazālī included Socrates, along with Plato and Aristotle, among the philosophers whom he called the *al-ilāhīyun*, those philosophers who devoted a central part of their thought to the field of *al-ilāhīyat*, metaphysics,[126] and he also counts Socrates among those philosophers who founded schools of thought.[127] Halevi himself was aware that the rabbi's description of Socrates differed from the way he was usually seen in the rationalist philosophical discourse of his time. This is evident from the words he has the philosophers' representative speak in the first section of *The Kuzari*. This represen-

123 The emphasis on Socrates's dissociation from divine wisdom is more pronounced in the variation in IV, 13. In this variation, where the addressees are "those who follow a revealed Law" (*mutašarriʿiyn*), he professes: "I don't comprehend" divine wisdom (*lastu aḥṣiruhā*). In the variation in V, 14, where the addressees are "the people of Athens" (*ahl atīniyā*), Socrates is more reserved in his assessment regarding his connection to divine wisdom, explaining that he is "not conversant with it" (*lastu aḥsunuhā*).

124 Gabriel Danzig, "Socrates in Hellenistic and Medieval Jewish Literature, with Special Regard to Yehuda Hallevi's *Kuzari*," in *Socrates from Antiquity to the Enlightenment*, ed. Michael Trapp (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007): 156.

125 Ilai Alon, *Socrates in Medieval Arabic Literature* (Leiden: Brill; Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1991), 93–98, 103–11.

126 Al-Ghazālī, *The Incoherence of the Philosophers*, 2.

127 Al-Ghazālī, *Deliverance from Error*, 62–63 (sec. 33–34).

tative does not hesitate to include Socrates in the group of well-known Greek philosophers to whom he attributes a perfection that elevates them to the metaphysical level of the active intellect.[128]

An examination of the distance between the presentation of Socrates in Arabic philosophical literature and the description of him in the rabbi's words in V, 14 reveals a similarity to the understanding of the figure of Socrates in the Hellenistic school of Academic scepticism. Socrates was revered in the tradition of Academic sceptical thought. He was respected not as a sceptic,[129] but rather as an anti-dogmatic philosopher, in the sense of one who avoided presenting a systematic philosophical doctrine, opting instead to remain true to dialectical philosophising, avoiding determinations and ultimate conclusions on the issue under discussion.[130] In the tradition of Academic scepticism – and other traditions as well – Socrates was seen as a model philosopher for focusing on everyday ethical matters rather than on vague theoretical issues that were divorced from human cognition and inaccessible to the human mind, such as the nature of the supreme beings and other matters outside the scope of physics. Socrates thus distinguished himself from other philosophers who tended to preoccupy themselves with such questions.[131] The congruence between the way in which Socrates was held up as a model of a non-dogmatic philosopher in the Academic sceptical tradition and the way in which he is presented as such a model in the rabbi's words in V, 14 may not be absolute, but it is quite significant nonetheless. This partial but important congruence is especially striking given what I noted above regarding the very different image of Socrates fashioned in the Arabic literature of Halevi's era.

To conclude the discussion, it bears noting that in V, 14, Halevi uses one of his favourite literary devices, that of historicisation.[132] In the dialogical context, V, 14 is a polemic against dogmatic philosophical doctrine and its stance on the human soul and its purpose in life, a topic on which the rabbi expounds in V, 12. This doctrine belongs to none other than Abū ʿAlī ibn Sīnā (d. 1037), and the words in V, 12 are nothing but a paraphrase of many of Ibn Sīnā's statements on the topic in his

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128 I, 1 (6, ll. 5–9 = Bashir, 156). See Danzig, "Socrates in Hellenistic and Medieval Jewish Literature," 153; Halper, "Socrates and Socratic Philosophy," 448.

129 Cicero, *On Academic Scepticism*, 106 (*Academici Libri*, sec. 45).

130 Cicero, *On Academic Scepticism*, 72 and n. 191 (*Lucullus*, sec. 123), 92–93 (*Academici Libri*, sec. 16–17); Cicero, *On the Nature of the Gods*, 12–14 (I, 5). See Burnyeat, "Antipater and Self-Refutation," 293–99; Halper, "Socrates and Socratic Philosophy," 466.

131 Cicero, *On Academic Scepticism*, 92 (*Academici Libri*, sec. 15). See Anthony A. Long, "Socrates in Later Greek Philosophy," in *The Cambridge Companion to Socrates*, ed. Donald R. Morrison (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011): 358–60.

132 As already noted, the most conspicuous use of this device is the setting of the work's general plot in the eighth-century kingdom of Khazaria.

Compendium on the Soul (*al-Maqālah fī al-nafs*).[133] The intense polemical note in the rabbi's words against the philosophers in V, 14 – "they talk about souls and prophecy [a great deal], but they are like the rest of flesh-and-blood"[134] – is chiefly aimed at Ibn Sīnā, whose doctrines on these matters Halevi had the rabbi voice in V, 12, without attribution. The fact that immediately afterwards, in V, 14, Halevi speaks of Socrates and the Greek philosophers and their schools of thought in antiquity, who belonged to an era that had long since passed, is a clear example of historicisation, which serves as an important literary device in Halevi's discreet relation to his immediate circle of readers (which was more or less identical with his social circle). Here, Halevi means to provide those readers with an obvious hint concerning the balance of power between the adherents of dogmatic rationalism and their opponents: at the time when philosophy was flourishing in ancient Hellenistic culture, this type of dogmatism set the tone for and gave rise to many schools of thought, whereas its opponents, such as Socrates, were few and were considered atypical. Similarly, at the time when Halevi wrote *The Kuzari*, when rationalistic theology and philosophy were flourishing in Arabic culture, the dogmatic rationalist approach had the upper hand, whereas its opponents were few and were considered outliers.[135] As we shall see in our next chapter in this study, when it comes to the Judeo-Arabic culture of his era, Halevi played the role of a one-man opposition to the dominant dogmatic rationalist approach.

133 On this early work by Ibn Sīnā, see Dimitri Gutas, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition: Introduction to Reading Avicenna's Philosophical Works* (Leiden: Brill, 1988), 82, 171.
134 V, 14 (328, ll. 12–13 = Bashir, 538).
135 See Danzig, "Socrates in Hellenistic and Medieval Jewish Literature," 152.

Chapter 4 Judah Halevi's Fideistic Scepticism against the Backdrop of Developments in the Arabic Culture of His Time

From the analysis in the previous chapter, the trends of dogmatic rationalism in Arabic culture have emerged as the most relevant background to the appearance of sceptical manifestations in *The Kuzari*. Thus, it seems fitting to point to a general historical parallel between the circumstances under which scepticism appeared in Hellenistic antiquity and the circumstances under which sceptical manifestations emerged in Judah Halevi's thought. The Hellenistic sceptical trend formed in reaction to the establishment of the dogmatic rationalist schools, first and foremost the Stoic, Epicurean, and Aristotelian schools of thought in the fourth and third centuries BCE, while the sceptical manifestations in Halevi's thought are a response to and a means of countering the establishment of the dogmatic rationalist schools of Arabic culture, above all the *kalām* and *falsafah* schools. For Halevi himself, as a thinker and writer active in the late eleventh and first half of the twelfth centuries, a period when the Arabic variations of Neoplatonism and Aristotelianism were prevalent among Jewish and Muslim writers in al-Andalus, the challenge posed by dogmatic rationalism as processed by the *falsafah* trends was greater than that posed by the thought of the *kalām* trends.[1] In his works, Ibn Sīnā, active in the first decades of the eleventh century, presented a systematic philosophical synthesis that covered all scientific disciplines, including metaphysics, which he called "the divine sciences" (*al-ilāhiyāt*), which, theologically speaking, is the most significant. Ibn Sīnā's tremendous philosophical achievement made a very profound impression on Arabic rationalists in the following generations.[2] Ibn Sīnā's thought reverberates throughout *The Kuzari* more strongly than that of al-Fārābī, *falsafah*'s important representative in the generations preceding Ibn Sīnā's time.[3] In the specific context of Halevi as an Andalusian thinker, the thought of the contemporaneous Andalusian philosopher Abū Bakr ibn Bāǧǧah (d. 1139), the first important representative of *falsafah* in Andalusia, also left a significant imprint on *The Kuzari*.[4]

In addition to noting the general parallel of circumstances in which classical Hellenistic scepticism appeared and the appearance of scepticism in Halevi's thought, it is also necessary to discuss the specific historical circumstances under

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1 See the discussion in Krinis, "The Arabic Background of the *Kuzari*," 17–19.
2 See Dimitri Gutas, "The Heritage of Avicenna: The Golden Age of Arabic Philosophy, 1000–1350," in *Avicenna and His Heritage*, ed. Jules Janssens and Daniel De Smet (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2002), 81–97.
3 Krinis, "The Arabic Background of the *Kuzari*," 4–8.
4 Pines, "Shīʿite Terms and Conceptions," 210–17; Krinis, "The Arabic Background of the *Kuzari*," 8–11.

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which Halevi formulated his thought as a response to the dogmatic rationalism of his time. As Halevi was operating within the context of Arabic culture, it is necessary to consider the unique circumstances of the development of dogmatic rationalism in Judeo-Arabic thought. Early in the development of dogmatic rationalism in the Muslim-Arabic context, the representatives of Muslim rationalism were confronted by the representatives of Muslim traditionalism.[5] This confrontation formed an ideological anti-rationalist opposition to rationalist approaches from their very inception. The argument between the traditionalist and rationalist trends continued unabated throughout the classical Islamic period and beyond.[6] Compared to these circumstances, the conditions of the development of Judeo-Arabic thought are particularly striking, because the emergence and development of dogmatic rationalism in Judeo-Arabic culture was not accompanied by the parallel development of a traditionalist counter-option. All the Jewish thinkers working within Judeo-Arabic thought until Halevi's time – or at least those whose thought is known to us – were of some dogmatic rationalist orientation or another.[7]

This historical fact is important in the construction of Halevi's thought and clarifies Halevi's "splendid isolation" in the social and intellectual setting in which he operated.[8] Above, in the second chapter, I discussed one well-known ramification of Halevi's intellectual isolation: when he attempted to formulate a polemical response to dogmatic rationalism, he was inclined to explain his position to his colleagues and readers – all of whom were dogmatic rationalists – by using their own terms. In this discussion, I want to focus on another ramification of this situation. In his attempt to articulate a polemical response to dogmatic rationalism, Halevi did not have a convenient traditionalist or other ideological doctrine in the context of Judeo-Arabic thought at his disposal. In the context of Judeo-Arabic thought, Halevi's choice to present an ideological alternative to dogmatic rationalism was there-

5 For the definitions of traditionalism and rationalism in the context of the classical Islamic period, see Abrahamov, *Islamic Theology: Traditionalism and Rationalism*, ix–xi, 52–53.

6 Abrahamov, *Islamic Theology: Traditionalism and Rationalism*, chapters 3 and 5; Abramahov, "Scripturalist and Traditionalist Theology," in *The Oxford Handbook of Islamic Theology*, ed. Sabine Schmidtke (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016): 263–80.

7 It seems that the emergence of the counter-rationalist trend in Jewish thought was triggered by the polemics about Maimonides's writings from the end of the twelfth century onwards. In this context, it is interesting to note that one Jewish work of the era which displayed significant similarities with the traditionalist Muslim arguments was *Ketav Tamim* (*Honest Pamphlet*) by Moses Taku (*fl.* first half of the thirteenth century), who lived in central Europe, far from the centres of Islamic culture.

8 Halevi's "splendid isolation" within his circle of friends, fans, and associates was strikingly manifested in their response to his decision to immigrate to the Holy Land. From sections of *The Kuzari* such as II, 23–24 and V, 22–27, as well as from a few of his poems, we learn that Halevi's decision to travel to the Holy Land was considered incomprehensible by his friends and associates in the higher stratum of Andalusian Jewish society. See Gil and Fleischer, *Yehuda Ha-Levi and His Circle*, 199–257.

fore a pioneering endeavour. In doing so, Halevi could not build on precedents in Judeo-Arabic thought. No wonder, therefore, that his main sources of inspiration for formulating this alternative were rooted in non-Jewish Arabic thought. To follow on from the earlier discussion, where I indicated the Hellenistic sources that had been translated into Arabic from which Halevi could have extracted sceptical assertions to use in articulating his own alternative to the dominant dogmatic rationalist thought, I shall at this point address a complementary discussion of trends in Muslim-Arabic thought that are of particular relevance for the articulation of such an alternative.

As noted, the dominance of dogmatic rationalism in various formulations in Judeo-Arabic thought was more evident and obvious than in the parallel Muslim-Arabic thought. As a Judeo-Arabic thinker, Halevi, who sought to present an ideological alternative to the dominant trend, also made use of components of the traditionalist Muslim approach. In the earlier discussion about the dialogue in I, 11–25, I analysed Halevi's epistemological manoeuvre in this section of the text and his reliance on the traditionalist Muslim epistemological conceptualisation which is centred around the notion of reports (*aḫbār*) of the past, verifying these reports by relying on direct sense perception (*ʿiyān*) and also on concurrent tradition based on multiple chains of transmitters (*tawātur*). Later on, in the dialogue in I, 43–67, which centres on the veracity of the Jewish chronology (*taʾrīḫ*), he also relies on traditionalist Muslim epistemology. As noted, the section concludes with a reference to the oral tradition (*al-naql*) being decisive on the matter under discussion. Thus, we may identify an important contribution to *The Kuzari* from traditionalist Muslim thought when it comes to creating an alternative to the dogmatic rationalist approach. Halevi was not the first Jewish author to utilise traditionalist Muslim terms and patterns in a polemical context, yet he seems to have been the first of them to utilise them in an anti-rationalistic polemical context.[9] Halevi's use of the terminology and way of thinking that was typical of Muslim traditionalists in these sections allowed him to present a definition of knowledge based on the concept of reporting (*ḫabar*), which differs in essence from the concept of knowledge in dogmatic rationalism, especially that of *falsafah*.

In addition to using traditionalist Muslim terminology, which was generally distinct from the terminology of *falsafah*'s dogmatic rationalism, we also see Halevi, in his polemics against his philosophical opponents, arguing with them by using the terminology and way of thinking that was typical of rationalist thought. Two such manoeuvres are notable: first, disputing them using the rationalist approach that is unique to scepticism, which I analysed at length above, a productive way of creating the alternative that Halevi sought to present in *The Kuzari*. The major contribution here lies in the specific internal logic of sceptical rationalism; namely, in avoid-

9 See the discussion in chapter 3 above.

ing either the verification or the refutation of certain positions by the use of the "equipollence of counter-arguments" (*isostheneia*). During the dialogical exchanges in I, 11–25 and I, 66–67, Halevi makes tactical use of this logic as an alternative to the internal logic of dogmatic rationalism, in which assent, verification, and refutation serve as basic components. Second, Halevi disputes the dogmatic rationalism of *falsafah* by engaging in *ad hominem* (*ilzām*) arguments; namely, by tactically adopting his opponents' assumptions only to demonstrate how, further down the line, they fail the test of correlation between these assumptions and the conclusions they derive from them for issues with theological implications. In his *ad hominem* argumentation, Halevi relies to a considerable extent on al-Ġazālī's precedent in *The Incoherence of the Philosophers* (*Tahāfut al-falāsifah*), in which al-Ġazālī used this approach to broadly undermine the core claims of *falsafah*.[10] The *ad hominem* argumentation is essentially negative, making do with undermining one's opponent's stances; it provides nothing on which it is possible to construct an alternative.[11] Of interest in this regard is Halevi's attempt to append his negative assertions, which he posits against *falsafah*'s notion of emanation (most of which he borrowed from al-Ġazālī),[12] with his own unique positive non-sceptical theory, which revolves around the notion of "the divine order" (*al-amr al-ilāhī*) as an alternative to *falsafah*'s concept of emanation.[13]

In terms of presenting an alternative to dogmatic rationalism in general, and that of *falsafah* in particular, the most significant contribution Halevi found in al-Ġazālī's thought is related to fideism. Al-Ġazālī articulated this approach with help from the mystical Muslim Ṣūfī tradition and the terminology associated with it. Although al-Ġazālī was initially a student and then a teacher of dogmatic rationalism in the Ashʿarite school of *kalām*, he rediscovered – or reinvented – himself as a Ṣūfī mentor at a later stage of his spiritual development. The appearance of fideism in al-Ġazālī's thought is a function of his transition from an early stage of dogmatic rationalism to a later stage of Ṣūfism. Undergoing a mystical experience and describing it in Ṣūfī terms provided al-Ġazālī with an arationalist mystical foundation. In one of his late works, *The Deliverance from Error (al-Munqiḏ min al-ḍalāl)*, al-Ġazālī provided a concise and persuasive account of how attaining mystical experiences allowed him to reevaluate the various articulations of dogmatic rationalism in

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10 See al-Ġazālī's programmatic exposition regarding his use of this method in *The Incoherence of the Philosophers*, 9.

11 Ayman Shihadeh, "From al-Ghazālī to al-Rāzī: 6th/12th Century Developments in Muslim Philosophical Theology," *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 15 (2005): 147, 164. For the ancient Hellenistic sceptics, who adhered to global scepticism, this kind of negative *ad hominem* argument was a way of refraining from taking a position oneself. (I owe this observation to Josef Stern.)

12 Harry A. Wolfson, "Hallevi and Maimonides on Design, Chance and Necessity," *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 11 (1941): 112–17.

13 Davidson, "The Active Intellect in the *Cuzari*," 393–95.

both the *kalām* and the *falsafah* schools. Relying on mystical experiences, al-Ġazālī identified rationalism's limitations in terms of the knowledge of the divine, which are inherent to rationalism because of its essence; namely, as an approach which privileges human intellectual inquiry even when it comes to divine knowledge. In-depth knowledge of the divine, in the sense of a supra-sensory experience of God's presence and proximity, is possible only by means of the non-intellectual mystical experience of the prophets and Ṣūfī saints.[14] Halevi was deeply affected by al-Ġazālī's fideist message as primarily spelt out in *The Deliverance from Error* and how it denied dogmatic rationalism its pre-eminence in defining and attaining knowledge in the realm of belief in the name of the mystical experience and the Ṣūfī means of cognition characterising it.[15] As a result, the dialogue between the rabbi and the Khazar king throughout much of *The Kuzari*'s fourth book and in several places in the fifth, such as V, 14, is aimed at the experiential epistemological alternative and the supra-sensory mystical ways of cognition that typify it. In this case, too, the polemical sting of the presentation of an alternative is aimed at dogmatic rationalism, not only that of *falsafah*, but also that of *kalām*.[16]

We can therefore discern that at the epistemological level, the traditionalist approach and the mystical Ṣūfī approach as processed by al-Ġazālī served as the two main pillars which supported Halevi's anti-rationalist alternative in *The Kuzari*. Both of these Muslim traditions were historically important and influential in critiquing the dogmatic rationalist trends in Arabic culture.[17] It is therefore not surprising that Halevi found these particular Muslim traditions helpful for creating an alternative to dogmatic rationalism in Judeo-Arabic thought.

To conclude this chapter, it behoves us to compare the way that Halevi used the sceptical tradition with the way it was used by other Judeo-Arabic thinkers. At this point of the study, such a comparison can only be made with one thinker, whose connection to scepticism has been substantially studied: Maimonides, the most important thinker to emerge from Judeo-Arabic culture, who was active in the second half of the twelfth century, some decades after Halevi's death. For the sake of this

14 See al-Ghazālī, *Deliverance from Error*, 57–58 (sec. 15–16), 77–78 (sec. 80–83), 81–88 (sec. 94–124), 89 (sec. 141), 97 (sec. 153). See also Eric Ormsby, *Ghazali: The Revival of Islam* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2007), 104–5.

15 Lobel, *Between Mysticism and Philosophy*, 171–76.

16 See, for instance, the description of Abraham in IV, 17 and the explanation (discussed above) in V, 16 with the example of the inferiority of "people who read treatises on prosody and pay close attention to their poetic meter" compared with "the person who is naturally inclined to it, who 'tastes' the meter of the verses." See also the discussion in Lobel, *Between Mysticism and Philosophy*, 154–57, 173–74.

17 See, in this context, Abrahamov, *Islamic Theology: Traditionalism and Rationalism*, 19–27; Heck, *Skepticism in Classical Islam*, 194–97; Roger Arnaldez, "*Maʿrifa*," in *Encyclopedia of Islam, Second Edition*, vol. 6, ed. Clifford Edmund Bosworth, Emeri van Donzelm, and Charles Pellat (Leiden: Brill, 1991): 569–70.

comparison, I shall start by presenting some background about Maimonides and his philosophical development.

Early in his development, Maimonides's thinking was quite obviously affected by *falsafah*'s dogmatic rationalist approach. He only sought out scepticism at a later stage, when he wrote *The Guide of the Perplexed* (*Dalālat al-ḥāʾirīn*).[18] In his earlier years, Maimonides was the great dogmatic Jewish thinker whose first major composition, *The Commentary on the Mishnah* (*Šarḥ al-mišnah*), articulated what became the most influential version of the Jewish catechism: a list of thirteen dogmatic principles of the Jewish faith.[19] His second great composition, *Mishneh Torah* (*The Code of Maimonides*), is constructed according to the format of an apodictic code of law and as such is imbued with an overall dogmatisation that is completely at odds with the open and non-conclusive legal discourse of the Talmud. The early Maimonides of *The Commentary on the Mishnah* and *Mishneh Torah* is also the thinker who made the dramatic interpretation, in the spirit of dogmatic rationalism, of identifying *falsafah*'s physics and metaphysics with the Talmudic "work of Creation" (*maʿaśeh berešit*) and "work of the Chariot" (*maʿaśeh merkavah*) respectively.[20] With this highly original and controversial move, Maimonides bestowed the dogmatic seal of approval of the supreme scientific spheres of Aristotelian philosophy on two highly esoteric Jewish traditional themes. So, in Maimonides's case, his achievements as a codifier in *The Commentary on the Mishnah* and especially in *Mishneh Torah*, which made him the greatest codifier of Jewish law, went hand in hand with his position as the one who contributed more than any other to the dogmatisation of the Jewish faith. Hence, the possibility that a thinker with a strong predilection for dogmatism like Maimonides could have incorporated sceptical elements into his *Guide of the Perplexed* later in his life, as suggested by few scholars in the last generation, is both remarkable and fascinating.

Equally remarkable and notable is the fact that almost at the same time, this kind of unexpected development was taking place in the thought of Faḫr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 1210), a thinker whose centrality to Muslim-Arabic culture is comparable in some ways to Maimonides's place in Jewish literature in terms of reputation and influence. Al-Rāzī's thought is notable for its transition from rigid dogmatic rational-

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18 Halbertal, *Maimonides: Life and Thought*, 302.

19 Moses Maimonides, *Šarḥ al-mišnah*, ed. and trans. Yosef Kafiḥ (Jerusalem: Mossad ha-Rav Kook, 1963–68), 4:210–17 (Judeo-Arabic original and Hebrew translation); Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, vol. 1, *Sefer ha-Maddaʿ*, *Hilekhot Yesodei ha-Torah*, ed. Mordechai Dov Rabinowitz, chapters 1–4 (Jerusalem, Mossad ha-Rav Kook, 1993), 3–24.

20 *Šarḥ al-mišnah*, 2:377. The impact of Maimonides's catechism has been so profound that a condensed version of it is included in virtually every Jewish daily prayer book (*Siddur*). For the possible relation between Maimonides's catechism and the Almohad catechism (Maimonides lived under Almohad rule when he began work on his *Šarḥ al-mišnah*), see Sarah Stroumsa, "Was Maimonides an Almohad Thinker?" [Hebrew], in *Alei Asor*, 162–63.

ism in the spirit of Ashʿarite *kalām* in his early writings to the sceptical pessimism typical of his later works. For al-Rāzī, the transition seems to have been even more radical than the one experienced by Maimonides.[21] It seems quite certain that Faḫr al-Dīn al-Rāzī was a key figure in the development of scepticism in Arabic culture.[22] Further progress in this field, which might include a comparative study between al-Rāzī and Maimonides, is likely to advance our understanding of the manifestations of scepticism in this cultural realm.

As already noted above, the possibility that Maimonides embraced a sceptical approach in *The Guide of the Perplexed* has been most forcibly and thoroughly elaborated and analysed in the studies of Josef Stern. According to Stern, the starting point of scepticism in the *Guide of the Perplexed* is its emphasis on the basic datum that the human intellect is seated in materiality. This fact is a severe limitation on the intellect's ability to comprehend the purely intellectual beings, the separate intellects, let alone God, a supra-intellectual entity. In other words, the human intellect encounters its most constraining limits in understanding any entity from the metaphysical realms.[23] The problem is that the aspect of metaphysics that deals with God and the separate intellects is precisely what most intrigues those who are charged with using their intellects and who strive for intellectual perfection; namely, philosophers, those for whom the siren's song of metaphysics is strongest, a temptation they cannot withstand, even if this is also the very field in which their intellects – as is true of all humans, whose minds are mired in the material – are most limited.[24] Here is where the sceptical approach meets Maimonides. For him, the sceptical approach is a useful tool for making philosophers rein in ther impulse towards dogmatic philosophising in the field of metaphysics. The use of scepticism exposes the fact that the philosophers' pretensions of being able to present clear demonstrative proofs and to reach certain knowledge of metaphysics are lacking a real basis.[25] Maimonides's transition towards philosophical metaphysics in the *Guide of the Perplexed* – from the apodictic rationale of dogmatic philosophy to the

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21 Shihadeh, *The Teleological Ethics of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī*, 181–99; Shihadeh, "From al-Ghazālī to al-Rāzī," 163–77. One should note that Saul Horovitz was the first to point to Faḫr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's place in the context of the development of scepticism in Arabic literature in his pioneering studies from the beginning of the twentieth century. See Horovitz, "Der Einfluss der griechischen Skepsis," 10–13, 23, 29–30, 43–44, 46.

22 It seems that more than any other writer, it was al-Rāzī and his version of rationalism that provoked the monumental anti-rational response from Aḥmad ibn Taymiyyah (d. 1328) and served as a trigger for the inclusion of sceptical components in the thought of this prominent thinker. See, in this context, Shihadeh, *The Teleological Ethics of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī*, 198–99; Heck, *Skepticism in Classical Islam*, 17, 153–92.

23 Stern, *The Matter and Form of Maimonides'* Guide, 76–77, 80, 124–31, 334, 337.

24 Stern, 81–82, 86–89, 178–79, 186.

25 See, in this context, Sarah Stroumsa, *Maimonides in His World: Portrait of a Mediterranean Thinker* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 44–45, 137–38.

rationale of sceptical philosophy's non-assent and suspension of judgment – preserved for him the possibility of philosophising about metaphysical matters in light of his growing tendency in his later writings to make a pessimistic epistemological assessment of the human intellect's ability to reach certain knowledge on these matters.[26]

In the discussion of manifestations of scepticism in Halevi's thought earlier in this study, I examined the possibility that the writings of Galen and Ptolemy served as the conduit for selective sceptical stances from Hellenism to Arabic culture in general and *The Kuzari* in particular. In *The Guide of the Perplexed*, this is more than a probability, as Maimonides explicitly cites both Galen and Ptolemy in the long discussion devoted to the question of the world's eternity versus its innovation. These citations appear in contexts that are extremely relevant for the argument that Maimonides was forging a selective sceptical approach in his work. Maimonides quotes Galen's sceptical stance on the eternity-versus-innovation question in the context of the aforementioned dismissive appraisal of al-Fārābī's position, an appraisal that Maimonides does not share.[27] As for Ptolemy's *Almagest*, Maimonides quotes a section of it in *The Guide of the Perplexed* II, 24, a chapter of special significance for the forging of his scepticism. While the ideas from the *Almagest* are taken from the body of the book, they are congruent with the spirit of Ptolemy's abovementioned statement from the book's introduction speaking about his sceptical assessment of the human intellect's cognitive ability in the realm of ungraspable, "unstable and unclear" matters.[28]

If we subsequently compare section V, 14 of *The Kuzari* with the claims that Maimonides made in *The Guide of the Perplexed*, we will find that the assertion about the limitations of the human intellect in the realm of metaphysics is made in the context of both authors' mitigated use of scepticism.[29] However, while Halevi incorporates its use into a fideist framework in whose name he wished to demolish philosophical preoccupation with metaphysics as a legitimate science, Maimonides forgoes the fideist context. In adopting and applying this assertion, Maimonides's intention is not to deny the adherents of philosophy any intellectual investigation

26 Stern, *The Matter and Form of Maimonides'* Guide, 85–86, 90–96, 184–85, 189–90, 311.

27 Maimonides, *Dalālat al-ḥā'irīn*, II, 15 (203, l. 29–204, l. 2 = *The Guide of the Perplexed*, 292).

28 Maimonides, *Dalālat al-ḥā'irīn*, II, 24 (227, ll. 13–17 = *The Guide of the Perplexed*, 325). Maimonides's reference here can be found in Ptolemy, *Almagest*, 600.

29 For the characterisation of Maimonides's scepticism as mitigated, see Stern, *The Matter and Form of Maimonides'* Guide, 5–6, 132, 136–38, 146. Halevi's sceptical attitude, unlike that of Maimonides, expands beyond metaphysics to include fundamental components of Aristotelian physics, such as the doctrine of the four elements of the sub-lunar world (V, 14 [322, l. 25–324, l. 24]). Maimonides, on the other hand, more than once asserts the complete credibility of Aristotelian physics regarding the sub-lunar world. See Maimonides, *Dalālat al-ḥā'irīn*, II, 22 (223, ll. 17–19), II, 24 (228, ll. 15–16 = *The Guide of the Perplexed*, 319, 326).

of metaphysics. Rather, he uses the sceptical approach as a methodological tool to guide them in that investigation. In *The Guide of the Perplexed*, Maimonides presents Aristotle, the father figure of *falsafah*, as a model of the cautious scholar, taking a selective sceptical approach in all matters pertaining to metaphysics.[30] The Aristotle of *The Guide of the Perplexed*, the careful philosopher making sure not to cross the limits of intellectual cognition, is the counterpart to the figure of Socrates that Halevi sketches in *The Kuzari*.[31] But the two authors describe this intellectual caution in completely different terms. For Halevi, it is related to the distinction between "human wisdom" and "divine wisdom." Socrates's caution prevents him, as a philosopher, from attempting to go beyond the realm of "human wisdom" and infringing on the realm of "divine wisdom." According to him, the latter is closed to most humans, who are endowed only with their intellect, and only open to those who possess mystical, inspirational cognition. Maimonides's approach, which he projects onto Aristotle, emerges as the approach that is truest to the constant rationalist demand for inquiry – *skepsis* – in the spirit of the classical sceptical approach.[32] Maimonides avoids making a clear distinction, as Halevi does, between human and divine wisdom, thus leaving the question of whether intellectual inquiry into metaphysics is appropriate without a clear-cut answer. This non-assent attitude provides further legitimacy of the sceptical kind for the possibility of studying metaphysics; that is, its inquiry as an ongoing exercise. Aristotle's caution in *The Guide of the Perplexed* is therefore what allows the philosopher to move in the realm of "divine wisdom" and to continue conducting intellectual inquiries in matters pertaining to it.

If we turn to the question of proving the existence of God using the teleological argument in Halevi and Maimonides, we find that both are in proximity to the sceptical approach despite their differing articulations on the subject. In *The Guide of the Perplexed* I, 72, Maimonides formulates the subject as an antinomy: the two opposing claims – that God is remote and separate from the world and that God is manifest in His providence and governance of every last part of the world – are both backed by demonstrative proofs.[33] By contrast, for Halevi, in the statement he has the Khazar king speak in I, 20, the three different and antithetical claims on the subject do not have the status of claims that are backed by demonstrative proofs; they are merely questionable assertions. Despite their differences, Maimonides's and Halevi's formulations both bring the issue to the point of the "equipollence of counterarguments" (*isostheneia*) that is desirable from the sceptical perspective.

30 See Stern, *The Matter and Form of Maimonides' Guide*, 283–85, 294, 303–4.
31 Danzig, "Socrates in Hellenistic and Medieval Jewish Literature," 156 n. 36.
32 Stern, *The Matter and Form of Maimonides' Guide*, 242, 246–49, 284–85, 294, 303–4, 312–13.
33 See Maimonides, *Dalālat al-ḥā'irīn*, I, 72 (133, l. 27–134, l. 3 = *The Guide of the Perplexed*, 192–93) and the discussion in Stern, *The Matter and Form of Maimonides' Guide*, 245, 278–79.

If we now turn to a comparison between Halevi's and Maimonides's positions on the debate over the world's eternity versus its innovation *ex nihilo*, we see that Maimonides presents a dogmatic conclusion that Halevi avoids. Theoretically, the two thinkers are close to one another in their fundamentally sceptical understanding that in this issue, intellectual inquiry is incapable of deciding between the two contradictory claims. Based on this understanding, in I, 67 of *The Kuzari*, Halevi reaches the non-dogmatic conclusion that an "adherent of the Law" (*al-mutašarriʿ*) is not obligated to believe in innovation *ex nihilo*. An "adherent of the Law" is also allowed to have opinions that do not contradict the belief "that this world came into new existence at a specific time in the past," including the belief that assumes the existence of a prime matter or the opinion that other worlds existed prior to this one.[34] Compared to Halevi's position here, Maimonides presents a much more rigid stance on the issue: "an adherent of the Law" is bound by a dogmatic obligation to believe in innovation *ex nihilo*. Consequently, he must reject other positions, even those that are found in the writings of the Talmudic sages about the existence of a prior "order of time" (*seder zemanim*) to the chronology of our present world.[35]

The approach of rationalist mitigated scepticism thus plays a significant role both in Maimonides's late thought (in the way in which Stern interprets it) and in Halevi's thought (in the way in which it is interpreted here), though for Maimonides – unlike Halevi – its role seems to be more essential. For him, it embodies a rationalistic alternative to dogmatism thanks to which he was able to continue to philosophise about metaphysical issues. Halevi, on the other hand, did not need a sceptical alternative to "save" philosophical metaphysics; from his perspective, seeking to know God and the upper world is not a quest dependent on the capacity of the human intellect, but rather on the capacity of the sensory and mystical perception of humanity's choicest members.

Finally, let me briefly point to what seems to me to be an interesting phenomenon that needs to be studied and clarified. In the course of a period of approximately one hundred years, from around 1100 until around 1200, the two Judeo-Arabic thinkers with lasting influence –Halevi and Maimonides – and the two Muslim-Arabic thinkers with an equally profound impact – al-Ġazālī and al-Rāzī – became increasingly critical, each in his own unique manner, of their dogmatic rationalistic upbringing. As mentioned above, starting from the ninth century onwards, dogmatic rationalist schools thrived among the educated elites in Arabic culture. Yet at a later historical stage, during the twelfth century, we find the most serious students of this kind of rationalism becoming critical of it, seeking different ways to free themselves from its dogmatic grip. This critical challenging of dogmatic rationalism

34 See the discussion in the previous chapter.

35 Maimonides, *Dalālat al-ḥāʾirīn*, II, 30 (245, ll. 6–21 = *The Guide of the Perplexed*, 349–50).

posed by the leading thinkers of the era served as an important background to the integration of sceptical motifs in works by those thinkers.

Epilogue

Classical scepticism sets an example of a global, systematic, anti-dogmatic approach. At the same time, it was a product of the Hellenistic culture in which it developed and was deeply rooted in this culture, absorbing its typical mentalities and modes of expression. Thus, it is not surprising that classical scepticism ceased to exist with the vanishing of Hellenistic culture. The reappearance of claims and motifs originating from the classical sceptical heritage in post-Hellenistic cultures can be explained by the lasting historical phenomenon of tension between rationalistic dogmatic trends and other trends of thought. This lasting tension seems to be the main reason why classical sceptical motifs continued to appear and to be utilised and reshaped in the transition from antiquity to the Middle Ages and the modern period by thinkers who challenged the rationalistic dogmatic assumptions of their period.

In the history of western civilisation, the assumptions of dogmatic thought are those that have usually gained dominance and hegemony. In contradistinction to the qualities reflected in dominant dogmatic tendencies, the lasting qualities of sceptical thought are the ones that fostered critical, nonconformist, unconventional, creative, flexible, tolerating, daring, sober, and realistic modes of thinking. These kinds of qualities were exhibited by some of the most original and exceptional thinkers of various cultures. In what follows, I will try to show how they appear in the passages in *The Kuzari* where Judah Halevi utilised classical sceptical motifs, passages that I discussed extensively in the main part of this study.

Central to dogmatic rationalism is the claim that human reason is humanity's best guide. Since Plato's *Politeia*, this claim has served some dogmatic philosophers as the foundation of all kinds of rationalistic utopian visions (with totalitarian ramifications) regarding the philosophers' ability to construct a "perfect state."[1] In *The Kuzari*, this claim appears in the dialogue between the Khazar king and the philosopher in I, 2–3, where the dogmatic philosopher states (in I, 3) that the "religion of the philosophers" is the preferred religious and civil order since it respects all those who follow reason. The dogmatic philosopher seems to imply here that such a religion can correct the current state of affairs, in which (as stated by the Khazar king in I, 2) the relations between the political entities guided by the two dominant revealed religions – Christianity and Islam – are marred by ongoing mutual bloodshed. In I, 13, the Jewish rabbi counters this claim from the dogmatic philosopher by implementing the sceptical mode of disagreement regarding the "religion of the philosophers," or "the syllogistic, governmental religion to which speculation leads," as it is presented here. The disagreements between the philosophers regard-

1 See, in this context, Karl R. Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, 2 vols. (London: Routledge & Sons, 1945).

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ing the beliefs and practices of this religion attest to the limitations of human reason in the domain of political theory and practice. The implicit conclusion from the rabbi's use of the sceptical mode of disagreement in this case is that political entities based on the "religion of the philosophers" are expected to fare no better than the ones based on non-philosophical religious laws: disagreement and bloodshed will prevail in both cases. Thus, the indirect clash between the philosopher of *The Kuzari* I, 3 and the rabbi of I, 13 represents a clash between the utopian idealistic quality of the dogmatic rationalistic tendency and the sober realistic quality of sceptical thought.[2] The sceptical measure that Halevi uses here is the tempering of the exaggerated trust that the rational dogmatists tend to put in human reasoning.

The Khazar king's formulation of the sceptical "equipollence of counter-arguments" in *The Kuzari* I, 20 demonstrates the sceptical quality of nonconformism. Halevi was certainly swimming against the current when he made his Khazar king doubt what was perhaps the most common and widely accepted argument throughout the ages: the teleological argument for God's existence, aka "the argument from design." Halevi did not adhere to global scepticism as the Hellenistic sceptics did. His use of sceptical measures was selective and tactical. As I pointed out above, calling into question "the argument from design" for God's existence was such a daring and unusual step that Halevi chose to give it only a parabolic articulation. Yet within the framework of this parabolic articulation, Halevi saw fit to use a sceptical measure to express his unconventional, nonconformist stance.

The qualities distinguishing Halevi's discussion of the question of the world's innovation versus its eternity in I, 67 are the qualities of creativity, originality, and tolerance. His predecessors in medieval Jewish thought chose to defend the rationality of the Torah's adherence to the doctrine of the innovation of the world by adopting the approach of dogmatic rationalism, which seeks to demonstrate the validity of one argument while refuting rival arguments (in this case, the argument of eternity). Halevi, on the other hand, chose to defend the rationality of the Torah's position by applying sceptical rationalism: the Torah's position does not negate human reason because the innovation argument has not been refuted, and its relationship to the rival argument of eternity is that of the "equipollence of counter-arguments." In I, 67, Halevi shows himself to be not only less dogmatic, but also more tolerant than his Jewish predecessors. Unlike them, Halevi was able to tolerate some beliefs that are incompatible with the belief in the world's innovation *ex ni-*

2 Another good example of Halevi's sober realistic voice can be found in I, 114. Here, Halevi puts a concise analysis of the collective humility that currently characterises the behaviour of the Jewish people into the mouth of the Khazar king. According to the king's analysis, this desirable behaviour (as portrayed in the rabbi's words in I, 113) is conditioned by their current inferiority and their dependence on other nations. In the event that the Jewish people achieve political independence and sovereignty, their political behaviour is not expected to be different from the violent behaviour that characterises the Christian and Muslim nations.

hilo; namely, belief in the existence of eternal matter and in many worlds prior to this world. For his part, Halevi allows the holder of these incompatible beliefs to be counted as "an adherent of the Law," like the holder of the belief in the world's innovation *ex nihilo*.[3] Halevi achieved this considerable measure of tolerance by adding a new dimension to the issue under discussion. While his predecessors in medieval Jewish thought considered the question of the world's innovation versus its eternity only from its ontological-cosmological dimension, Halevi demonstrates the flexibility of his thought by adding and even giving the upper hand to another, new dimension of this question: the chronology of the world.

Finally, we reach the rabbi's speech in V, 14, where Halevi distinguishes Socrates as the one who set an example of a critical undogmatic philosopher. As such, Socrates stands as an exceptional figure among the host of dogmatic philosophers and their schools in the Hellenistic world. Here, Halevi seems to go beyond even the Hellenistic sceptics who formed their own schools. In characterising Socrates as he does in V, 14, as an exceptional figure in his time and culture, Halevi seems to suggest that the original undogmatic thinker is someone who swims strongly against the intellectual current of his age, someone who tends to be a *sui generis* figure, someone whose place in the history of thought is unique and inimitable.[4]

In sum, *The Kuzari* supplies its readers with a few, albeit illuminating, examples of some of the qualities responsible for the enduring contribution of scepticism to the history of philosophy in the transition from the Hellenistic to the post-Hellenistic period.

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3 Halevi's tolerance in this case can be appreciated when compared to the position taken by al-Ġazālī (in the concluding section of *The Incoherence of the Philosophers*) and Maimonides (in *The Guide of the Perplexed*). Both took an intolerant position in denying "the adherent of the Law" any option but the belief in the world's innovation *ex nihilo*.

4 In the rabbi's speech in III, 1 (140, ll. 11–17 = Bashir, 331), Socrates is the only philosopher who is identified as belonging to the highest level of philosophers. According to the rabbi's description here, only rare individuals attained this level in the past and "there is no hope of attaining their level today."

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Transliteration Charts

Arabic

ا	a/ā
ب	b
ت	t
ث	ṯ
ج	ǧ
ح	ḥ
خ	ḫ
د	d
ذ	ḏ
ر	r
ز	z
س	s
ش	š
ص	ṣ
ض	ḍ
ط	ṭ
ظ	ẓ
ع	ʿ
غ	ġ
ف	f
ق	q
ك	k
ل	l
م	m
ن	n
ه	h
و	w/ū
ي	y/ī
ء	ʾ
ى	ā
ة	ah/at

Hebrew

א	ʾ/a
בּ	b
ב	v
ג	g
ד	d
ה	h
ו	w
ז	z
ח	ḥ
ט	ṭ
י	y
כּ	k
כ	kh
ל	l
מ	m
נ	n
ס	s
ע	ʿ
פּ	p
פ	f
צ	ṣ
ק	q
ר	r
שׁ	š
שׂ	ś
ת	t

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