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Michela Torbidoni

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Acknowledgements

Maimonides on the Psychology of Leadership in the *Mishneh Torah*

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Abstract

In the *Mishneh Torah*, Maimonides states that the pious should avoid pride and anger, but that if the pious individual is also a leader, then it may be necessary for them to simulate anger and pride for educational or political reasons. These pious leaders should not feel angry or arrogant within themselves, but they should know how to simulate those traits when necessary to motivate or correct those they are leading. This paper argues that these few lines on pious leadership reveal the foundational premise of Maimonides's entire approach to leadership throughout the *Mishneh Torah*, in the examples of the king, the judge, the teacher, the parent, the slave-master, and the wealthy. Each of these individuals has a hierarchical position in a community, such that they have power and responsibility over others. However, the relationship between their public and private personas differs depending on the nature of the institution they lead.

Keywords

Maimonides – *Mishneh Torah* – anger – pride – leadership – king – judge – teacher

1   Introduction

One of the most notable tensions one finds in Maimonides's codification of Jewish law, the *Mishneh Torah*, can be seen in the two contrasting ethical ideals outlined in his *Laws of Character Traits* [*Hilkhot De'ot*]: the wise [*ḥakham*] and the pious [*ḥasid*]. The wise person, like Aristotle's ethical model in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, strives for the mean in all his character traits, while

the pious person recognises that there are certain character traits that would be dangerous and religiously deficient if they were at the mean.[1] In Maimonides's view, the pious must avoid two particular tendencies, pride [*govah lev*] and anger [*ka'as*], such that they are advised to veer away from the mean and embrace the extreme opposite of those tendencies by shunning anger and striving for humility. Indeed, he describes both pride and anger as forms of heresy against

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1 Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Robert C. Bartlett and Susan D. Collins (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 26–89 (1103a14–1128b35; books 2 to 4, which deal with the moral virtues) and Moses Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah: The Code of Maimonides*, ed. Yohai Makbili (Haifa: Or Vishua, 2009), 46–47 (MT, *Laws of Character Traits*, 2.3). There is a vast and rich body of scholarly literature discussing the complexities of Maimonides's ethics. See Herbert Davidson, "Maimonides' *Shemonah Peraqim* and Alfarabi's *Fusūl al-Madani*," *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 31 (1963): 33–50; Davidson, "The Middle Way in Maimonides' Ethics," *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 54 (1987): 31–72; Robert Eisen, "*Lifnim Mi-Shurat Ha-Din* in Maimonides' *Mishneh Torah*," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 89 (1999): 291–317; Marvin Fox, "The Doctrine of the Mean in Aristotle and Maimonides: A Comparative Study," in Fox, *Interpreting Maimonides: Studies in Methodology, Metaphysics, and Moral Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 93–123; Daniel H. Frank, "Anger as a Vice: A Maimonidean Critique of Aristotle's Ethics," *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 7 (1990): 269–81; Frank, "Humility as a Virtue: A Maimonidean Critique of Aristotle's Ethics," in *Moses Maimonides and His Time*, ed. Eric L. Ormsby (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1989), 89–99; Lawrence Kaplan, "An Introduction to Maimonides' *Eight Chapters*," *The Edah Journal* 2, no. 2 (2002), http://www.edah.org/backend/JournalArticle/kaplan2_2.pdf; Barry Kogan, "*Ḥasid*, *Ḥakham* and *Nabi*: Maimonides' Conception of the Human Ideal" [Hebrew], *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 9 (1990): 177–91; Howard Kreisel, *Maimonides' Political Thought: Studies in Ethics, Law, and the Human Ideal* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1999), 159–88; Aviram Ravitzky, "The Balanced Path and the Path of Asceticism—The Unity of Maimonides' Ethics," *Tradition* 47, no. 1 (2014): 28–47; Bernard Septimus, "Literary Structure and Ethical Theory in Maimonides' *Sefer ha-Madda*," in *Maimonides after 800 Years: Essays on Maimonides and His Influence*, ed. Jay M. Harris (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Center for Jewish Studies, 2007), 307–25; David Shatz, "Maimonides' Moral Theory," in *The Cambridge Companion to Maimonides*, ed. Kenneth Seeskin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 167–92; Bezalel Safran, "Maimonides and Aristotle on Ethical Theory," in *Alei Shefer: Studies in the Literature of Jewish Thought*, ed. Moshe Hallamish (Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1990), 75–93; Safran, "Maimonides on Pride and Anger," in *Turim; Studies in Jewish History and Literature Presented to Dr. Bernard Lander*, ed. Michael A. Shmidman (New York: Touro College Press, 2007–2008), 1:185–232 and 2:137–69; Kenneth Seeskin, "Maimonides' Appropriation of Aristotle's Ethics" in *The Reception of Aristotle's Ethics*, ed. Jon Miller (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 107–12; Steven Schwarzschild, "Moral Radicalism and 'Middlingness' in the Ethics of Maimonides," *Studies in Medieval Culture* 11 (1977): 65–94; Leo Strauss, "Notes on Maimonides' *Book of Knowledge*," in Strauss, *Leo Strauss on Maimonides: The Complete Writings*, ed. Kenneth Hart Green (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 550–68, esp. 561–63; Raymond Weiss, *Maimonides' Ethics: The Encounter of Philosophic and Religious Morality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

proper belief in God: pride is like forgetting God and anger is akin to worshipping idols.[2]

Yet at the same time, after stating that the pious should avoid pride and anger completely, Maimonides adds that as they often serve as leaders, they are permitted to use anger so long as it is solely for educational purposes. He states:

> Now, he might wish to arouse fear in his children and the members of his household or in the community (if he is a leader) and to become angry at them in order that they return to what is good. Then he shall pretend to be angry in their presence in order to admonish them, but his mind shall be tranquil within himself, like a man who feigns anger but is not angry.[3]

Maimonides seems to be suggesting that if an individual has achieved a high level of piety and is also a leader, then he may sometimes find it necessary to simulate anger—and also, at least by implication, pride—for educational or political reasons. This does not mean that these pious leaders should feel angry or arrogant within themselves, but rather that they should know how to simulate those traits when required in order to motivate or correct those they are leading in order to achieve a necessary end. While this statement may appear to be simply a passing piece of good practical advice, with no special theoretical or legal significance, I would like to suggest that these few lines on pious leadership are actually the foundational premise of Maimonides's entire approach to leadership throughout the *Mishneh Torah*.[4] This is

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2 Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, 47 (MT, *Laws of Character Traits*, 2.3).

3 Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, 47 (MT, *Laws of Character Traits*, 2.3). English translation from Moses Maimonides, *Ethical Writings of Maimonides*, ed. Raymond L. Weiss and Charles Butterworth (New York: New York University Press, 1975), 32.

4 The *Mishneh Torah* is a code and summary of Jewish law, but the methodology of its codification was influenced by Maimonides's larger philosophy. Isadore Twersky articulates this in suggesting that "the philosophic or extra-halakhic dimension in the *Mishneh Torah* [...] is imperceptibly interwoven and fully integrated into the very texture of the code. It is so natural and so integral that it need not be singled out or stamped or otherwise identified" (Twersky, "On Law and Ethics in the *Mishneh Torah*: A Case Study of *Hilkhot Megillah* 11:17," *Tradition* 24, no. 2 [1989]: 140). For this approach to reading the *Mishneh Torah*, see Twersky, *Introduction to the Code of Maimonides* (*Mishneh Torah*) (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1980), 356–514; Warren Zev Harvey, "The *Mishneh Torah* as a Key to the Secrets of the *Guide*," in *Me'ah She'arim: Studies in Medieval Jewish Spiritual Life in Memory of Isadore Twersky*, ed. Ezra Fleischer, Gerald Blidstein, Carmi Horowitz, and Bernard Septimus (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2001), 11–28; Menachem Kellner, "The Literary Character of the *Mishneh Torah*: On the Art of Writing in Maimonides' Halakhic Works," in Fleischer, Blidstein, Horowitz, and

especially significant since this statement has been generally overlooked in the scholarship on Maimonides's thought. The following study will argue that Maimonides's pious precept against indulgence in anger and pride, as well as his seemingly contrary affirmation of their instructional expediency in the public square, actually work together harmoniously. They serve as core principles and as models of correct intentions that unite the varying examples of leadership utilised in his central legal code.

Maimonides's psychology of leadership indicates that the soul of the pious leader is divided between his internal disposition, with its manifesting actions, and his false external performance, which does not correspond to his internal disposition. This seemingly contradictory behaviour manifests itself in two forms: (a) the pious leader has a humble personality, while often presenting himself as externally proud; (b) the pious leader is internally calm, devoid of the feeling of anger, while often externally utilising it for specific purposes. This point is expounded with even greater clarity by Maimonides's son, Abraham Maimonides, in his *Comprehensive Guide for the Servants of God*. He distinguishes between two types of leaders: leaders who can maintain inward and outward humility, like the biblical prophets, and leaders who maintain inward humility while displaying outward pride, like the biblical kings. He explains how this tension is often necessary for leaders, such that "the placement of awe in the people causes them to fear their leader, uphold his decrees, and avoid disobedience. Authority necessitates this condition. [...] The need to deviate from outward humility is for a constructive purpose."[5] Hence, Abraham Maimonides both echoes and expands upon his father's teaching: although humility is the ideal quality for leaders to cultivate, those they are leading sometimes need to fear their leaders and require discipline in order to do so.

The implications of these points are not fully evident simply from reading the *Laws of Character Traits* alone; they become clearer when one examines how Maimonides applies his theoretical concept to various examples of leaders cited throughout the *Mishneh Torah*.[6] Specifically, there are six

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Septimus, *Me'ah She'arim*, 29–45; and David Gillis, *Reading Maimonides' Mishneh Torah* (London: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2014).

5   Abraham Maimonides, *The Guide to Serving God*, trans. Yaakov Wincelberg (Jerusalem: Feldheim, 2007), 180–81 (chapter 7: "Humility").

6   Other discussions of Maimonides's approach to leadership include Lawrence V. Berman's analysis of his philosophy of leadership in the *Guide* and David Hartman and Abraham Halkin's examination of his approach to leadership in his letters. See Berman, "Ibn Bâjjah and Maimonides: A Chapter in the History of Political Philosophy" (PhD diss., Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1959); Berman, "Maimonides on Political Leadership," in *Kinship and Consent: The Jewish Political Tradition*, ed. Daniel J. Elazar; Moses Maimonides, *Epistles of Maimonides: Crisis and Leadership*, ed. David Hartman, trans. Abraham Halkin (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1985); Abraham Melamed, *The Philosopher-King in Medieval*

types of individuals described in the *Mishneh Torah* who can be categorised as leaders: the judge, the king, the parent, the slave-master, the teacher, and the wealthy. Each of these individuals has a hierarchical position in a community, such that they have power and responsibility over other people, serve a particular societal function, and affect the lives of the less powerful people they lead. However, the relationship between their public and private personas differs depending on each leader's nature. Three of these leaders, the king, the judge, and the teacher, must avoid internal anger or pride and refrain from acting on these emotions, while at other times employing them externally. Another of these leaders, the parent, has external responsibilities, while they are not being judged on their internal character. At the same time, two of these leaders, the slave-master and the wealthy, are only judged on their internal disposition and are not expected to feign a false public personality for political or educational purposes. The difference between the three categories is highly significant. The king, the judge, and the teacher maintain institutions that are necessary for the well-functioning of a healthy society, and thus their public pride and occasional displays of anger help to maintain the dignity and operation of the monarchy, the courts, and the education system. In contrast, the slave-master and the excessively wealthy represent hierarchies that are unjust and that ultimately should not exist; the individuals who are enslaved and poor are confined to lower societal roles due to unjust factors beyond their control. It is not part of their leadership role to maintain the structure of those hierarchies; rather, they should minimise them and their damaging effects to whatever extent possible. Then there are leaders like parents, who are in their positions of leadership simply due to the natural fact of having children, but have not necessarily achieved their position by virtue of any inherent aptitude, and who may even be morally lacking. Therefore, they represent an institution that is necessary, which is why their sole focus is on receiving honour and reverence from their children, but without the assumption that they can necessarily reach the highest level of humility and the avoidance of anger.

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and Renaissance Jewish Political Thought, trans. Lenn E. Goodman (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2003), 26–60; Melamed, *Wisdom's Little Sister: Medieval Jewish Political Philosophy* [Hebrew] (Ra'anana: Open University Press, 2011), 144–62. Twersky, *Introduction to the Code of Maimonides*, 271–72, also notes: "On the one hand, Maimonides appreciated the role of power [...]. On the other hand, he spiritualized the offices of authority in various ways." For a discussion of Maimonides on leadership as a form of *imitatio Dei*, see Almut Bruckstein, "How Can Ethics Be Taught: 'Socratic' and 'Post-Socratic' Method in Maimonides' Theory of Emulation," *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 4 (1997): 268–84; Kreisel, *Maimonides' Political Thought*, 125–58; Menachem Kellner, *Maimonides on Human Perfection* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990), 47–61; Shalom Sadik, "The Ideal Leader's Rise above Character in the Thought of Machiavelli and Maimonides," *Judaica* 69 (2013): 288–308.

TABLE 1   Categories of leaders in the *Mishneh Torah*

Leader	Internal disposition	Feigned behavior
King	Humble	Public honour
Judge	Humble	Public honour
Teacher	Absence of anger	Educational anger
	Humble	Public honour
Parent	X	Public honour
Slave-master	Avoidance of anger	X
	Humble	
Wealthy	Avoidance of anger	X
	Humble	

2   The King

Maimonides places special emphasis on the most recognisable model of leadership, which is that of the king.[7] In fact, he dedicates the last section of the final volume of the fourteen books of the *Mishneh Torah* to the *Laws of Kings*. The second chapter of Maimonides's *Laws of Kings* lists the various ways in which honour is duly given to the king. He begins the chapter with: "The king is to be accorded great honor. The attitude of his subjects toward him should be one of awe and reverence."[8] Then, for the next five sets of laws, he details a long list of ways in which the king is treated reverentially by the people. Examples include that no commoner should ride on his horse, sit on his throne, make use of his sceptre, crown, or any utensil, or see him when he is naked, receiving a haircut, or taking a bath. Furthermore, the king is obliged to sit on a throne

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7   Kingship in Maimonides's writings has been analysed in Gerald J. Blidstein, *Political Concepts in Maimonidean Halakha* [Hebrew] (Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1983); Blidstein, "On Political Structures—Four Medieval Comments," *The Jewish Journal of Sociology* 22 (1980): 50–52; Blidstein, "'Ideal' and 'Real' in Classical Jewish Political Theory," in *The Quest for Utopia: Jewish Political Ideas and Institutions through the Ages*, ed. Zvi Gitelman (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1992), 48–54; Menachem Lorberbaum, *Politics and the Limits of Law: Secularizing the Political in Medieval Jewish Thought* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001), 43–69; James A. Diamond, *Converts, Heretics, and Lepers: Maimonides and the Outsider* (Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame University Press, 2007), 79–106.

8   Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, 1234 (MT, *Laws of Kings*, 2.1). English translation from Moses Maimonides, *The Code of Maimonides. Book Fourteen: The Book of Judges*, trans. Abraham M. Hershman (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1949), 210.

and to wear a crown, to receive daily haircuts, and to wear beautiful clothes.[9] The implication of these laws seems to be that the king, in his capacity as king, is not normally to be viewed or treated as if he were like any other ordinary person. The king must be held aloft so that he will be seen as different from the people he is leading and hence be properly revered by them.

However, by the sixth law, Maimonides shifts gears and highlights the opposite trait—that of humility: "Just as Scripture accords great honor to the king and bids all pay him honor, so it bids him cultivate a humble and lowly spirit" and "at all times, his conduct should be marked by a spirit of great humility."[10] It is important to note that the humble disposition is not simply a matter of the king's private behaviour, but is rather the indicator of how the king views and acts towards those he is leading. The behaviour that emerges from this humble outlook is compassion (*ḥonen u-meraḥem*) towards those who are weaker, compelling him to treat the small and the great alike. In other words, humility makes one treat people equitably, without concern for their social status or wealth (or lack thereof). Maimonides in fact suggests that if a king possesses humility, he ultimately does not see himself as having any intrinsic difference from the people he leads, other than being required to perform the institutional role that he fulfils as king.[11] Indeed, Maimonides's exemplar for this type of king is Moses, whose leadership of the Israelites he compares to one nursing an infant; as a "nursing father," this type of king is supremely patient with his people's complaints and is responsive to their assorted disputes and challenges (from Num 11:12).[12]

As a consequence, Maimonides shows that the king must balance the external honours and sense of elevation given to him that come with the privileges of royalty while maintaining an internal sense of humility through feeling that he is truly the same as the people he is leading so that his behaviour is not prideful. He needs honour in order to maintain his position and authority in

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9   Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, 1234–35 (MT, *Laws of Kings*, 2.1–5).

10   Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, 1234 (MT, *Laws of Kings*, 2.6). English translation from *The Code of Maimonides. Book Fourteen: The Book of Judges*, 211.

11   Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, 1235 (MT, *Laws of Kings*, 2.6). See Diamond, *Converts, Heretics, and Lepers*, 79–106.

12   One interesting observation here is that although Maimonides is citing Num 11:12, the biblical text does not present Moses seeking to act like a "nursing father" to the Israelites. Instead, he is complaining that the Israelites have not matured and that they are still acting like infants who require nursing. Here, Maimonides is transforming the biblical complaint into an ideal of behaviour. Raymond Weiss notes here that "even if Moses does not behave like a 'nursing father' with an infant, the Torah implies that he should have done so; the Maimonidean interpretation of the metaphor is authentically biblical." See Weiss, *Maimondies' Ethics*, 110.

the political community so that people will respect him, for otherwise they will not follow his commands and he will not be able to accomplish his tasks. However, it is also necessary that he be internally humble in order that he may make the right decisions. In fact, there is a strong link between humility and compassion. If the king is humble, he will realise that there is no inherent difference between himself and anyone he is ruling. Hence, an effective king should view himself as an average person, just like the people he leads, even though he happens to have the most elevated social and political status in the land. He will listen to people's concerns, have sympathy for their problems, and try to better their position in life. Furthermore, he will not be inclined to seize everything for himself, but instead will do what is best for as many people as possible.

3   The Judge

Maimonides offers another significant example of a leader whose soul is divided between a presentation of external pride and an internal disposition towards humility as reflected in his method of coming to proper judgments: the judge, whose characteristics he discusses in the twenty-fifth chapter of his *Laws of Sanhedrin*. He begins by clearly stating that the people are duty-bound to pay respect to a judge, specifying that they are "commanded to show honor to a judge and that they should treat a judge with reverence [*eymat ha-dayyan*]."[13] However, for this reverence to be achieved, a judge must act in a manner that differentiates his behaviour from that of other people: a judge cannot perform physical labour in front of three people or eat, drink, or become intoxicated in front of others at social gatherings.[14] The distance that he must maintain from the people is necessary in order for the people he is judging to view him as superior to them and as such respect the authority of his rulings. Moreover, Maimonides suggests that the judge's rulings are intimately connected to the status of the Torah itself. This is because if the people lose faith in those who apply the Torah's principles to contemporary cases—that is, the judges— this will end up devaluing the entire structure of the Torah going back to the revelation at Sinai. Perhaps this is why Maimonides writes with such harsh disapproval of those judges who do not follow the appropriate limits on their behaviour:

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13   Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, 1196 (MT, *Laws of Sanhedrin*, 25.3). English translation from *The Code of Maimonides. Book Fourteen: The Book of Judges*, 76.

14   Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, 1196 (MT, *Laws of Sanhedrin*, 25.4).

> Woe unto those judges who make a practice of such indulgences for (their) contempt of the Torah of Moses. They despise its judgments, lower its standards, bring it down to dust, and cause evil to themselves and their children's children in this world and in the world to come.[15]

However, the judge's endowment with such an elevated status is not meant to cause him to become overly proud. It is crucial for him to maintain a humble character, citing Moses as an exemplar of humility.[16] Maimonides recognises that it is tempting for a judge to veer towards conceit and act disrespectfully towards the people, whom he may judge harshly because they have not been through his rigorous education and training. In response to this challenge, Maimonides warns the judge to remember that "even though they are simple people and lowly, they are the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and the hosts of God whom He led out of Egypt with great power and a strong hand."[17] This statement is meant to remind the judge of the inherent value of every member of the Jewish community whose behaviour he is evaluating. Reminding the judge that God liberated the entire people of Israel from Egypt, not simply the leaders and scholars, like the elite members of the judiciary, acts as a reminder that everyone must be given an opportunity to receive a fair and equal judgment. Like the king, the judge should imitate the leadership ideal of Moses, whom, as previously stated, he compares to one who nurses an infant.[18]

Maimonides also expands upon the potential dangers of a haughty judge in an earlier chapter of the *Laws of Sanhedrin* (20:7–8), where he criticises a judge who rushes to judgment because of his pride. He severely condemns that judge not only for being foolish [*šoṭeh*], but also for being wicked [*rašaʿ*] and haughty [*gas ruaḥ*]. He perceives that it is tempting for a judge to become egotistical, believing that he understands the law so well that he can simply see a case and rush to a quick judgment based on his experience and knowledge without carefully examining all the relevant facts and details. Since no two situations are alike, Maimonides also suggests that for true justice to be rendered, a wise judge should understand this fundamental principle and evaluate all the evidence carefully before making a decision.[19]

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15   Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, 1196 (MT, *Laws of Sanhedrin*, 25.4). English translation from *The Code of Maimonides. Book Fourteen: The Book of Judges*, 76.

16   Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, 1195–96 (MT, *Laws of Sanhedrin*, 25.1–2).

17   Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, 1195–96 (MT, *Laws of Sanhedrin*, 25.2). English translation from *The Code of Maimonides. Book Fourteen: The Book of Judges*, 75.

18   Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, 1195–96 (MT, *Laws of Sanhedrin*, 25.2).

19   Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, 1191–92 (MT, *Laws of Sanhedrin*, 20.7–8).

4   The Teacher of Torah

The third model of leadership in Maimonides's writings is not explicitly polit-
ical, but pedagogical: the teacher of Torah [*ha-rav*]. Although Maimonides
emphasises that the teacher of Torah must avoid anger as a disposition and
practise patience, he should nevertheless be prepared to use anger as an edu-
cational tool at specific moments. Maimonides discusses this in his *Laws of
Torah Study* [*Hilkhot Talmud Torah*], which is one of the five divisions of the
first book of the *Mishneh Torah*, the *Book of Knowledge*.[20] In the fourth chapter,
he counsels that a teacher of Torah should not become upset and angry at the
students if they are having difficulty grasping the material, but should instead
repeat and review the material.[21] This is a clear example of how Maimonides
applies the pious avoidance of anger to a practical situation. Patience, not
anger, is a key trait for a teacher, citing the statement from *Ethics of the Fathers*:
"The one who is embarrassed cannot learn, and the one who is irascible cannot
teach" (2:6).[22] Why is this so? The idea is that an impatient teacher will not
understand the unique development level of each student within a class. That
teacher will become frustrated that the students are not at the level at which
he hopes them to be. Furthermore, he suggests that teaching in an angry man-
ner is not going to make the students learn any more effectively.

    In a similar vein, Maimonides instructs the student how to respond to a
teacher of Torah who becomes impatient because he has to repeat the material
too many times. He writes:

> Similarly, a student should not say "I understood" if he does not under-
> stand, but should ask again and again, even many times. And if the
> master gets angry at him or chastises him, he [the student] should say
> to him [the master]: "My master, it is Torah and I need to comprehend it,
> and my grasp is limited."[23]

The key point here is that the Torah was not given solely to an intellectual elite,
but is for everyone to grasp; thus, the teacher must have patience and perhaps

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20   For an analysis of Maimonides's *Laws of Torah Study*, see Lawrence Kaplan, "Moses
      Maimonides' Laws of the Study of Torah," in *Judaism in Practice: From the Middle Ages
      through the Early Modern Period*, ed. Lawrence Fine (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University
      Press, 2001), 171–85.
21   Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, 58 (MT, *Laws of Torah Study*, 4.4).
22   English translation from Kaplan, "Moses Maimonides' Laws of the Study of Torah," 183.
23   Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, 58 (MT, *Laws of Torah Study*, 4.4). English translation from
      Kaplan, "Moses Maimonides' Laws of the Study of Torah," 183.

be creative when conveying the material in order to get every student to comprehend it. Like the king and the judge, the teacher of Torah must employ his humility in order to empathise with the plight of the confused students by imagining himself in their shoes. Maimonides suggests that a teacher who becomes riled and gives up on his students too easily will not manage to convey the Torah's teachings to the next generation.

However, Maimonides does recognise that there are certain times when a teacher of Torah should use anger for educational purposes. He sees that sometimes students are lazy and not interested in working hard to understand the material, stating:

> But if it is clear to the master that the students are negligent and slack in [their study] of words of Torah, and it is for that reason that they do not understand, he is obliged to chastise them and shame them with words [of reproach], in order to sharpen their wits.[24]

The example he cites is not a case where the students are working hard and simply not grasping the material because of its difficulty, but rather a case where they are too distracted by other matters and need to be encouraged to work more diligently in order to learn. The teacher of Torah is not shown to have suddenly changed his personality, becoming a person who is ruled by anger. In fact, he remains internally calm while "performing" anger, but only on specific occasions when he calmly judges it needful in order to awaken his students to achieve their educational goals.

A similar tension is found in the fifth chapter of the *Laws of Torah Study* with regard to the honour befitting a teacher who both commands honour and acts with humility towards his students. Near the beginning of the chapter, Maimonides highlights the fact that reverence must be given to one's teacher of Torah, stating that "there is no greater honor than that due a teacher, and no greater awe than that due a teacher."[25] It is also significant that he adds this opening declaration to a codification of a set of statements on reverence for one's teacher from *b. Sanh.* 110a. However, towards the end of the fifth chapter,

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24   Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, 58 (MT, *Laws of Torah Study*, 4.5). English translation from Kaplan, "Moses Maimonides' Laws of the Study of Torah," 183–84.

25   Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, 58 (MT, *Laws of Torah Study*, 5.1). English translation by Eliyahu Touger. Leo Strauss notes here that "this central section makes clear that the extreme humility demanded by the Torah does not preclude the sage's concern with being honored and enjoying other privileges, for that concern only reflects his concern with the Torah being honored (v, 1; vi, 11–12)" (Strauss, "Notes on Maimonides' *Book of Knowledge*," 563).

he also notes the importance of a teacher giving honour to his students, citing the verse from *Ethics of the Fathers*: "The honor of your students should be as dear to you as your own" (4:12). He avers that a teacher should love his students like his children, who bring him pleasure in this world and the next. Furthermore, he notes that teachers are apt to learn from their students. He writes:

> Pupils add to the master's wisdom and broaden his heart. The sages said: "Much wisdom have I learned from my masters, more from my friends, but most from my pupils." Even as a small twig kindles a great fire so a little pupil stimulates the rabbi and there goes out from his questions marvelous wisdom.[26]

Here, Maimonides brings out the difference between an arrogant teacher and a humble teacher. An arrogant teacher would feel that he has mastered all that there is to know and that he is painfully communicating that knowledge to his students. The questions the students raise would be a waste of that teacher's time and simply a necessary obligation. In contrast, the humble teacher honours his students, shows them love in treating them like his own children, and appreciates how much they assist him in the pursuit of wisdom through their questions.

5   The Parent

The next example is the most personal form of leadership, a parent's leadership of a child. Not all leadership has to take place in the political arena; it can operate in all parts of life, including within the family. One aspect is similar: children must honour their parents as gratitude for bringing their physical existence into being. Maimonides discusses this in the sixth chapter of the *Laws of Rebels* (and as separate commands in the *Book of Commandments*).[27] He observes that there are two aspects to the respect given to parents: honour

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26   Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, 59 (MT, *Laws of Torah Study*, 5.13). English translation from Moses Maimonides, *The Book of Knowledge*, trans. H.M. Russell and J. Weinberg (Edinburgh: Royal College of Physicians, 1981), 63.

27   Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, 1218–19 (MT, *Laws of Rebels*, 6.1–15), and Moses Maimonides, *The Commandments* (*Sefer Ha-Mitzvoth*), trans. Charles B. Chavel, 1:226–28 (Positive Commandments 210–11).

[*kavod*] and reverence [*yirʾah*].[28] Reverence includes not sitting in the parents' place, not contradicting their words, and not calling them by their personal names, while honour includes giving them food, drink, clothing, and financial assistance.[29] A child is still required to honour his parent and not embarrass or be angry at him even if, as Maimonides hypothesises in one example, he witnesses him taking a purse of gold and throwing it into the sea in his presence. Even in such a situation, a child is still required to revere his parent and remain silent. This would hold even if, as Maimonides colourfully describes, the grown child is leading a community and his parent comes and strikes him and spits in his face in front of the community members.[30]

However, Maimonides does not appear to consider parents as falling into the category of pious leadership like a king, judge, or Torah teacher. Indeed, this may reflect one key aspect that is missing from his discussion of parents. There is no mention of the soul and character traits of a parent in the *Laws of Rebels*. Unlike the previous three types of leadership, there is no command for a parent to strive for humility and the avoidance of anger. The closest legal obligation is that parents should not impose too heavy a burden of honour on their children and that they can forgo the honour due to them.[31]

Why, one might ask, does Maimonides seem unconcerned about the parent's soul? The reason seems to be that he does not hold the average parent to the same high level of piety to which he holds the king, the judge, or the teacher of Torah. Perhaps this explains why he emphasises that the duty to honour a teacher of Torah is even greater than the obligation to honour a parent at the beginning of the fifth chapter of the *Laws of Torah Study*. He proffers the reason that "his father brings him into the life of this world, while his teacher, who teaches him wisdom, brings him into the life of the world to come."[32] It is not that Maimonides does not recognise that there will be parents who are also great educators of Torah, "leading" their children to perfect the moral and

28   Gerald Blidstein, *Honor Thy Father and Mother: Filial Responsibility in Jewish Law and Ethics* (New York: Ktav, 2005), 133–34. He notes there that "Maimonides rules that the son must continue to honor his father whatever the moral or religious degradation to which he has sunk. […] The reverence and honor due a parent are not functions of the objective worth or virtue of the parent. Rather, they inhere in his status or person."

29   Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, 1218–19 (MT, *Laws of Rebels*, 6.3).

30   Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, 1219 (MT, *Laws of Rebels*, 6.7).

31   Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, 1219 (MT, *Laws of Rebels*, 6.8).

32   Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, 58 (MT, *Laws of Torah Study*, 5.1). English translation by Eliyahu Touger.

intellectual virtues; rather, he does not expect that everyone will reach the level of wisdom and leadership simply by virtue of being a parent.[33]

6   The Slave-Master

Another type of leader mentioned in the *Mishneh Torah* is the slave-master, a subject that Maimonides discusses in the last chapter of the *Laws of Slaves*. While this kind of leader is anathema to contemporary readers, it was a common feature of the medieval world.[34] The original context of this chapter concerns the treatment of a non-Jewish slave, but Maimonides's larger ethical conclusions at the end of these sets of laws are about the treatment of slaves more generally.[35] He concedes that while one is legally allowed to overwork a non-Jewish slave, "the attribute of piety and the way of wisdom" [*middat ḥasidut we-darkhey ha-ḥokhmah*] are in agreement that this is not the proper moral behaviour. Since Maimonides explicitly states in the *Laws of Character Traits* that wisdom and piety often conflict, it is significant that he presents an example where the two ethical models are in agreement.[36] In fact, he says that one should strive to treat slaves with mercy, serve them from one's

33   This may be why Maimonides writes in the *Guide of the Perplexed* that "good order of the household, […] is the first part of the city" (*Guide* 3.41, in Moses Maimonides, *The Guide of the Perplexed*, trans. Shlomo Pines [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963], 2:562). The family is a foundational form of political association, but not the perfect one. See also Maimonides's *Treatise on Logic*, where he distinguishes two forms of political science, the government of the household and the government of the city. The purpose of the government of the household is to "bring about the best possible improvement of their condition according to the requirements of time and place," while the purpose of the government of the city is "science imparting to its masters a knowledge of true happiness, showing them the way to obtain it." See Israel Efros, "Maimonides' Treatise on Logic (*Maḳālah fi-Ṣinā'at Al-Manṭiḳ*): The Original Arabic and Three Hebrew Translations," *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 8 (1937/38): 63–64.

34   For the historical context of slavery in the Middle Ages, see Bernard Lewis, *Race and Slavery in the Middle East: An Historical Enquiry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 3–15 and Israel Abrahams, *Jewish Life in the Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1993), 96–102.

35   David Gillis and Menachem Kellner have argued that the final section of each of the fourteen books of the *Mishneh Torah* contains a universalistic message. For a discussion of this section, see Gillis and Kellner, *Maimonides the Universalist: The Ethical Horizons of the Mishneh Torah* (London: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2020), 235–66; James A. Diamond, *Jewish Theology Unbound* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 200–10.

36   Gillis and Kellner note that "the combination of *ḥokmah* and *ḥasidut* that we find in 'Laws of Slaves,' 9:8 is unique in the work" (Gillis and Kellner, *Maimonides the Universalist*, 244).

own food and drink, provide for them before taking food for oneself, refrain from embarrassing or becoming angry at them, and make an effort to listen to their claims.[37]

One can certainly hear echoes here of the pious soul discussed in the *Laws of Character Traits*, where one is cautioned against anger and pride or acting as if one is above others. But there is a significant difference. The model of pious leadership employed by the king, the judge, and the teacher of Torah would require that the leader avoid anger and honour, but feign it for political or educational reasons. Here, that conflict does not exist. Why? In those other cases, the hierarchical difference between the leader and those being led is necessary for the leader to accomplish his task, whether in war, in court, or in the classroom. Leaders in those cases must demand obedience and deference to their authority in order to ensure that people respect the institutions that they represent.

However, the slave-master is different from these other leaders since the institution of slavery does not serve a necessary or just end. Indeed, the implications of Maimonides's statements are highly radical (for his day): that both the slave and the master are human beings and are ultimately equal. David Gillis and Menachem Kellner capture Maimonides's unique view of slavery by saying that "in his closing words on the subject, Maimonides stands the institution on its head, and turns it into a platform for eloquent advocacy of human equality."[38] Moreover, Maimonides suggests not only that are all men created in the "image of God," but also that they are only on different ends of the power spectrum because of certain accidents of history. He emphasises this point through the quotations he uses, such as citing Psalm 145:9, "His mercies are upon all of His works," implying that all God's creatures are equally valued.[39] When he cites the same verse in the *Guide of the Perplexed*, he underscores the same point by stating that "He makes individuals of the same species equal at their creation."[40]

Unlike the biological and necessary social hierarchy of parent and child, and the vital societal roles of the king, the judge and the teacher of Torah, the role of slave-owner is not one that is preferable. Maimonides suggests that the unjust hierarchical relationship between the slave-owner and the slave is not justifiable, and so the proper ethical path is to undermine it when possible. A

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37   Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, 1092 (MT, *Laws of Slaves*, 9.8).

38   Gillis and Kellner, *Maimonides the Universalist*, 236.

39   Diamond, *Jewish Theology Unbound*, 208–9, and Gillis and Kellner, *Maimonides the Universalist*, 256.

40   Maimonides, *Guide* 3.12 (Pines, 2:448).

humble and compassionate slave-master is required to treat his slave equally to how he, the master, would want to be treated.

7   The Wealthy

In his *Laws of Gifts to the Poor*, Maimonides suggests that the wealthy can also be considered leaders.[41] Although those with wealth hold no specific political station in the *Mishneh Torah*, they still hold a position in society with the financial means to help support others in the community who are in financial need. A poor person is similar to a slave in that both are in a state of dependence and have been put there by unjust forces beyond their control.[42] Just as pride is described as a form of idolatry in the *Laws of Character Traits*, Maimonides suggests that neglecting to give charity is also a form of idolatry.[43] As Maimonides states, "he who turns his eyes away from charity is called a base fellow, just as is he who worships idols."[44] The interconnectedness of idolatry tied to both pride and avoiding charity appears more than accidental. One might say that not giving charity arises from a form of selfish pride that implies that wealthy individuals only value their own wealth and success and that they are not concerned with the situation of others. Selfishness, pride, and idolatry all conflict with the ethics of the biblical God who cares equally for the wealthy and the poor, not caring about one individual more than another because of their financial situation. Maimonides thus continues:

> The Holy One, blessed be He, stands nigh unto the cry of the poor, as is it said, *Thou hearest the cry of the poor*. One should therefore be careful about their cry, for a covenant has been made with them, as it is said,

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41   Mark R. Cohen notes that "Maimonides' *Laws of Gifts for the Poor* represented the first attempt to draw together and systematically codify all the rabbinic teachings about charity, assembled from rulings scattered throughout the Bible and the Talmudic and post-Talmudic literature." See Cohen, *Maimonides and the Merchants: Jewish Law and Society in the Medieval Islamic World* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017), 1.

42   One piece of textual evidence to connect the poor and the slave is that both *Laws of Gifts to the Poor*, 10.2, and *Laws of Slaves*, 9.8, cite Deut 13:18: "That the Lord may [...] show thee mercy, and have compassion upon thee."

43   Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, 47 (MT, *Laws of Character Traits*, 2.3).

44   Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, 562 (MT, *Laws of Gifts to the Poor*, 10.3). English translation from Moses Maimonides, *The Code of Maimonides. Book Seven: The Book of Agriculture*, trans. Isaac Klein (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1979), 89–90.

> *And it shall come to pass, when he crieth unto Me, that I will hear, for I am gracious* (Exod. 22:26).[45]

As discussed earlier in the examples of the king and the judge, for Maimonides, there is a strong correlation between humility and compassion. A person who has less individual pride will be more likely to identify with the plight of the weaker members of the community and thus show compassion towards them in their actions. This explains why wealthy individuals who give money to charity are seen as both humble and imitative of God's attribute of compassion. In a similar vein, Maimonides regards the giver of charity as being akin to a parent, comparing him to a father who shows compassion to his children, citing "I was a father to the needy" (Job 29:16).[46]

Accordingly, Maimonides's eight-level hierarchy of charitable giving indicates that the highest form of giving is one in which pride is absent. In the ideal form, the goal is to help individuals to become financially sustainable so that they are not reliant on charity and for wealthy givers not to receive any recognition for their charitable gifts.[47] In the next two levels, the identity of the giver is not known, either because they are anonymous on both sides or because the giver knows the identity of the receiver, but the receiver does not know the giver. In both these cases, Maimonides emphasises the importance of giving in secret, citing one case in which there was a Chamber of Secrets in the Temple and another in which the Sages would anonymously deposit money at the doors of the poor.[48]

One element missing from the description of charitable leadership that is found in some of Maimonides's other discussions of leadership is the requirement to occasionally feign anger or demand honour for political or educational purposes. Hence, he does not provide examples of wealthy givers of charity making a display of their lavish attire in order to make the poor respect them, nor does he show wealthy people chastising the poor for not finding a job or working harder to earn a living. It is the opposite: Maimonides condemns such behaviour as callous and unseemly. He writes: "It is forbidden to rebuke a poor man or to raise one's voice in a shout at him, seeing that his heart is broken and

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45   Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, 562 (MT, *Laws of Gifts to the Poor*, 10.3). English translation from *The Code of Maimonides. Book Seven: The Book of Agriculture*, 89–90.

46   Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, 562 (MT, *Laws of Gifts to the Poor*, 10.5). English translation from *The Code of Maimonides. Book Seven: The Book of Agriculture*, 90.

47   Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, 562 (MT, *Laws of Gifts to the Poor*, 10.7).

48   Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, 563 (MT, *Laws of Gifts to the Poor*, 10.8–9).

crushed [...]. Woe unto him that shames the poor! Woe unto him!"[49] Here, we can see another strong contrast between the earlier forms of leadership that were discussed. The king, the judge, and the teacher of Torah have a legitimate need for public reverence in order to maintain respect for the institutions that they represent. The teacher of Torah is even sometimes required to use anger to educate his students. But the poor are emotionally broken by the tragic situation of their poverty and hence cannot be blamed for their loss of wealth, since poverty is often caused by factors beyond their control. Reverence and anger are counterintuitive in such situations. Therefore, when it comes to wealthy leaders, the only traits they need to practise are humility and compassion.

8   Conclusion

This analysis of the various types of leaders in the *Mishneh Torah* may provide a possible answer to the question of why Maimonides presents the psychology of piety at the beginning of the *Laws of Character Traits* as the archetype for leadership. Pious leaders must strive to constrain any internal tendencies towards anger and honour and resultingly act with humble compassion towards others, while simultaneously feigning anger and pride for social or educational purposes. This tension reflects an imitation of the non-anthropomorphic nature of God by removing traits of anger and pride from one's character as much as possible, while also recognising that human beings are physical creatures who are driven by anger and honour and thus require this tool to motivate them to act properly. The pious recognise this duality in leading other people, whether it be in the form of kingship, within the judicial system, or inside the classroom. However, Maimonides prudently avoids recommending the feigning of anger or honour when those being led are victims of unjust circumstances, as in the case of slavery or dire poverty, since these are situations that should be minimised with the ultimate goal of eradication. In such cases, the only proper course of action for a leader is humility, compassion, and the suppression of anger.

   The challenge of avoiding honour and anger within one's own soul while simultaneously performing it for others is a difficult task and a model of piety that is only achieved by a select group, who often, though not always, become

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49   Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, 562 (MT, *Laws of Gifts to the Poor*, 10.5). English translation from *The Code of Maimonides. Book Seven: The Book of Agriculture*, 90.

the leaders of a particular political community.[50] This also raises the psychological question of how these elite leaders balance the conflicting demands with which Maimonides encourages them to contend. It seems easy on paper, but is difficult to achieve in practice. One can imagine that one's exterior performance, even if feigned, seeps into one's internal character, such that the anger that one performs and the reverence given to oneself damage a person's humble self-regard. At the same time, one can also foresee the pious man's internal calm having the effect of weakening the quality of their external performance, such that the audience will see through the falsity of their anger and pretence of superiority. These are questions with which leaders must constantly grapple. This duality in the *Mishneh Torah* is reminiscent of Maimonides's analysis of the leadership of the prophet in the *Guide*, who combines the intellectual knowledge of rational perfection with the creative skills of the imaginative faculty in transforming philosophical ideas into a poetic form for popular consumption.[51] And as difficult as it sounds, this may well be the tension that Maimonides hopes that leaders, like the pious or the prophets, will be able to master, balancing intellectual and moral purity with creative performance, not only in the public sphere, but also within their own souls.

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50   Here, I am building on the conclusions of Eisen and Kriesel. See Eisen, "*Lifnim Mi-Shurat Ha-Din* in Maimonides' *Mishneh Torah*," 315–17, and Kreisel, *Maimonides' Political Thought*, 176–82.

51   Maimonides, *Guide* 2.37 (Pines, 2:374).

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Rabbinic Manners [*Derekh Ereṣ*] and the Formation of Etiquette Literature in Medieval Europe

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Abstract

This paper addresses the question of rabbinic etiquette [*derekh ereṣ*] as it emerges in two of the minor tractates of the Babylonian Talmud, *Derekh Ereṣ Rabbah* and *Derekh Ereṣ Zuṭa* (*post* seventh century), and places it in the broader scholarly discussion of etiquette literature. In light of their literary reception, it contextualises these rabbinic texts in the cultural frame of medieval Christian *savoir-faire* manuals and analyses classic and current scholarship on etiquette literature, with particular attention to the comparison between Christian European courtesy and Islamic Egyptian *adab*. In order to overcome an alleged clash of civilising processes, this article explores theoretical models of behavioural codification that can be applied to the *Derekh Ereṣ* tractates as literary products, such as Pierre Bourdieu's concept of habitus. Both habitus and *derekh ereṣ* describe a lifestyle learned through practice that distinguishes a given socio-cultural elite. *Derekh ereṣ* only became a definite behavioural ideology on the medieval literary reception of the *Derekh Ereṣ* tractates, which were codified and disseminated in Europe between the eleventh and thirteenth century during a phase of textualisation affecting not only Christian culture, but also Jewish culture.

Keywords

rabbinic literature – *derekh ereṣ* – etiquette – habitus – transmission history

1   Introduction

There are a couple of works that have traditionally been transmitted among the minor tractates of the Babylonian Talmud that stand out for their unique

content interweaving ethical teaching with etiquette instruction. The two tractates bear the titles *Derekh Ereṣ Rabbah* and *Derekh Ereṣ Zuṭa*, which could be rendered as *Major [Tractate] on Good Manners* and *Minor [Tractate] on Good Manners*. In light of their edifying topics and the anthological format in which they are collected, Jonathan W. Schofer has described *Derekh Ereṣ Rabbah* and *Derekh Ereṣ Zuṭa* as "ethical compilations."[1] In fact, works such as the *Derekh Ereṣ* corpus, *Avot*, *Avot de-Rabbi Natan*, and *Seder Eliyahu Rabbah* and *Seder Eliyahu Zuṭa* seem to represent a transitional genre in rabbinic literature that marks a passage between biblical (and, in general, ancient Near Eastern) wisdom texts and medieval *musar*; that is, ethical literature.[2]

The polysemic phrase *derekh ereṣ*[3] can be likened to the notions of *savoir-vivre*, good manners, and courtesy. To put it better, *derekh ereṣ* indicates the set of behavioural attributes that most evidently characterise the members of the rabbinic elite who lead a sage-like way of life. In particular, *Derekh Ereṣ Zuṭa* is mostly devoted to religious and spiritual guidance for aspiring sages [*talmide ḥakhamim*], while *Derekh Ereṣ Rabbah* deals with applied etiquette, instructing the reader on the correct conduct in different situations of everyday life such as table manners, hospitality, and behaviour in toilets, bath-houses, and the marketplace.

As far as literary contextualisation is concerned, the place and date of the redaction of the two texts are extremely difficult to trace. On the one hand, both the linguistic garb in which the precepts are expressed—namely, Tannaitic Hebrew—and their mention of eminent sages from the first centuries CE point away from an early redaction and should rather be regarded as a rhetorical trait endowing the material with the prestigious authority of rabbinic golden age lore. On the other, the tractates collect and reshape a consistent

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1   Jonathan W. Schofer, "Rabbinical Ethical Formation and the Formation of Rabbinical Ethical Compilations," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Talmud and Rabbinic Literature*, ed. Charlotte E. Fonrobert and Martin S. Jaffee (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 313–35. The only critical edition of *Derekh Ereṣ Rabbah* and *Derekh Ereṣ Zuṭa* is Michael Higger, ed., *The Treatises Derek Erez: Masseket Derek Erez, Pirke Ben Azzai, Tosefta Derek Erez*, 2 vols. (New York: Debe Rabbanan, 1935). For an English translation of the texts, see M. Ginsberg, trans., "*Derek Ereṣ Rabba, Derek Ereṣ Zuṭa*," in *The Minor Tractates of the Talmud: Massektoth Ketannoth*, ed. Abraham Cohen (London: Soncino Press, 1965), 2:529–602; Marcus Van Loopik, trans., *The Ways of the Sages and the Way of the World. The Minor Tractates of the Babylonian Talmud: Derekh 'Eretz Rabbah, Derekh 'Eretz Zuta, Pereq ha-Shalom* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1991); Daniel Sperber, *A Commentary on Derech Erez Zuṭa. Chapters Five to Eight* (Ramat-Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1990).

2   Sperber, *A Commentary on Derech Erez Zuṭa*, 9.

3   The semantic umbrella ranges from sexual relations to customs to secular activity; cf. Michael Higger, *Massekhtot Ze'irot* (New York: Bloch, 1929), 1–7.

amount of traditions attested in the major halakhic and haggadic corpora, including the Tosefta, the Palestinian Talmud, the Babylonian Talmud, *Sifre*, *Sifra*, *Midrash Rabbah*, *Avot*, and *Avot de-Rabbi Natan*.[4] In light of these data, the *terminus post quem* for the final redaction should be the redaction of the latest of the works included in *Derekh Ereṣ*; namely, the Babylonian Talmud. Thus, *Derekh Ereṣ Rabbah* and *Derekh Ereṣ Zuṭa* may have been redacted after the seventh century.[5] However, their literary form, which retains features of classic rabbinic literature, prevents us from ascribing the texts to any of the genres developed in the subsequent era of the *geʾonim*.

This convoluted philological framework may have played a part in the marginal status of the *Derekh Ereṣ* tractates in classic and contemporary scholarship on rabbinic literature. Their structural feature of intertextual building could in fact be diminished as derivativeness, if the normative contents transmitted in such anthologies are themselves deemed common sense *minutiae*, somewhat trivial and borderline halakhic, rather than dignified manifestations of universalist and encyclopedic rabbinic orthopraxis. Nevertheless, *Derekh Ereṣ Rabbah* and *Derekh Ereṣ Zuṭa* deserve to be rescued from this perspective so that we may appreciate their cultural impact both within and beyond the literary domain of talmudic-midrashic tradition. To do so, this paper proposes to shift the focus from the immediate context of the composition and redaction of the materials that merged into the *Derekh Ereṣ* corpus to the reception history of the *Derekh Ereṣ* tractates. If we retrace the transmission and dissemination of these works in the Middle Ages, it will be possible to situate the emergence of Jewish etiquette literature in a broader intercultural context, by means of comparison with Christian European courtesy manuals and (potentially) Islamic Egyptian *adab* literature. From a historical perspective, the need to codify socially distinctive lifestyles emerged among both Christian and Judaic elites during the cultural textualisation phase of medieval Europe (eleventh to thirteenth centuries); that is, during the period when and in the area where the manuscript and literary reception of the *Derekh Ereṣ* tractates mainly took place.

The comparative reading proposed in this paper does not presume or attempt to prove a (hardly verifiable) genealogical pattern of influence. Instead, the comparison with medieval Christian literature will enlarge the

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4 Schofer, "Rabbinical Ethical Formation," 316.

5 Myron B. Lerner, "The External Tractates," in *The Literature of the Jewish People in the Period of the Second Temple and the Talmud, Volume 3: The Literature of the Sages. First Part: Oral Tora, Halakha, Mishna, Tosefta, Talmud. External Tractates*, ed. Shmuel Safrai (Assen: Van Gorcum; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 383.

cultural perspective through which rabbinic scholarship customarily designates *Derekh Ereṣ Rabbah* and *Derekh Ereṣ Zuṭa* as minor and uncategorised expressions of late antique and medieval Jewish normative and ethical culture. At the same time, positing a comparative reading of Jewish and Christian etiquette traditions entails addressing latent Orientalist biases in classic (Eurocentric) scholarship on etiquette literatures, thus moving away from the model of the *The Civilizing Process* initiated by Norbert Elias almost a century ago. As an alternative, the notion of *habitus* elaborated by Pierre Bourdieu can be used to identify and compare culturally specific conceptualisations of socially distinctive lifestyles and their textual codification in the form of etiquette literature—something common to Jewish, Christian, and Islamic culture alike.

This article will first survey how the concept of *derekh ereṣ* was understood and constructed in the eponymous *Derekh Ereṣ* tractates, as well as in earlier (talmudic) and later (musaric) sources, outlining the development of the idealisation of good manners as a tenet of rabbinic character. Then, it will proceed to discussing the position of Jewish etiquette in current and past scholarship on etiquette literature, problematising the purported incomparability between the Mediterranean (i.e., Arab-Islamic, Semitic, or Jewish) ethos of conviviality and the Christian European code of courtesy developed between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. To overcome such an impasse, the Bourdieusian model of habitus will be applied to the rabbinic construct of *derekh ereṣ*, suggesting the relevance of textual codification and transmission to understanding the dissemination of practical, corporeal, and social knowledge as a cultural phenomenon informing both Jewish communities and their Christian surroundings. The distribution of manuscript testimonies and literary quotations from the *Derekh Ereṣ* tractates in fact predominantly occured in medieval Europe, where a comprehensive process of textualisation was shifting the cultural and social patterns of pedagogy—including the previously non-textual education on manners—offering fruitful ground for intercultural readings of Jewish and Christian literary etiquette traditions. Finally, an appendix includes the full translated text of three narratives from *Derekh Ereṣ Rabbah* illustrating the compilation's construction of *derekh ereṣ* as a rabbinic value.

2 Rabbinic *je ne sais quoi*

Let us first concentrate on the very term generating the present scholarly reflection; that is, the expression *derekh ereṣ*, giving the name to two compilations, *Derekh Ereṣ Rabbah* and *Derekh Ereṣ Zuṭa*, that extensively treat manners

by referring to them through this precise concept. Even though *derekh ereṣ* bears a polysemy that is difficult to unravel on the diachronic level in rabbinic literature, the *Derekh Ereṣ* corpus presents a definite, consistent, and almost systematic usage of it. In fact, the phrase occurs in three loci, corresponding to three anecdotes (or *ma'aśim*) that are unparalleled in other rabbinic sources, which were probably composed *ad hoc* during one of the latest stages of its redaction.[6] The exemplary function of these stories is enriched by the explicit reference to the principle of *derekh ereṣ*—good manners or courtesy—as the ideal around which the narratives seem to be fictionally constructed.[7]

(1)   In *Der. Er. Rab.* 5:2, the prescription "One should not enter his fellow's house unexpectedly" is clarified by a *ma'aśeh* where a philosopher, a co-protagonist in the story, reacts to the courtesy exhibited by a rabbinic embassy knocking at his door with the following words: "Such *derekh ereṣ* must belong to a sage."

(2)   In *Der. Er. Rab.* 6:1, the master of the house praises his guest the rabbi for his halakhically irreproachable conduct in terms of good manners: "Rabbi, you are a great sage, endowed with *derekh ereṣ*."

(3)   Finally, the instruction in *Der. Er. Rab.* 7:1, "When two sit together at a table, the most important should reach for the food first, then it is the turn of the least important," is followed by an anecdote narrating how it is also a rabbi's duty to examine his disciples in matters of courtesy: "My sons, I did all this just to prove whether you are endowed with *derekh ereṣ*."

These three passages[8] attest to a homogeneous view according to which *derekh ereṣ* corresponds to courtesy as the desirable trait crowning the distinctive character of the rabbinic sage. *Derekh ereṣ* seems to be a potentially universal quality, which enhances the social regard of members of a self-perceived intellectual elite, such a rabbi or aspiring rabbi, in front of the larger societal body as displayed in various quotidian instances, such as shared meals, travel lodging, commerce, and sanitary practices. Several studies have attempted to frame the concept of *derekh ereṣ* within the realm of ethics, referring to its

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6   However, this is not the final stage of its redaction, since at least a section of *Derekh Ereṣ Rabbah* (5:1–2) clearly belongs to a textual phase that is subsequent to the overall compilation of the tractate.

7   For the full text, see Appendix.

8   In *Derekh Ereṣ Zuṭa*, the expression *derekh ereṣ* occurs in only one maxim (3:1): "Ponder your words before speaking. Measure your actions on *derekh ereṣ* and give retribution to your steps."

original meaning of the right path of moral conduct.[9] The connection with the semantic realm of morality—a category of thought that does not easily transfer to rabbinic cultural production[10]—seems nevertheless reductive and not entirely comprehensive, especially in light of the textual materials examined. In order to uncover the theoretical implications related to the notion of *derekh ereṣ*, we will consider two literary examples—one antecedent and one posterior to the *Derekh Ereṣ* tractates—conveying various nuances of the rabbinic ideal of courtesy.

(1) *Derekh Ereṣ Rabbah* 6, a chapter dedicated to matters of hospitality and conviviality, collects a number of scattered prescriptions that had merged into a couple of partially parallel traditions in the Babylonian Talmud; namely, *b. Pesaḥ.* 86a and *b. Beṣah* 25b. In particular, the latter passage is worth quoting in full:

> Rather, Rami bar Aba instructs on a matter of *derekh ereṣ* [regarding the issue that one is not supposed to consume meat before the animal has been flayed and disembowelled], as it is taught:[11] One should not eat garlic or onion from the top, but rather from the leaves; anyone who eats in the first way is a gorger. Similarly, one should not drink his goblet in one draught; anyone who drinks in that way is a glutton. The sages transmit: One who drinks his goblet in one draught is a glutton; if [he drinks it] in

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9   Max Kadushin, *Worship and Ethics: A Study in Rabbinic Judaism* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964), 39–62; Shmuel Safrai, "The Term Derekh Erez" [Hebrew], *Tarbiz* 60 (1991): 147–62; David Flusser, "'Which Is the Right Way That a Man Should Choose for Himself?' (*Sayings of the Fathers* 2:1)" [Hebrew], *Tarbiz* 60 (1991): 163–78. Flusser and Safrai charge the expression *derekh ereṣ* with a moralistic value on the basis of an arbitrary interpretation of its occurrences in tractate *Avot*, considered a tannaitic work. Cf. Avraham Walfish, "Creative Redaction and the Power of Desire—A Study of the Redaction of Tractate Qiddushin: Mishnah, Tosefta, and Babylonian Talmud" [Hebrew], *Jewish Studies, an Internet Journal* 7 (2008): 30 n. 19. The definition of "righteous moral conduct, self-control" is also adopted in Ron Naiweld, "Saints et mondains. Le traité *Kallah* et la propagation du mode de vie rabbinique en Babylonie," *Revue des études juives* 172 (2013): 34. See also Lennart Lehmhaus, *Derekh Eretz im Tora* (דרך ארץ עם תורה)—Seder Eliyahu Zuṭa *als ethisch-religiöser Identitätsdiskurs in gaonäischer Zeit* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebek, 2020) on the ethical anthology *Tanna de-be Eliyahu*.

10   Schofer, "Rabbinical Ethical Formation," 313–14, and Schofer, "Self, Subject, and Chosen Subjection: Rabbinic Ethics and Comparative Possibilities," *The Journal of Religious Ethics* 33 (2005): 255–91.

11   The following external tradition [*baraita*] (i.e., a tannaitic instruction that does not appear in the Mishnah) is paralleled in both *Der. Er. Rab.* 6:5 and *b. Pesaḥ.* 86a. In the latter source, the tradition is embedded in a narrative section on the unusual hospitality customs of Rav Huna bar Rav Natan.

two draughts, he has *derekh ereṣ*; if [he drinks it] in three draughts, he is pretentious.

From the philological point of view, both the talmudic passages are written in Aramaic and mention personalities from the late Amoraic period (fourth century). However, the specific traditions regarding manners are transmitted in Tannaitic Hebrew. This fact may imply that materials concerning *derekh ereṣ* were circulating in an independent and informal format during the various phases of the redaction of the Babylonian Talmud. Besides this hypothetical conclusion, another consideration emerges from the text: the teaching of *derekh ereṣ* is not an object of halakhic disquisition. Traditions about *derekh ereṣ* may appear in narrative discourse or in sapiential excursus, but they do not directly fit into legal reasoning. On the contrary, in the excerpt from tractate *Beṣah* in particular, a silent tension between the realm of *halakhah* and that of *derekh ereṣ* is perceivable. In fact, the passage seems to suggest that whenever halakhic mechanisms of exegesis and legal production are ineffective (for instance, when it is impossible to harmonise different rabbinic opinions), the methodological escamotage of *derekh ereṣ* may be of service. In other words, if it is not dictated by law, it is a matter of common sense and pragmatism.[12]

(2) In order to find a more consistent and explicit definition of *derekh ereṣ*, we have to turn to medieval *musar* literature. In Rome in around the second half of the thirteenth century, Yeḥi'el ben Yequti'el ʿAnaw[13] devoted a lengthy chapter of the edifying work *Sefer Maʿalot ha-Middot* to the spiritual quality [*middah*] of *derekh ereṣ*. At the beginning of the "twenty-third level," the author describes this fundamental value as follows:

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12   Besides talmudic literature, the expression *derekh ereṣ* also repeatedly appears in midrashic compilations. An interesting example of its nuanced polysemy is represented by the phrase "The Torah is teaching [you] *derekh ereṣ*," where *derekh ereṣ* refers to a common practice which, in the exegetical process, finds its roots in the biblical texts. For instance, in *Numbers Rabbah* 19, the verse "Let us pass, please, across your land: we will not trespass fields or vineyards nor drink water from the wells" (Num 20:17) is expounded as follows: "The Torah is teaching you *derekh ereṣ*; that is, when travelling to a land that is not his own, if he is hungry, a man should not eat from what he brought with him. Rather, he should put aside his provision and buy food from a trader for the latter's profit" (see other instances in *Gen. Rab.* 70:14; *Num. Rab.* 19:7).

13   The rabbinic scholar, physician, and poet Yeḥi'el ben Yequti'el ʿAnaw lived in Rome between 1260 and 1289. He was also the copyist of the Leiden manuscript of the Palestinian Talmud. Cf. Gabriel Y. Ravenah, "Sefer Maʿalot ha-Middot: Its Character and Purpose" [Hebrew], in *Išah ḥakhmat lev: Minḥat Zikkaron le-doqṭor Sarah Frankel*, ed. B. Yaniv (Jerusalem, 2010), 25–52.

> *Derekh ereṣ* is a universal quality [*ma'alat middah kelalit*] encompassing all other qualities, both spiritual and physical. [...] For this reason, I postponed its discussion to the end of all the other degrees. [...] The value of *derekh ereṣ* is precious to God [*ha-maqom*] because there cannot be civil community [*yišuvo šel 'olam*] without *derekh ereṣ*. Anyone who does not possess *derekh ereṣ* is deemed a wild beast. [...] *Derekh ereṣ* means that everyone should reflect by themselves on the ways in which they must behave in order to please both God and the people. [...] My sons, behave with piety and fear of God towards other people, but also with humbleness, humility, and affability. Do not depart from the customs of the majority, because whoever changes will lose.[14] Negotiate in favour of others, speak in their favour, and act in order to accomplish a good action in itself. Be distinguished in how you act and speak, in how you eat and drink, in how you dress and attire yourself, in how you buy and sell, in how you walk and sit.[15] Practice all the good manners and good customs that the wisest and most virtuous among men perform, so that you too will please both God and the people.[16]

This introduction is followed by a compendium of the previous twenty-two *middot*, with a rich collection of direct and indirect quotations from *Derekh Ereṣ Rabbah* and *Derekh Ereṣ Zuṭa*.[17] Yeḥi'el ben Yequti'el 'Anaw's depiction of the features of *derekh ereṣ* is more systematic than those found in prior literary traditions. Rabbinic courtesy represents the completion of a spiritual path and at the same time constitutes the *sine qua non* for the civil coexistence of sentient flesh and blood. At any rate, the ideal of *derekh ereṣ* retains an inherent complexity, expressing a tension—or, better to say, a continuum—between the physical and the spiritual level, the interior and exterior materialisation. On one side, in fact, the author presents *derekh ereṣ* as a form of self-consciousness, not innate but learned, whose aim is to discern how to please God and humanity.[18] On the other, this interiorisation of orthopractical principles directly affects

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14   *m. B. Meṣi'a* 6:1.

15   This phrasing recalls Maimonides's introduction to etiquette norms in *Mishneh Torah, Hilkhot De'ot* 5.

16   Yeḥi'el ben Yequti'el 'Anaw, *Sefer Ma'alot ha-Middot*, ed. Y.S. Winfeld (Jerusalem: Eškol, 1978), 292–94.

17   The chapter includes *Derekh Ereṣ Zuṭa* 1–8 (presented as *Massekhet Derekh Ereṣ Rabbah*; cf. Yeḥi'el ben Yequti'el 'Anaw, *Sefer Ma'alot ha-Middot*, 304–13) and material from *Derekh Ereṣ Rabbah* 4–11 (Yeḥi'el ben Yequti'el 'Anaw, *Sefer Ma'alot ha-Middot*, 313–19).

18   This formulation seems to echo, *ante litteram*, the concept of *Über-Ich-Bildung* [the formation of the superego] at the centre of Elias's reconstruction of the civilising process; see below on chapter 3.

the external aura of social charisma and religious piety with which the right-eous person performs every deed of his everyday life—hence the inclusion of the etiquette norms in *Sefer Maʿalot ha-Middot*.

The literary examples mentioned above help us to deduce some specific traits of the ideal of *derekh ereṣ*. First of all, rabbinic courtesy entails a social dimension that functions in two directions: *derekh ereṣ* not only originates from and applies to everything involving human interaction, but also becomes a form of socio-cultural distinction. This ideology operates in an eminently practical realm and concerns actions and behaviours that are considered normal, appropriate, and evidently convenient. As a result, the study of this practical lore lies outside of traditional rabbinic speculation. In other words, it is difficult to turn *derekh ereṣ* into an object of discourse. It is from this theoretical indefinability that the liminal status of *derekh ereṣ* in halakhic codification is generated.[19] Although discussed as a behavioural trait or domain related to rabbinic activity, *derekh ereṣ* does not necessarily equate to an intensification of the application of halakhic norms in applied rabbinic conduct, as claimed, for instance, by Marcus Van Loopik in the introduction to his commented translation of *Derekh Ereṣ Rabbah* and *Derekh Ereṣ Zuṭa*.[20] Rather, from the standpoint of behavioural application, *derekh ereṣ* runs parallel to complying with halakhic normativity, complementing and validating it. In this sense, unlike *halakhah*, *derekh ereṣ* does not implicate a cultural specificity preventing us from collating rabbinic etiquette with other non-Jewish traditions on courtesy. At the same time, the very conceptualisation of rabbinic etiquette norms into a definite ideology, that of *derekh ereṣ*, will stimulate a more thorough reflection on ostensibly dismissible *minutiae* ascribable to universal common sense.

3   The Myth of Mediterranean Conviviality and the Civilising Process

When speaking of Jewish etiquette, one might be tempted to hark back to biblical authenticity by referring to normative technicalities such as ritual

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19   This liminal status would also permeate moral theorisation after the cultural assimilation of philosophical thought in medieval Judaism, as can be inferred from the ontological duplicity of *derekh ereṣ* delineated in *Sefer Maʿalot ha-Middot*. On etiquette and ethical language, see Mark Addison Amos, "'For Manners Make Man': Bourdieu, de Certeau, and the Common Appropriation of Noble Manners in the *Book of Courtesy*," in *Medieval Conduct*, ed. Kathleen Ashley and Robert L.A. Clark (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), 23–48.

20   Van Loopik, *The Ways of the Sages*, 5.

purity and alimentary abominations. However, the rabbinic understanding of etiquette is more interested in addressing the question of "how" rather than "what": for instance, *how* to eat rather than *what* to eat. From this point of view, the most ancient tract on good manners can be found in a deutero-canonical text, *Ben Sira*.[21] A passage in *Ben Sira* 31:12–32:13 enumerates actions that should either be encouraged or discouraged during the social occasion of the banquet.[22] In particular, a sentence in 31:15—"Your fellow's tastes are like yours [*deʿah reʿakha ke-nafšekha*]: keep in mind what you dislike"—was taken as the exemplary epitome of the Mediterranean—and perhaps Semitic—approach to conviviality in a study of medieval Islamic etiquette literature by Paulina Lewicka.[23] Lewicka's main interest is in reconstructing the convivial customs in the urban centres of the Near East during the Middle Ages. Nevertheless, she also proposes a comparison between medieval Islamic etiquette tradition and its Christian European counterpart in order "to make a number of observations regarding the spirit that governed their tables."[24] Like *Ben Sira*, Arabo-Islamic conviviality seems to have been guided by a refined philosophy of hospitality[25] that appears close to the social ideology behind the Greco-Roman principle of reciprocity.[26] The profound respect for one's fellow diner is revitalised by the religious nature of the instructions, to the point that the prescriptions would be theoretically binding for every Muslim. However, Arabic etiquette

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21   For an edition of the Hebrew version of *Ben Sira*, see Pancratius C. Beentjes, ed., *The Book of Ben Sira in Hebrew: A Text Edition of All Extant Hebrew Manuscripts and a Synopsis of Parallel Hebrew Ben Sira Texts* (Leiden: Brill, 1997). On the relationship between *Ben Sira* and rabbinic literature, see Jenny R. Labendz, "The Book of Ben Sira in Rabbinic Literature," *Association of Jewish Studies Review* 30 (2006): 347–92.

22   On this passage, see John J. Collins, *Jewish Wisdom in the Hellenistic Age* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011), 32–33; Seth Schwartz, "No Dialogue at the Symposium? Conviviality in Ben Sira and the Palestinian Talmud," in *The End of Dialogue in Antiquity*, ed. Simon Goldhill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 193–216.

23   Paulina B. Lewicka, *Food and Foodways of Medieval Cairenes: Aspects of Life in an Islamic Metropolis of the Eastern Mediterranean* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), and Lewicka, "When a Shared Meal is Formalized: Observations on Arabic 'Table Manners' Manuals of the Middle Ages," in *Authority, Privacy and Public Order in Islam: Proceedings of the 22nd Congress of L'Union Européenne des Arabisants et Islamisants*, ed. Barbara Michalak-Pikulska and Andrzej Pikulski (Leuven: Peeters, 2006), 423–33.

24   Lewicka, "When a Shared Meal is Formalized," 425.

25   Lewicka, 425–26.

26   Lewicka, *Food and Foodways*, 397–98. On the ideology of reciprocity in Hellenistic and late antique Judaism, see Seth Schwartz, *Were the Jews a Mediterranean Society? Reciprocity and Solidarity in Ancient Judaism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010), particularly 45–79 on the ethics in *Ben Sira*. On the anthropological function of reciprocity, see Marcel Mauss, "Essai sur le don. Forme et raison de l'échange dans les sociétés archaïques," *L'Année sociologique*, n.s. 1 (1923–1924): 30–186.

manuals were *de facto* addressed to urban elites.[27] In contrast, European literature regarding manners is encapsulated within a secular framework, being conceived for the education of the nobility—either late medieval courtly society or the eighteenth-century aristocracy.[28] Unlike their Near-Eastern counterparts, European prescriptions do not originate from a fervent ethos of conviviality, but rather tend to self-referentiality: in other words, one is supposed to be courteous because it is courteous to be courteous. Moreover, the development of a culture of manners in Europe appears to stem from the necessity of domesticating potentially violent aspects of the act of sharing a meal.[29]

Thus, Lewicka concludes that "the two schools of table manners, being products of their own cultures, can hardly be considered as coming from the same basket."[30] Yet this irreconcilability between the two civilisations seems to be the product of a relapsed Orientalism rather than the result of a thorough comparison. In fact, Lewicka's investigation of European etiquette literature is almost exclusively based on the work of Norbert Elias. His *The Civilizing Process* [Über den Prozeß der Zivilisation][31] is indeed the quintessential and founding work on etiquette studies; nevertheless, since the 1980s, it has prompted a prolific scholarly trend of sociological and historical investigations into manners—a trend that it would be productive to interrogate.

In the first volume of *The Civilizing Process*, Elias interpreted manners as the expression of a self-consciousness that had been developing in Europe since the late Middle Ages. In his account, the creation and dissemination of texts prescribing good manners during the thirteenth to eighteenth centuries is evidence of a precise stage in the so-called psychic process of civilisation.[32] This process entails a collective evolution in terms of the dominance and repression of the emotional aspects of one's character, to the point that individual self-control is no longer influenced by external constrictions, but rather

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27   Lewicka, *Food and Foodways*, 397–98.

28   Lewicka, "When a Shared Meal is Formalized," 432.

29   Lewicka, *Food and Foodways*, 395. Cf. Margaret Visser, *The Rituals of Dinner: The Origins, Evolution, Eccentricities and Meaning of Table Manners* (New York: Penguin, 1991), xii; Alan Beardsworth and Teresa Keil, *Sociology on the Menu: An Invitation to the Study of Food and Society* (London: Routledge, 1997), 102–3.

30   Lewicka, *Food and Foodways*, 401.

31   Norbert Elias, *Über den Prozeß der Zivilisation. I. Wandlungen des Verhaltens in den weltlichen Oberschichten des Abendlandes* (Basel: Haus zum Falken, 1939), followed by Elias, *Über den Prozeß der Zivilisation. II. Wandlungen der Gesellschaft. Entwurf zu einer Theorie der Zivilisation* (Basel: Haus zum Falken, 1939).

32   Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process: Sociogenetic and Psychogenetic Investigations*, trans. Edmund Jephcott, ed. Eric Dunning, Johan Goudsblom, and Stephen Mennell, rev. ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), x.

becomes interiorised in the form of psychic automatism.[33] Importantly, it is in social structures that the economy of impulses [*Triebhaushalt*] finds its characterisation. The etiquette manuals that Elias discussed as cultural sources in fact addressed an elite audience. The emotional and behavioural constraints that this literature delineates are related to the social status of their recipient. Good manners, thus, as a self-compelling practice, function as a means for the upper classes to distinguish themselves from their subordinates.[34] In this sociological perspective, it is possible to understand how the psychic evolution of the civilising process interweaves with the historical shift from a feudal world to the formation of an absolute state.[35]

If we move from a Euro-centric standpoint, then the most obvious critique of Elias's thesis that can be raised concerns the contrast between the universality of the psychological processes described and the specificity of the cultural data implemented (European societies during the thirteenth to eighteenth centuries). From this point of view, it would be easy to infer that *other* (non-European) cultures by definition belong to a different—if not inferior—dimension. As a consequence, an acritical adoption of this model might almost naturally pervert the comparative view into a clash of civilisations. In addition, it should be noted that Elias reads literary data as witnesses of the actual practices of the societies that produced these texts. Furthermore, the cluster of ideas and religious beliefs that sometimes emerges from these textual corpora is generally neglected and reduced to a mere over-structural appendix that offers scarce help for understanding behavioural and social phenomena *per se*. On the basis of these critiques of Elias's methodological construction, will it thus be possible to find a more structural and less phenomenological framework into which to insert a comparative analysis of different cultures—in our case, rabbinic Jews and medieval Christians?

A more recent attempt to frame the history of manners in Europe was made by Jorge Arditi in a study of the transformation of social relations in France and England from the fourteenth to eighteenth centuries. Elias's paradigm is revisited via a solid and thorough theoretical structure that is mostly based on the philosophy of Michel Foucault.[36] As a key to the inquiry, Arditi introduces

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33   Elias, *The Civilizing Process*, 109.

34   Elias, 134.

35   The second volume of Elias's magnum opus (Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process, Vol. II. State Formation and Civilization*, trans. Edmund Jephcott [Oxford: Blackwell, 1982]) focuses on a thorough historical analysis.

36   Jorge Arditi, *A Genealogy of Manners: Transformations of Social Relations in France and England from the Fourteenth to the Eighteenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 6–13.

the concept of the *infrastructures of social relations*, meaning "patterns of association and differentiation in a society and [...] the practices through which these patterns are produced and reproduced."[37] Every infrastructure implies a "determined logic by which individuals establish relations of similarity or difference among each other and thus develop an understanding of themselves in relation to others."[38] If we apply this principle to the case of good manners, we can see how a behavioural prescription, such as "be courteous," may remain the same in different eras and be legitimate either in ancient Rome or in the late Middle Ages. However, what is more relevant is the fact that on the one hand, the symbolic and moral schemes that give meaning to the prescription may change, while on the other, the form shaped by the necessity of communication depends on the practical implementation of a given infrastructure of social relations.[39] Thus, for instance, good manners were part of the formation of the *cives* [citizens] in the Roman world, to the point that almost no prescriptive literary testimony has come down to us. However, in the feudal Middle Ages, good manners became both an object of reflection (with the construction of the ideal of courtliness) and an object of communication (with the compilation of specifically dedicated handbooks). In this sense, etiquette manuals, as a prescriptive *dispositif* for behavioural practices, constitute the ideal medium for an examination of how infrastructures of social relations emerge and transform. At any rate, it should be recalled that these infrastructures do not affect the population as a whole, but rather represent only the dominant social group.[40] They are, in fact, the instrument through which an elite builds its identity and exercises its power.

The merit of Arditi's systematisation is that it sheds light on the logic behind the practice—that is, on the ideological structures that interweave with the behavioural prescriptions—without diminishing the latter's role. In any case, this model can hardly be adapted to our rabbinic sources due to two peculiarities of the *Derekh Ereṣ* tractates: firstly, the absence of rabbinic political enforcement complicates the application of Arditi's sociological model, and secondly and most importantly, it is impossible to clearly define the *Sitz im Leben* of the texts themselves. A potential and more productive intercultural comparison could perhaps be found precisely in the literariness—or the discursive dimension, which we can certainly grasp—of the rabbinic works under examination.

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37 Arditi, *Genealogy of Manners*, 8.
38 Arditi, 8.
39 Arditi, 67.
40 Arditi, 13–14.

4   Habitus

Shifting the attention to the literariness of the *Derekh Ereṣ* tractates means moving the spotlight from the inextricable crux of when and where *Derekh Ereṣ Rabbah* and *Derekh Ereṣ Zuṭa* were composed to the cultural context of their reception as self-standing literary works rather than merely an ill-defined corpus of intertextual fragments. If we turn to consider the *Derekh Ereṣ* tractates as literary objects, disseminating a certain set of values exactly by means of their fashioning into literary compilations of rabbinic traditions, we will be able to extract the very backbone of their instructional message, beyond the specificities making *derekh ereṣ* the rabbinic conceptualisation of etiquette. This functional backbone enables the juxtaposition of rabbinic etiquette to cognate etiquette traditions, such as medieval Christian courtesy writings and Islamic *adab* literature, inasmuch as it takes into consideration the cultural impact of literary products conveying manners instruction. An apt model for such a reassessment can be identified in Pierre Bourdieu's theory of habitus. The notion of habitus particularly fits the starting point of this inquiry as it incorporates the constitutive elements of *derekh ereṣ*: both ideas, in fact, describe a lifestyle, learned through practice and socialisation, that a given socio-cultural elite elects as its ideal mark of distinction. However, both ideas tend to escape discursiveness, leaving a tension between their inherently pragmatic and corporeal occurrence and the pedagogical necessity to turn such a practice into communicable literature.

The notion of habitus originated in antique philosophy: the Latin term *habitus* denotes an *attitude* or *gait*, in the sense of *exterior aspect*, and at the same time, a *disposition* or *characteristic*. In this latter semantic nuance, the word "habitus" is used in scholasticism as a translation of the Aristotelian concept of *hexis*—that is, the condition permanently acquired through practice standing at the basis of virtue.[41] During the twentieth century, the expression was reintroduced by the anthropologist Marcel Mauss in relation to the study of the techniques of the body.[42] However, it is in Bourdieusian sociology that the concept receives an extensive theorisation. Habitus designates a "system of acquired dispositions,"[43] entailing all those non-discursive aspects of cultural phenomena—such as taste and style—by means of which a social group

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41   Aristotle, *Metaph.* 5.1022b.
42   Marcel Mauss, "Les techniques du corps," in Mauss, *Sociologie et Anthropologie* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1950), 365–86.
43   Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice, repr. ed. (Stanford, CA: Polity Press, 2014), 53; 84 n. 2.

defines itself. At the core of this system, we find bodily learning, through which each individual obtains the basic structures that are necessary for their inclusion in a given social space.[44] From this point of view, good manners represent an exemplary form of *connaissance par corps*:[45] they are, in fact, an eminently corporeal behavioural *dispositif*, the knowledge of which constitutes a pivotal element in the education of individual members of a social group that uses these manners to define its social identity and ethos in the realm of practice, creating a specific lifestyle.[46]

The concept of a practical reason that functions in a social context and entails a non-discursive level can be meta-historically applied to the rabbinic ideal of *derekh ereṣ* described above. However, it should be kept in mind that Bourdieu delineated a theory of practice, whereas we are dealing with texts and literature. By definition, textual material pertains to the epistemological realm of objectification, which is theoretically alien to the essence of habitus. Therefore, what happens when a habitus is objectified, in the sense that it becomes the object of a discourse? According to Bourdieu, practice does not univocally translate into theory, producing an epistemological hiatus between these two realms of instruction.[47] If we apply Bourdieu's formulation to the question of rabbinic courtesy, it is exactly the gap between practice and speculation that explains the ambiguous position of *derekh ereṣ* vis-à-vis normativity.[48]

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44   This interpretative structure is similar to the definition of the "infrastructure of social relations" formulated by Arditi. However, he emphasises "the *logic* in terms of which we constitute modalities of thinking and acting in the first place. In this sense infrastructures of social relations would involve a second order of schemata—the same infrastructure, that is, making possible many different schemata and habituses." See Arditi, *The Genealogy of Manners*, 231–32 n. 17.

45   Pierre Bourdieu, *Pascalian Meditations*, trans. Richard Nice (Stanford, CA: Polity Press, 2000), 128–63.

46   Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983), 170–72. Bourdieu's notion of a socially distinctive habitus is applied to the case of Clement of Alexandria's *Paedagogus* (140/150–215 CE) in Blake Leyerle, "Clement of Alexandria on the Importance of Table Etiquette," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 3 (1995): 123–41.

47   Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, 91.

48   On the perception of etiquette normativity as "natural," see Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, 55–56: "Being the product of a particular class of objective regularities, the *habitus* tends to generate all the 'reasonable,' 'common sense,' behaviours (and only these) which are possible within the limits of these regularities, and which are likely to be positively sanctioned because they are objectively adjusted to the logic characteristic of a particular field, whose objective future they anticipate." The problem of the relationship between praxis and normativity—or fact and law—has been addressed in Giorgio Agamben, *The Highest Poverty: Monastic Rules and Form-of-Life*, trans. Adam Kotsko (Stanford, CA:

While acknowledging the inescapable ontological tension between theory and practice, Bourdieu notes how any attempt at discursively objectifying habitus originates in a given historical change in educational methods.[49] In the specific case of *derekh ereṣ*, the crucial shift in approaching the rabbinic habitus corresponds to the compilation and transmission of the tractates *Derekh Ereṣ Rabbah* and *Derekh Ereṣ Zuṭa* as literary products. The *mise en texte* of otherwise scattered traditions regarding good manners marks a sort of passage from courtesy to etiquette—in other words, from the incidental discussion of a particular habitus to the codification of a given lifestyle.[50] At any rate, it should be kept in mind that because of their borderline position between practice and theory of practice, etiquette manuals do not constitute a reliable source for historical inquiry.[51] Since their content should not be taken as a historical testimony, it is instead the process generating a new literary genre that can be studied as a cultural phenomenon. As Bourdieu's analysis suggests, the literary success of rabbinic etiquette manuals can be understood in relation to the historical occurrence of a crisis in knowledge transfer; that is, the educational crossroads that resulted in the textualisation of both Jewish and non-Jewish culture in medieval Europe.

Stanford University Press, 2013), 26: "It is decisive, however, that the rule enters in this way into a zone of undecidability with respect to life. A norm that does not refer to single acts and events, but to the entire existence of an individual, to his *forma vivendi*, is no longer easily recognizable as a law, just as a life that is founded in its totality in the form of a rule is no longer truly life." On the normative value of etiquette, see also Giorgio Patrizi, "Il valore della norma: Etichetta come comunicazione e rappresentazione tra Cortegiano e Galateo," in *Étiquette et politesse*, ed. Alain Montandon (Clermont-Ferrand: Association des publications de la Faculté des lettres et sciences humaines, 1992), 33–42.

49   Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, 102–3.

50   Alain Montandon has likened the difference between etiquette and courtesy (*etiquette* and *politesse*) to Ferdinand de Saussure's distinction between *langue* and *langage*: while etiquette is a fixed model constituted by a set of given prescriptions, courtesy can be defined as etiquette's dynamic equivalent; i.e., the art of implementing etiquette prescriptions (Montandon, "De l'urbanité: Entre étiquette et politesse," in Montandon, *Étiquette et politesse*, 11–12). On habitus as a generative grammar, see Bourdieu's postface to Erwin Panofsky, *Architecture gothique et pensée scolastique* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1974), 152.

51   Amos, "For Manners Make Man," 30. As far as the historicity of quotidian and religious practices is concerned, textual testimonies shall be contrasted with material evidence: see Andrea Berlin, "Household Judaism," in *Galilee in the Late Second Temple and Mishnaic Periods 100 BCE–200 CE. Volume 1: Life, Culture, and Society*, ed. David A. Fiensy and James R. Strange (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014), 208–15; Stuart S. Miller, *At the Intersection of Texts and Material Finds: Stepped Pools, Stone Vessels, and Ritual Purity among the Jews of Roman Galilee* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2015); Alexei Sivertsev, *Private Households and Public Politics in 3rd–5th Century Jewish Palestine* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2020).

5   **The Transmission History of the *Derekh Ereṣ* Tractates
       and the Codification of Etiquette**

As literary media facilitating the dissemination of rabbinic behavioural ide-
ology, the tractates *Derekh Ereṣ Rabbah* and *Derekh Ereṣ Zuṭa* are not attested
circulating before the late Middle Ages, as can be seen from the manuscript
tradition and mentions of the tractates in other literary works. Concerning the
former type of evidence, *Derekh Ereṣ Rabbah* and *Derekh Ereṣ Zuṭa*—similarly
to other rabbinic texts—are first attested in medieval manuscripts, the earli-
est dating back to the thirteenth century.[52] The *Derekh Ereṣ* tractates are first
transmitted as a literary corpus in MS New York, Jewish Theological Seminary
2237, which was copied in Provence in 1271. Another manuscript of Sephardic
origin, MS Oxford, Bodleian Library, Opp. Add. 4º 128 (Neubauer 2339), dates to
the fourteenth century. The bulk of complete testimonies for the *Derekh Ereṣ*
corpus comes from the Ashkenazi area: MSS Oxford, Bodleian Library, Opp.
59 (Neubauer 1100) (thirteenth century); Oxford, Bodleian Library, Mich. 569
(Neubauer 1098) (thirteenth to fourteenth century); Munich, Bavarian State
Library 95 (Paris, 1342); and Jerusalem, National Library of Israel, Heb. 8º5226
(fourteenth century). Only the later manuscripts originated in Italy; namely,
MSS New York, Jewish Theological Seminary 1909 and Oxford, Bodleian Library,
Mich. 175 (Neubauer 2257) (fourteenth to fifteenth century). From this short
list, we can thus infer that the manuscript tradition of *Derekh Ereṣ Rabbah* and

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52   The independent transmission of tractate *Derekh Ereṣ Zuṭa* needs to be addressed on
       its own. The earliest complete manuscript is MS Oxford, Bodleian Library, Pococke 262
       (Neubauer 896) (Lybia, 1203), which transmits *Derekh Ereṣ Zuṭa* together with Solomon
       ben Natan Sijilmasa's Siddur, a Judaeo-Arabic prayer book redacted in Morocco in the
       eleventh or twelfth century. In the Mizraḥ area, various portions of *Derekh Ereṣ Zuṭa* are
       attested in several fragments from the Cairo Geniza. The diffusion of *Derekh Ereṣ Zuṭa* as
       an autonomous work may depend on its pre-eminently sapiential character—closer to
       Avot than to *Derekh Ereṣ Rabbah*—which renders the text particularly apt for liturgical
       usage. Cf. Van Loopik, *The Ways of the Sages*, 10. At any rate, a lesser presence of manu-
       script testimonies from the Middle East does not necessarily correspond to a complete
       discontinuation in transmission history, since this quantitative subordination might be
       uniquely accidental. Passages from *Derekh Ereṣ Zuṭa* are indeed mentioned in geonic
       compilations, such as *Halakhot Gedolot, Seder ʿAmram Gaʾon*, and Hay Gaʾon's commen-
       tary on *m. Ṭeharot*; see Higger, *Massekhtot Zeʿirot*, 51–52. While attesting the presence of
       Derekh Ereṣ texts in geonic Babylonia (possibly with a cultural emphasis on traditions
       from *Derekh Erekh Zuṭa* as sources for scholastic ethos), these references do not point to a
       fully formed corpus of rabbinic materials on etiquette.

Derekh Ereṣ Zuṭa as a collection is almost completely circumscribed to medieval Europe.[53]

As far as the reception of this literary complex—and thus its quotation in other texts as a distinct piece of literature—is concerned, we encounter a progressive acquisition of literariness. In the introduction to his edition of *Massekhtot Zeʿirot*, Michael Higger provides a detailed inventory of rabbinic loci quoting materials found in the *Derekh Ereṣ* tractates or mentioning them as textual pieces.[54] These literary references offer a basis for understanding the evolution in the perception of the *Derekh Ereṣ* corpus as a progressively recognisable complex of textual units.[55]

(a) As discussed above, in the Babylonian Talmud, the ideal of *derekh ereṣ* is still polysemic and indefinable to a certain extent. Moreover, the scarce hints to a *discourse* on *derekh ereṣ* are similarly vague: thus, tractate *Berakhot* (22a)[56] refers to *hilkhot derekh ereṣ*, which apparently constitute a—non-fixed and still oral—collection of study materials accompanying the classic rabbinic curriculum:

> A person who suffers from gonorrhoea or a skin disease or who has had intercourse with a menstruating woman is allowed to read the Pentateuch, the Prophets, and the Hagiographa and is also allowed to repeat the Mishnah, the Gemara, and the halakhic and aggadic traditions, while a person who has experienced a nocturnal emission [*baʿal qeri*] is not allowed. Rabbi Yehudah says: "The *baʿal qeri* is allowed to repeat the *hilkhot derekh ereṣ*." A story was told concerning Rabbi Yehudah. After experiencing a nocturnal emission, he was walking near a river. His disciples asked him: "Rabbi, please teach us a chapter from *hilkhot derekh ereṣ*." He went down to the river, immersed himself in it, and only afterwards did he teach the lesson. The disciples said: "Have you not taught us,

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53   With the exception of MSS Oxford, Bodleian Library, Heb. b. 10 (Neubauer 2833) and Oxford, Bodleian Library, Marsh 580 (Neubauer 563) in Oriental script, which are both fragmentary; cf. Adolf Neubauer, *Catalogue of the Hebrew Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library* (Oxford, 1886), 1:111; 2:263–67.

54   Higger, *Massekhtot Zeʿirot*, 51–66.

55   Cf. Günter Stemberger, "Dating Rabbinic Traditions," in *The New Testament and Rabbinic Literature*, ed. Reimund Bieringer, Florentino García Martínez, Didier Pollefeyt, and Peter J. Tomson (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 83: "Advocating a pragmatic approach to them [i.e. questions on redaction and edition for rabbinic texts], I should assume that from the moment when a work is being quoted and referred to by others, it may be considered a more or less clearly identifiable unit although others might still try to adapt and 'improve' it."

56   Lerner, "The External Tractates," 380; Van Loopik, *The Ways of the Sages*, 8.

Rabbi, that the *hilkhot derekh ereṣ* can be repeated even by a *ba'al qeri*?"
He answered: "Even if I am indulgent with other people, I am stringent
with myself."

The passage is excerpted from the discussion of a *mishnah* in *Ber.* 3:4 concerning the prohibition of reciting the *šema'* and the meal blessings for someone experiencing a state of impurity due to a nocturnal emission [*ba'al qeri*]. The fact that the study of *hilkhot derekh ereṣ* is permitted while one is subject to such a condition suggests that this normative corpus was not attributed a particularly affecting religious or scholarly sacredness.[57] The definition of *hilkhot derekh ereṣ* itself points to the inextricable ambiguity—but also continuity— between the normative orders of *halakhah* and *derekh ereṣ*, apparently expressing an intermediate phase in the canonisation of etiquette instructions, which were indeed perceived as norms, although still on the margins of halakhic codification.[58]

A few centuries later, a similar opinion was held by Šerira Ga'on of Pumbedita in the Epistle [*Iggeret*] explaining the history of the rabbinic tradition to the Kayrawan community (tenth century). At the end of a section on the authoritative value of external teachings [*baraitot*] in chapter 5, he states: "And the same can be said about the so-called minor[59] *baraitot*, whence no legislation is deduced, such as the *hilkhot derekh ereṣ* and other aggadic collections."[60]

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57 On the connection between the prohibition of Torah study following a nocturnal emission and the striving for sexual modesty, see Daniel Boyarin, *Carnal Israel: Reading Sex in Talmudic Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 40–51. As suggested by one of the reviewers of this article, *hilkhot derekh ereṣ* may indicate a set of norms on sexual conduct, if the term *derekh ereṣ* is to be understood in its meaning of "sexual intercourse"; in this way, Rabbi Yehudah's refraining from studying *hilkhot derekh ereṣ* would derive not from excessive halakhic strictness, but from an excess of decorum, meant to avoid any source of sexual arousal.

58 The tension between *halakhah* and *derekh ereṣ* can be compared to that between *halakhah* and *minhag*, i.e. law and custom; see, for instance, Gideon Libson, "Halakhah and Reality in the Gaonic Period: Taqqanah, Minhag, Tradition and Consensus. Some Observations," in *The Jews of Medieval Islam: Community, Society, and Identity. Proceedings of an International Conference Held by the Institute of Jewish Studies, University College London 1992*, ed. Daniel Frank (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 67–99; Andreas Lehnardt, "Minhag in der jüdischen Tradition. Überlegungen zur Stellung des Brauches in der rabbinischen Halacha anhand des Talmud-Traktates Pesachim," *Judaica: Beiträge zum Verstehen des Judentums* 60 (2004): 37–52.

59 According to the French version of the text; in the Spanish version, these *baraitot* are called "closed."

60 Šerira Gaon, *The Iggeres of Rav Sherira Gaon*, ed. Natan D. Rabinowich (Jerusalem: Moznaim, 1988), 49; Margarete Schlüter, *Auf welche Weise wurde die Mishnah geschrieben?*

(b) The references in *b. Ber.* and *Iggeret Šerira* do not provide sufficient literary evidence for proving that the *hilkhot derekh ereṣ* correspond to the *textus receptus* of the *Derekh Ereṣ* tractates.[61] Mentions of textual materials paralleled in *Derekh Ereṣ Rabbah* and *Derekh Ereṣ Zuṭa* and recognised as part of the *Derekh Ereṣ* corpus only begin to be attested in medieval Hebrew literature. The earliest references can be found in the works of two rabbis from eleventh-century Italy, Natan ben Yeḥi'el and Solomon ben ha-Yatom.[62] In his lexicographical oeuvre entitled *'Arukh*, Natan ben Yeḥi'el related a selection of instructions from *Der. Er. Rab.* 10:1, presenting them as tannaitic teachings: "Another tradition in *Derekh Ereṣ*: One who enters a bathhouse—how shall he behave? He should first take off his shoes."[63] In his commentary *Peruš Massekhet Mašqin*, Solomon ben ha-Yatom included some materials close to *Der. Er. Rab.* 4:3: "It is accounted in *hilkhot derekh ereṣ*: One should never depart from his fellow before letting him know. Even the master shall ask his disciple permission [to leave]."[64]

(c) These references, however, are still vague. For clearer mentions of a self-defined compilation of written materials on the topic of *derekh ereṣ*, we shall turn to the commentaries on the Babylonian Talmud composed by Rashi (Troyes, 1040–1105) and the Tosafists (Northern France, twelfth to thirteenth century). These commentaries refer to either *Derekh Ereṣ Rabbah* or *Derekh Ereṣ Zuṭa* as *massekhet*, *qunṭres*,[65] or *pereq*, meaning *tractates*—and thus, *texts*.[66] Rashi points out literary parallels with *Derekh Ereṣ Rabbah* and *Derekh Ereṣ Zuṭa* in two circumstances.[67] In the *Tosafot*, the indications are more abundant and more detailed in terms of literary nomenclature, including

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Das Antwortschreiben des Rav Sherira Gaon: Mit einem Faksimile der Handschrift Berlin Qu. 685 (Or. 160) und des Erstdrucks Konstantinopel 1566 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1993), 141–43.

61   However, the tradition collected in *y. Šab.* 6:2 (8a) which makes reference to *derekh ereṣ* is indeed parallel to *Der. Er. Rab.* 10:1 ("According to *derekh ereṣ*, when putting on shoes, one should tie the right foot first and the left foot last; and when taking off shoes, one should untie the left foot first and the right foot last"): cf. Higger, *Massekhtot Ze'irot*, 33.

62   Higger, *Massekhtot Ze'irot*, 52.

63   Natan ben Yeḥi'el, *Arukh ha-šalem*, ed. Alexander Kohut, vol. 1 (Vienna, 1878), 234.

64   Solomon ben ha-Yatom, *Peruš Massekhet Mašqin*, ed. Hirsch Perez Chayes (Berlin: Mekize Nirdamim, 1909), 80.

65   From the Latin *commentarius* or *quinternus*.

66   An equivalent process occurred to the term *kalah* in the Babylonian Talmud, equated by Rashi with the title of the minor tractate *Kallah*: see David Brodsky, *A Bride without a Blessing: A Study in the Redaction and Content of Masekhet Kallah and Its Gemara* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebek, 2012), 10.

67   *b. Ber.* 4a // *Der. Er. Zuṭ.* 3:2; *b. Pesaḥ.* 86b // *Der. Er. Rab.* 6:1; *b. B. Bat.* 58a // *Der. Er. Zuṭ.* 1:17.

the definitions *Massekhet Derekh Ereṣ*,[68] *Hilkhot Derekh Ereṣ*,[69] *Qunṭres Derekh Ereṣ*,[70] and *Pereq Ben ʿAzzay*.[71]

(d) The intertextual presence of the *Derekh Ereṣ* tractates in Hebrew literature became more considerable starting from the end of the twelfth century and the beginning of the thirteenth century. Thanks to a certain proximity from a thematic point of view, the *Derekh Ereṣ* corpus is mostly quoted and rearranged in works that can be classified as *musar*. The content of *Derekh Ereṣ Rabbah* and *Derekh Ereṣ Zuṭa* is almost entirely reported in Yosef ben Yehudah Aknin's *Sefer Musar* (Spain and North Africa, 1150–1220)[72] and the previously mentioned Yeḥiʾel ben Yequtiel Anaw's *Sefer Maʿalot ha-Middot* (Rome, thirteenth century).[73] Later on, other, less systematic quotations of textual portions from the *Derekh Ereṣ* tractates are attested in Meʾir Aldabi's *Ševiley Emunah* (Spain, 1310–1360)[74] and Isaac Abohab's *Menorat ha-Maʾor* (Spain, end of the fourteenth century).[75] Furthermore, the *Derekh Ereṣ* corpus was also addressed in exegetical works, such as *Yalqut Šimʿoni* (Germany, twelfth to thirteenth century),[76] and halakhic compilations such as Isaac ben Moses of Vienna's *Or Zaruaʿ* (Germany and France, ca. 1180–1250)[77] and Alexander Suslin ha-Kohen's (Germany, d. 1349) *Sefer Aguddah*.[78] A further step in this process of acquiring literariness can be discerned from the inclusion of *Derekh Ereṣ Rabbah* and *Derekh Ereṣ Zuṭa* among the minor tractates of the Babylonian Talmud. Naḥmanides (Gerona, 1194–1270) and Menaḥem ha-Meʾiri (Catalonia, 1249–1310) did not include the *Derekh Ereṣ* tractates in their listing of the minor tractates of the Babylonian Talmud [*massekhtot qeṭanot*].[79] However, MS Munich 95 (Paris, 1342) transmits the text of *Derekh Ereṣ Rabbah* and *Derekh Ereṣ Zuṭa* in the appendix including the minor tractates. The ultimate (deutero-)canonisation of the *Derekh*

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68   *b. Taʿan.* 20b // *Der. Er. Rab.* 4:1; *b. Meg.* 29a // *Der. Er. Zuṭ.* 8:10; *b. Yebam.* 16b // *Der. Er. Zuṭ.* 1:18.

69   *b. Ketub.* 17a // *b. Meg.* 29a // *Der. Er. Zuṭ.* 8:10.

70   *b. Bek.* 44b // *Der. Er. Zuṭ.* 6:3.

71   *b. ʿErub.* 53b // *Der. Er. Rab.* 6:3.

72   Higger, *Massekhtot Zeʿirot*, 54.

73   Higger, 55.

74   Higger, 57–58.

75   Higger, 54–55.

76   Higger, 54–55.

77   Higger, 56.

78   Higger, 57.

79   Van Loopik, *The Ways of the Sages*, 2; Abraham Tawrogi, *Der talmudische Tractat Derech Erez Sutta nach Handschriften und seltenen Ausgaben* (Königsberg, 1885), i. See Moses Naḥmanides, *Torat ha-Adam, ʿInyan ha-hoṣaʾah* (in Naḥmanides, *The Writings of Ramban* [Hebrew], ed. Charles B. Chavel [Jerusalem: Mosad ha-Rav Kook, 1964], 2:100.258) and Menaḥem ha-Meʾiri, *Bet ha-Beḥirah* (in ha-Meʾiri, *Bet ha-Beḥirah*, ed. Samuel Dickman [Jerusalem: Mekhon ha-Talmud ha-Israʾeli ha-Šalem, 1965], 61b).

Ereṣ corpus took place in 1550, with the publication of the third edition of the Babylonian Talmud (Venice, Giustiniani).

If we take into consideration the geo-historical distribution of the manuscript tradition together with the indirect literary transmission of the *Derekh Ereṣ* corpus, the cultural scenario that saw the reception of *Derekh Ereṣ Rabbah* and *Derekh Ereṣ Zuṭa* as texts appears to be late medieval Europe. And it is exactly in this geo-historical context that a crucial shift in Jewish intellectual life occurred—the textualisation of rabbinic culture, consecrating the Babylonian Talmud as the focal *written text* at the basis of Jewish religious identity.

6   The Textualisation of Rabbinic Culture

Similarly to the minor tractates *Derekh Ereṣ Rabbah* and *Derekh Ereṣ Zuṭa*, the *opus magnum* of rabbinic culture, the Babylonian Talmud, underwent an extremely complex redactional process, whose historical outline remains a *vexata quaestio* in contemporary scholarship. The final redaction of the Babylonian Talmud is traditionally dated to the end of the fifth century.[80] Written copies of this collection—or portions of it—probably did not circulate before the mid-eighth century.[81] In this historical context, the Babylonian Talmud was perceived as *Torah še-be-ʿal-peh*, oral law. The Babylonian Talmud acquired cultural pre-eminence as a *written* reference—through a process of textualisation, as defined by Talya Fishman—in a later phase and in a different area.[82]

According to Fishman's historical reconstruction, the process that transformed the Babylonian Talmud into a written reference book for legal activity started with the work of the geonic academies in Babylonia during the Abbasid

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80   From the scholarly perspective, the crucial phase of the redaction of the Babylonian Talmud was the editorial work of the *saborayim* during the sixth century. For a survey of the methodological problems of dating rabbinic texts, see Stemberger, "Dating Rabbinic Traditions."

81   Gérard Nahon, "Orality and Literacy: The French Tosaphists," in *Studies in Medieval Jewish Intellectual and Social History*, ed. David Engel (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 145–68. On the cultural impact of books as material objects in Abbasid Babylonia, see Talya Fishman, *Becoming the People of the Talmud: Oral Torah as Written Tradition in Medieval Jewish Cultures* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 34. The earliest fragments of talmudic text from the Cairo Geniza date back to the ninth century; cf. Michael Krupp, "Manuscripts of the Babylonian Talmud," in Safrai, *The Literature of the Sages. First Part*, 347.

82   Fishman, *Becoming the People of the Talmud*, 111.

empire (seventh to tenth centuries). In this case, the source of authority lay in the rabbinic personality of the legislator rather than in the textual basis for a given legal matter. The bearer of legal tradition is thus human rather than textual.[83] However, while the Babylonian *geʾonim* continued to transmit juridical lore orally, in the Jewish diaspora, the Babylonian Talmud began to circulate as a written text.[84] Between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries, North African and Andalusian sages undertook an intensive reflection on talmudic content aimed at establishing an actual juridical application,[85] resulting in a proliferation of commentaries and *digesta*.[86] Moreover, the Babylonian Talmud began to gain an aura of sacredness that was somewhat symmetrical to that of scripture itself.[87]

The Babylonian Talmud experienced a different reception in Ashkenaz. In this area, by the eleventh to twelfth century, manuscript testimonies of the Talmud started to increase, possibly after the historical trauma of the Crusades[88] or, more generally, thanks to a relatively stable social and political situation where the cultural attitude towards the written word had changed.[89] The crucial medium of the written transmission of the Talmud is related to the exegetical work of Rashi and the Tosafists—work that implies a textual approach to rabbinic materials that diverges from the practice-oriented post-talmudic literature in Sepharad in the same period. By means of the gloss as a hermeneutical form, rabbinic tradition was conceived and interpreted as a fully coherent juridical corpus, endowed with discursive continuity and inner consistency.[90] Thus, the emergence of the Babylonian Talmud as a written text

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83   Fishman, 36.

84   Fishman, 46–47.

85   The Babylonian Talmud is seen as *halakhah le-maʿaseh*; i.e., applied law: cf. Fishman, *Becoming the People of the Talmud*, 74.

86   Fishman, *Becoming the People of the Talmud*, 86–87.

87   See, for instance, the works of Shemuʾel ha-Nagid (Spain, eleventh century) and Abraham ibn Daud (Toledo, twelfth century); cf. Fishman, *Becoming the People of the Talmud*, 75.

88   Ephraim Kanarfogel, *Jewish Education and Society in the High Middle Ages* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1992), 55–65.

89   Fishman, *Becoming the People of the Talmud*, 121. On the relationship between Jewish culture and the twelfth-century humanistic renaissance, see Avraham Grossman, *Rashi*, trans. Joel A. Linsider (Oxford: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2012), 7–10.

90   Fishman, *Becoming the People of the Talmud*, 135. On Rashi, see Grossman, *Rashi*, 133–48. On the Tosafists, see Charles Taoutati, "Les 'tosafot' ou la quête indéfinie de la coherence," in *Rashi et la culture juive en France du nord au moyen âge*, ed. Gilbert Dahan, Gérard Nahon, and Elie Nicholas (Paris: Peeters, 1997), 331–41. For a comparison of the methodologies used in juridical schools during the Middle Ages, cf. Israel Ta-Shma, "Halakha and Reality: The Tosafist Experience," in Dahan, Nahon, and Nicolas, *Rashi et la culture juive*, 324.

developed in two directions: on the one hand, through the increasing dissemination of manuscripts for learning purposes, and on the other, through the colossal process of writing the *tosafot*.[91] Eventually, in the thirteenth century, this study system was imported into Sepharad by Naḥmanides, with a consequent homogenisation of the concept of talmudic scholarship in medieval rabbinic Judaism.[92]

It is important to state that the textual understanding of rabbinic tradition as developed by Rashi and the Tosafists is rooted in scholastic learning. Through the dissemination of written copies of its commentated text, the Babylonian Talmud became the juridical reference book *par excellence* that allowed rabbinic scholars to polish their logical and dialectical skills. In terms of pedagogical method, the study of the text of the Babylonian Talmud ended up replacing the charismatic authority on which the master-disciple ethos had previously been modelled.[93] Coincidently with the written regulation of the major aspects of daily life, the sub-fields of everyday practice that were only informally disciplined by the rabbinic authorities became the object of normative systematisation. Jewish literature developed a trend of producing practical manuals, such as specific prayer books and para-halakhic guides to circumcision, ritual slaughter, scribal art, and funeral ceremonies.[94] The literary success of the *Derekh Ereṣ* manuals can be understood within this cultural framework: even the rabbinic habitus—a pure practice whose definition eludes discourse—started to be more diffusely transmitted and progressively canonised as a literary corpus.

7   From Body to Text

The textualisation of rabbinic culture occurred simultaneously with and under the influence of that of Northern European culture. Here, between the tenth and twelfth centuries, the educational system experienced a complete overhaul. The buildout of monastic and cathedral schools under the Carolingian government led to the diffusion of manuscript culture thanks to

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91   Nahon, "Orality and Literacy," 148.

92   Fishman, *Becoming the People of the Talmud*, 122–23.

93   Fishman, 136–49. Cf. also Kanarfogel, *Jewish Education*, 70–73; Gérard Nahon, "*Didascali*, rabbins et écoles du Paris médiéval 1130–1171," in Dahan, Nahon, and Nicolas, *Rashi et la culture juive*, 25–28; Grossman, *Rashi*, 56–70.

94   Fishman, *Becoming the People of the Talmud*, 150–51.

the introduction of the pedagogical formula of the *trivium* and the *quadrivium*.[95] From the mid-tenth century, cathedral schools became the centre of formation for aspiring court administrators, lay and clerical alike, thanks to Ottonian educational reforms. In this context, the curriculum focused on the acquirement of civil manners [*civiles mores*]. Starting from the Capetian era in the twelfth century, a further cultural shift took place: the emergence of scholasticism and the creation of universities.[96]

From the pedagogical point of view, the education system shifted from a charisma-inspired form of transmitting theoretical and practical knowledge to an intellectual culture based on rational, critical, and systematic thought, implemented through writing over two centuries.[97] Up until the rise of scholasticism, medieval education was based on literacy and manners [*litterae et mores*]. Instruction entailed not only the study of theoretical rudiments, but also behavioural discipline. Good manners, in fact, were considered to be the starting point for the cultivation of virtues.[98] In practice, this sort of study was performed through emulation: in monastic and cathedral schools, disciples learned the appropriate habitus from the charismatic presence of their teachers, internalising through constant effort their gestures, gait, movements, physical and psychological attitudes, expressiveness, voice tones, and modes of expression.[99]

The idea of a specular correspondence between moral virtue and exterior decorum is rooted in classical culture.[100] Gesticulation and posture were key aspects of the education of a rhetor, as described, for instance, in *De officiis* [On Duties], where Cicero recommends a display of corporeal elegance, regulated by the golden mean, to accompany the intellectual performance and life-long mission of the *homo politicus*.[101] The ethical and aesthetic principle of *aurea mediocritas* as an echo of spiritual equilibrium was later borrowed

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95   The study of grammar, logic, and rhetoric, followed by arithmetic, geometry, music, and astronomy.

96   C. Stephen Jaeger, *The Envy of Angels: Cathedral Schools and Social Ideals in Medieval Europe, 950–1200* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994), 326–27.

97   Jaeger, *The Envy of Angels*, 325–26.

98   Jaeger, 106.

99   Jaeger, 111. See also Fishman, *Becoming the People of the Talmud*, 97–98.

100   C. Stephen Jaeger, *The Origins of Courtliness: Civilizing Trends and the Formation of Courtly Ideals, 939–1210* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), 112; Jean-Claude Schmitt, *La raison des gestes dans l'Occident medieval* (Paris: Gallimard, 1990), 35. On classical rhetoric and rabbinic education, see Richard Hidary, *Rabbis and Classical Rhetoric: Sophistic Education and Oratory in the Talmud and Midrash* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

101   Cicero, *Off.* 1.36.130–31.

in Christian culture.[102] As far as medieval monastic pedagogy is concerned, the most programmatic formulation of the ecclesiastical habitus is found in one of the capital works of etiquette literature, *De institutione novitiorum* [On the Education of Novices] by Hugh of Saint Victor (ca. 1096–1141). This tractate was redacted before 1140 with the purpose of educating novices in the behavioural fields of righteous life (chapters 1–9) and the practice of discipline (chapters 10–21).[103] With the term *disciplina* in particular, Hugh identifies the symbolic value of body techniques *à la* Mauss.[104] This extensive and rigorous regulation of everyday life derives from the antique normative tradition of monastic rules. Thanks to its theoretical framework, which could be universally applicable, *De institutione novitiorum* experienced a noteworthy literary success even beyond the cloister walls. In fact, it had a deep influence on the emerging Christian etiquette literature—from Provençal courtly manuals on *savoir-vivre* to Renaissance tractates such as Baldassar Castiglione's *Cortegiano* and Giovanni della Casa's *Galateo*.[105]

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102   See, for instance, Ambrose, *Off.* 1.18.71 (Ambrose, *De Officiis, Volume 1: Introduction, Text, and Translation*, trans. Ivor J. Davidson [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001], 157–59).

103   Schmitt, *La raison des gestes*, 174–89; Jaeger, *The Envy of Angels*, 254–68.

104   Schmitt, *La raison des gestes*, 178. "Discipline is a good and honest conduct according to which one not only refrains from evil-doing, but also shows oneself to be irreprehensible in all things while performing good actions. [...] All the limbs of the body shall thus be controlled exteriorly through discipline, so as to interiorly reinforce the condition of the spirit: in this way, by opposing exterior composure to the interior mobility that should be tamed, the spirit too concentrates in itself until it reaches constant peace. [...] And, little by little, by habit, the same appearance of virtue that is exteriorly observed in corporeal behavior through discipline will embed in the spirit": chapter 10, Hugh of St Victor, *L'oeuvre de Hugues de Saint-Victor*, vol. 1: *De institutione novitiorum, De virtute orandi, De laude caritatis, De arrha animae*, ed. Hugh B. Feiss and Patrice Sicard, trans. Dominique Poirel, Henri Rochais, and Patrice Sicard (Turnhout: Brepols, 1997), 48–50. The dynamics between the corporeal and the spiritual, together with the insistence on an active intervention in individual *Bildung*, seem to be shared principles in both Hugh of Saint Victor's *De institutione novitiorum* and Yeḥi'el ben Yequti'el 'Anaw's *Sefer Ma'alot ha-Middot*. Monastic education, however, lacks the pre-eminence of social involvement, which in contrast is essential in Jewish rabbinic culture.

105   On the influence of monastic *regulae* on courtly literature, cf. Jonathan Nicholls, *The Matter of Courtesy: Medieval Courtesy Books and the Gawain-Poet* (Woodbridge: D.S. Brewer, 1985), 22–44; Claude Roussel, "Les legs de la Rose: Modèles et préceptes de la sociabilité mediévale," in *Pour une histoire des traités de savoir-vivre en Europe*, ed. Alain Montandon (Clermont-Ferrand: Association des publications de la Faculté des lettres et sciences humaines, 1994), 1:9; Stephen Kolsky, "Making and Breaking Rules: Castiglione's Cortegiano," *Renaissance Studies* 11 (1997): 366. On discipline as a behavioural ideology, see Dilwin Knox, "*Disciplina*: The Monastic and Clerical Origins of European Civility," in *Renaissance Society and Culture: Essays in Honor of Eugene F. Rice Jr.*, ed. John Monfasani (New York: Italica Press, 1991), 107–35; Ettore Romagnoli, "Disciplina est conversatio bona

As a systematisation of practice in manual form, Hugh of Saint Victor's work entailed a redefinition of the pedagogical system, suggesting a historical context of cultural crisis.[106] Until the twelfth century, there are scant sources regarding the education of *mores*, and they mostly consist of indirect references to manners in letters and biographies—materials that are descriptive, but not prescriptive. The explosion of literature on manners occurred following the decline of charismatic teaching, with the affirmation of the textualised culture of scholasticism.[107] In other words, the nurturing of virtues moved from body to text. Once it became the subject of literary discourse, the monastic habitus centred in the cultivation of virtues [*cultus virtutum*] turned into a secular paradigm that eventually came to constitute the cornerstone of courtly ethos in feudal society.[108]

8   Conclusion

"With the historical appearance of a specialized, explicit action of inculcation,"[109] the behavioural style[110] that had previously been naturally transmitted and acquired through practice came to be questioned. Henceforth, textual codification led to the development of an entire literature devoted to the proper way to behave. This late medieval European phenomenon simultaneously reverberated in contemporary Jewish society. Specifically, the circulation of rabbinic etiquette manuals—as evinced from the manuscript transmission of *Derekh Ereṣ Rabbah* and *Derekh Ereṣ Zuṭa*[111]—indicates that the rabbinic elite felt the need to discuss and systematise a habitus by means

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et honesta: Anima, corpo e società tra Ugo di San Vittore ed Erasmo da Rotterdam," in *Disciplina del'anima, disciplina del corpo e disciplina della società tra medioevo ed età moderna*, ed. Paolo Prodi (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1994), 507–37.

106   Other works by authors from the clerical milieu are Pietro Alfonsi's *Disciplina clericalis* (ca. 1076–1140) and Johannes von Garland's *Morale scolarium* (1241); cf. Elias, *The Civilizing Process*, 53; Roussel, "Les legs de la Rose," 13–15.

107   Jaeger, *The Envy of Angels*, 323: "Documentation seems to stand in an inverse proportion to the reality of the phenomena documented." This is paradoxical only at first glance, considering Bourdieu's explanation of the discursive objectification of habitus.

108   On the lexicon of courtly ideology, see Jaeger, *The Origins of Courtliness*, 127–75.

109   Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, 102–3.

110   This wording is from Nicholls, *The Matter of Courtesy*, 43.

111   Philological problems in scholarly reconstructions of textual redactions and editions are also encountered in medieval Christian literature on etiquette (with works such as *Facetus*, *Urbanus magnus*, *De modo comendi*, and *Quisquis est in mensa*). Similarly to rabbinic texts, this literature—either in Latin or in vulgar idioms—is indeed characterised by redactional fluidity, anonymous and collective authorship, and a textual history

of which to educate their members—the *talmidey ḥakhamim*, who could thus aim at incorporating *derekh ereṣ* within their learning-oriented set of distinctive virtues.

It would thus not be possible to appreciate the role of *Derekh Ereṣ Rabbah* and *Derekh Ereṣ Zuṭa* without a close comparison with neighbouring cultures. In particular, Christian literature on manners (both clerical and secular, Latin and vernacular), which evolved into multiple formal genres from the eleventh century on, proves a profitable object of comparison. This comparative analysis, however, involves the exploration of the cultural mechanisms assuring the dissemination of texts as self-contained literary products rather than a survey of similarities and dissimilarities in the contents transmitted in these different religious traditions. This methodological move springs from the need to challenge reductionist and Orientalist approaches that still haunt the study of rabbinic literature and culture, especially when allegedly minor textual manifestations such as the *Derekh Ereṣ* tractates are concerned. The insurmountable complication of unequivocally identifying the redaction and intertextual descendance of late antique Jewish writings can be bypassed by taking into consideration the equally significant retracing of transmissional history, which intrinsically opens a further glimpse into the intercultural and interreligious context in which literary products circulated and exercised intellectual impact. The case of the *Derekh Ereṣ* corpus turns out to be especially productive from this perspective: the very idea of *derekh ereṣ*, once stripped of reductionist readings oriented to exclusively halakhic or moralising understandings of rabbinic Judaism, is suited to theoretical experimentation, through the application of Bourdieu's model of habitus, inspiring a reflection on the structural and functional mechanisms of the extra-textual production of knowledge, which in turn facilitates comparative interpretation.

As a concluding remark, a desideratum shall be expressed. A broader investigation of the practical and theoretical tenets structuring the concept of *derekh ereṣ* as a behavioural ideology should address not only late antique and medieval Christian literary materials on etiquette, but also Arabo-Islamic perspectives on manners as a distinctive aspect of character formation. Literatures from the Islamicate world, in fact, present a specific trend, which later became a genre in its own right called *adab*. The expression *adab* is indeed semantically close to *derekh ereṣ*, indicating the stylistic cluster of manners and practical behaviours that distinguish the refined person. The semantic development of *derekh ereṣ* into a cultural label for the members of the

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of literary borrowing and rearrangements; cf. Nicholls, *The Origins of Courtliness*, 57–74, 139–76.

rabbinic elite seems to be parallel to the emergence of *adab* literature during the Abbasid empire—that is, the historical period when the textual materials constituting the bulk of *Derekh Ereṣ Rabbah* and *Derekh Ereṣ Zuṭa* were undergoing redaction.[112] As far as historical and material references—in the form of manuscript testimonies—are concerned, the subsequent stage in the cultural canonisation of the principle of *derekh ereṣ* took place in medieval Europe as one of the facets of the broad process of the textualisation of culture, involving not only continental areas, but also the Mediterranean and the Middle East. As *textus recepti* epitomising rabbinic ethics and aesthetics, *Derekh Ereṣ Rabbah* and *Derekh Ereṣ Zuṭa* became a literary reference for the shaping of praxis as a usually discarded object of theoretical reflection.

Appendix[113]

(1)   *A Host's Dilemma: Derekh Ereṣ Rabbah* 5:2

One should not enter his fellow's house unexpectedly. [...]

It happened that four elders travelled to the central court, where they knew a fellow philosopher. They were Rabban Gamaliʾel, Rabbi Yehošuaʿ, Rabbi Eleʿazar ben ʿAzaryah, and Rabbi Aqiva. Rabbi Yehošuaʿ asked Rabban Gamaliʾel: "Would you like us to visit our fellow the philosopher?" He replied: "No." The morning after, [the other] asked again: "Would you like us to visit our fellow the philosopher?" and he replied: "Yes."

[Rabbi Yehošuaʿ] went and knocked on the door. The philosopher pondered in his mind: "Such *derekh ereṣ* must belong to a sage." The second time, he got up and washed his face, [hands,] and feet. The third time, he stood and opened the door. He saw the sages standing in a line; that is, Rabban Gamaliʾel in the middle, Rabbi Eleʿazar and Rabbi Yehošuaʿ on his right, and Rabbi Aqiva on his left. The philosopher pondered in his mind: "How shall I salute the sages of Israel? If I said: 'Peace be upon you, Rabban Gamaliʾel,' I would demean the sages of Israel. But, if I said: 'Peace be upon you, sages of Israel,' I would demean Rabban Gamaliʾel." When he reached them, he said: "Peace be upon you, sages of Israel—first and foremost to Rabban Gamaliʾel."

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112   On the influence of the Arabic *adab* on a Jewish sub-genre of *musar* literature, the conduct rules [*hanhagot*], see Zeʾev Gries, "The Fashioning of *Hanhagot* (*Regimen Vitae*) Literature at the End of the Sixteenth Century and during the Seventeenth Century and Its Historical Significance" [Hebrew], *Tarbiz* 56 (1987): 527–81.

113   My translation of the Hebrew text is based on the version in MS New York 2237. Where necessary, the *textus receptus* has been integrated in square brackets.

(2)   *Etiquette versus Torah: Derekh Ereṣ Rabbah* **6:1**
Anyone who visits a house must do everything the host tells him.

It happened that Šimʿon ben Anṭipaṭris used to exhort the guests visiting his house to eat and drink. But if someone who had vowed [by the Torah to abstain from eating and drinking] broke his vow, he would flog him before his departure. This story was heard by Rabban Yoḥanan ben Zakaʾi and the sages, who were enraged by this matter. They said: "Who will go and report to us?" Rabbi Yehošuaʿ answered: "I will go and see what happens." They agreed: "Go in peace."

[Rabbi Yehošuaʿ went and met the host sitting at the entrance of his house. He greeted him: "Peace be upon you, rabbi." The other answered: "Peace be upon you, rabbi and master," and asked: "Do you need anything?" He replied: "A lodging."] He said: "Be my guest." They sat and engaged with Torah until evening. Early in the morning, Rabbi Yehošuaʿ told him: "Rabbi, I am going to the baths." He replied: "As you wish," and Rabbi Yehošuaʿ feared that he would flog him on the back. After he went out, they ate and drank. Later he said: "Who will escort me?" and the other answered: "I will."

In the meantime, Rabbi Yehošuaʿ was pondering in his mind: "What will I report to the sages who sent me here?" Rabbi Yehošuaʿ turned back and the other asked him: "Rabbi, why have you turned back?" He said: "There is one thing I must ask you: Why do you flog the people visiting your house, but not me?" He replied: "You are a great sage, endowed with *derekh ereṣ*. When I order the people visiting my house to eat and drink, those who have vowed abstinence by the Torah break their vow. And so I have heard from the sages: anyone who vows by the Torah but breaks his vow has to be given forty lashes." He asked: "And do you act according to this?" The other answered: "Indeed." He told him: "Therefore I order you to give the forty lashes twice: forty lashes in your name and forty lashes in the name of the sages who sent me here."

(3)   *Trial by Meal: Derekh Ereṣ Rabbah* **7:1–2**
When two sit together at a table, the most important should reach for the food first, then it is the turn of the least important. If the least important reaches for the food first, then he is a glutton.

It happened that Rabbi Aqiva hosted a meal for two of his disciples. He served two dishes, one of which was still raw, while the other was well-cooked. He presented [the raw dish] first. The sharper student grabbed the stalk with one hand, while trying to tear it with the other hand. The stalk did not detach, so he moved his hand away and ate plain bread. The duller student grabbed the stalk with one hand and bit directly into the dish. Rabbi Aqiva told him: "Not this way, my son, try putting your heel on the dish!"

Thereafter, he [presented the well-cooked dish; they ate and drank] until satiated. After they had eaten and drunk, he said to them: "My sons, I did all this just to prove whether you are endowed with *derekh ereṣ*."

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The Effect of Typology on the Character Judgment of Jacob and Esau in Naḥmanides's *Commentary*

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Abstract

The current study aims to understand the effect of Naḥmanides's typological interpretation on his judgment of the characters of Jacob and Esau. While he tends to evaluate most biblical figures in a nuanced fashion, commending the actions of many non-Israelite figures and criticising the patriarchs for their immoral behaviour, we see a pivotal deviation with respect to the Jacob-Esau narrative. In contrast to the complex moral portrayal arising from the biblical story itself, Naḥmanides does not judge Jacob critically, while he harshly condemns Esau. This exception is understood in the context of Naḥmanides's typological exegesis, which interpreted the Jacob-Esau narrative as prefiguring the events between the Jewish and Christian collectives. The contemporary relevance Naḥmanides places on this narrative, coupled with the messianic significance he attributed it with, prevented him from judging Jacob and Esau in a more complex manner.

Keywords

1 Introduction[1]

The thirteenth-century Jewish Catalan scholar and commentator Moses Naḥmanides believed that scripture was multivalent, which led him to interpret the biblical text accordingly.[2] One form of exegesis that is prevalent in

2 Mordechai Z. Cohen, *The Rule of Peshat: Jewish Constructions of the Plain Sense of Scripture and Their Christian and Muslim Contexts, 900–1270* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020), 271–300. Amos Funkenstein claimed that four distinct methods of exegesis can be identified in his commentary: *pešaṭ*, *remez*, *deraš*, and *sod*, which can be respectively translated as the literal, symbolic, homiletical, and mystical interpretations. See Funkenstein, *Styles in Medieval Biblical Exegesis: An Introduction* [Hebrew] (Tel Aviv: Ministry of Defense, 1990), 50–62. Funkenstein posited that these four methods of exegesis are analogous to the medieval Christian trend of interpreting the Bible according to four senses of scripture. In addition to the literal meaning, the biblical text is to be understood according to three additional senses: allegorical, tropological (moral), and anagogical (mystical). These four senses were employed by eminent Christian scholars in the Middle Ages; see Henri de Lubac, *Exégèse médiévale: Les quatre sens de l'Écriture*, vol. 4 (Paris: Aubier, 1959); Beryl Smalley, "Stephen Langton and the Four Senses of Scripture," *Speculum* 6 (1931): 60–76; Gilbert Dahan, *L'exégèse chrétienne de la Bible en Occident médiéval, XIIᵉ–XIVᵉ siècles* (Paris: Cerf, 1999), 50–51. Moreover, according to Funkenstein, Naḥmanides adopted this fourfold structure from Christian exegesis and appropriated it for his own hermeneutical use, while Cohen embraced a similar stance: see Cohen, "Nahmanides' Four Senses of Scriptural Signification: Jewish and Christian Contexts," in *Entangled Histories: Knowledge, Authority and Jewish Culture in the Thirteenth Century*, ed. Elisheva Baumgarten, Ruth Mazo Karras, and Katelyn Mesler (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017), 38–58. Funkenstein himself focused on the *remez* methodology in Naḥmanides's commentary, which he identified as historical-typological exegesis, and presented its similarity to the Christian tendency to interpret the Old Testament narratives as prefigurative allusions to events later described in the New Testament; see Funkenstein, *Perceptions of Jewish History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 98–121. He perceived Naḥmanides's typological exegesis as an exceptional phenomenon in medieval Jewish commentaries; see ibid., 117–21. For a contrasting view, see Marc Saperstein, "Jewish Typological Exegesis after Nahmanides," *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 1 (1993): 158–70. Some scholars have accepted Funkenstein's identification of four distinct levels of interpretation but have contested its alleged Christian origin; see Jacob Licht, "On the Method of Naḥmanides" [Hebrew], *Teuda* 3 (1983): 232. Others have completely denied that there is a fourfold structure in Naḥmanides's commentary; according to Oded Yisraeli, only two levels can be properly distinguished: the meaning that is revealed and that which is concealed, the latter including knowledge of future historical events, which is only alluded to in the biblical text. See Yisraeli, *R. Moses b. Naḥman (Naḥmanides): Intellectual Biography* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2020), 133 n. 80. For the purpose

his commentary is a typological-historical method of interpretation, in such a way that episodes described in the biblical narrative allude to and prefigure future events. This typological exegesis took shape in the rule of *ma'aseh avot siman le-vanim*, meaning that the actions of the fathers are a sign for their children.[3] In his commentary, Naḥmanides presents this principle, explaining why the biblical narrative describes the patriarchs' journeys and actions with such elaboration:

> I will tell you a principle by which you will understand all the coming portions of scripture concerning Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. It is indeed a great matter which our Rabbis mentioned briefly, saying: "Whatever has happened to the patriarchs is a sign to the children" [*Tanḥ. Lekh Lekha* 9]. It is for this reason that the verses narrate at great length the account of the journeys of the patriarchs, the digging of the wells, and other events. Now someone may consider them unnecessary and of no useful purpose, but in truth they all serve as a lesson for the future: when an event happens to any one of the three patriarchs, that which is decreed to happen to his children can be understood.[4]

The stories of the patriarchs, according to Naḥmanides, not only inform the reader about the historical episodes of the past, but also serve to allude to future events. He demonstrates this principle many times throughout his commentary on the book of Genesis; in one such account, he justifies why the narrative gives a detailed elaboration of the episode of Isaac's disputes with the Philistines over the wells (Genesis 26):

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of this article, the exact breakdown of Naḥmanides's methods of exegesis is not critical; his typological interpretation is prominent in his commentary according to both Funkenstein (as an independent form of exegesis) and Yisraeli (as part of the concealed level of meaning).

3 For a further review of this topic, following Funkenstein, see Yair Haas, "Naḥmanides's Typological Exegesis of the Pentateuch as Anti-Christian Polemics" [Hebrew], *Shnaton: An Annual for Biblical and Ancient Near Eastern Studies* 14 (2004): 289–99; Micah Goodman, "Typological Interpretation in Naḥmanides's Teaching" [Hebrew], *Daat: A Journal of Jewish Philosophy* 56 (2005): 39–59; Ruth Ben-Meir, "Towards the Exegetical Approaches of Ramban" [Hebrew], *Iyunei Miqra u-Parshanut* 8 (2007): 533–51; Moshe Halbertal, *Nahmanides: Law and Mysticism*, trans. Daniel Tabak (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2020), 201–38.

4 Naḥmanides on Gen 12:6; the source for this English translation is Moses Nahmanides, *Ramban (Nachmanides) Commentary on the Torah*, trans. and annotated Charles B. Chavel, 5 vols. (New York: Shilo, 1971–1976), 1:168–69. The forthcoming citations from Naḥmanides's biblical commentary will refer to this edition of Chavel's translation.

> Scripture gives a lengthy account of the matter of the wells when in the literal interpretation of the story there would seem to be no benefit nor any great honor to Isaac in that he and his father did the identical thing. However, there is a hidden matter involved here since scripture's purpose is to make known a future matter. A well of living water alludes to the House of God which the children of Isaac will build. This is why scripture mentions a well of living waters, even as it says, A fountain of living waters, the Eternal [Jer 17:13]. He called the first well *ʿeseq* (contention), which is an allusion to the First House, concerning which the nations contended with us [...]. The second well he called *śiṭnah* (enmity), a name harsher than the first. This alludes to the Second House, which has indeed been referred to by this very name, in the beginning of his reign, they wrote "sitnah" against the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem [Ezra 4:6]. [...] The third well he called *reḥovot* (spacious). This is a reference to the Future House, which will be speedily built in our days, and it will be done without quarrel and feud, and God will enlarge our borders.[5]

Naḥmanides interprets the three wells as a typological prefiguration of the three temples; while both the First and Second Temple periods were characterised by strife, as hinted at in the names "*ʿeseq*" and "*śiṭnah*," the third temple will be blessed with peace and prosperity, as the name "*reḥovot*" suggests.

In the commentary above, it is evident that the *pešaṭ* [plain meaning] and the typological sense are on different hermeneutical levels; while Naḥmanides refers to the former as "the literal interpretation," the latter is a "hidden matter." Accordingly, the patriarchal events function as *signifiers*, while the historical episodes that will befall their offspring in the future serve as the *signified* elements.[6] In other words, according to Naḥmanides, these biblical accounts are not self-contained in their literal meaning, but rather covertly allude to future events. Hence, one would expect that the plain sense of scripture is the "independent" plane of exegesis, which affects the "dependent" plane, the signified future events to which it alludes, based on this typological commentary. Indeed, it seems as though Naḥmanides's typological method of exegesis is

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5 Naḥmanides on Gen 26:20, 1:334–35.

6 Naḥmanides himself uses the expressions *siman* and *remez*, which can be respectively translated as "sign" and "hint." The Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure introduced the semiotic terms "signifier" and "signified" as the two planes of a sign. While he employed these terms in a linguistic context, we use them here in a more general sense to indicate reference, in congruence with the terms that Naḥmanides himself uses. For further discussion of the Saussurean sign model, see Daniel Chandler, *Semiotics: The Basics*, 3rd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2017), 13–15.

incorporated in a straightforward one-way direction: the literal understanding of the patriarchal stories serves as a signifier by alluding to future events. In contrast, surely the signified content—that is, the eventual episodes of the future as Naḥmanides understood them—should not affect the plain understanding of the patriarchal events.

While this above conception is most intuitive, it may not necessarily be the case. Perhaps the hidden meaning, as Naḥmanides understood it, influenced how he interpreted the plain sense. As Elliot Wolfson has shown, there is sometimes an overlap between the *pešaṭ* and the mystical levels of interpretation, as the latter facilitates the understanding of the former.[7] For example, in his commentary on the story of Judah and Tamar (Genesis 38), Naḥmanides hints to *sod ha-ʿibur*, the secret of reincarnation, as a matter that can explain the importance of the levirate marriage commandment, according to the *pešaṭ* interpretation.[8] In this example, as in others, Naḥmanides posits that the external *pešaṭ* meaning can only be properly understood in light of the mystical meaning. That being the case, we can see how his mystical interpretation affected his comprehension of the *pešaṭ*. Considering that Wolfson successfully exemplified the influence of the *mystical* interpretation on the understanding of the *pešaṭ*, is it possible that his *typological* interpretation also affected his understanding of the plain meaning?

In the following sections, we will address the question presented above by examining Naḥmanides's exegesis of the Jacob-Esau story. Specifically, we will review how he evaluates the characters of these two brothers, unequivocally denigrating Esau while sanctioning the behaviour of Jacob. This dichotomous preconception influences Naḥmanides's interpretation of the plain understanding of certain episodes, especially by attributing malevolent intentions to Esau in otherwise ambiguous descriptions of the biblical story. We will argue that this depiction should be understood in the context of the typological significance that Naḥmanides ascribed to the Jacob-Esau narrative as prefiguring the historical events of his own time, thus demonstrating how Naḥmanides's typological exegesis may affect how he comprehended and interpreted the plain meaning of this story.

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7   Elliot R. Wolfson, "By Way of Truth: Aspects of Naḥmanides' Kabbalistic Hermeneutic," *AJS Review* 14 (1989): 129–42.

8   Wolfson, "By Way of Truth," 131; see Naḥmanides on Gen 38:8.

2   Nuanced Judgment of Biblical Characters in Naḥmanides's *Commentary*

This one-sided presentation of Jacob and Esau is not only at odds with the far more complex judgment that arises from the biblical narrative itself, as we will subsequently argue, but it is also inconsistent with Naḥmanides's own personal hermeneutical inclination with respect to other biblical characters. In his commentary, Naḥmanides demonstrates a tendency to evaluate the biblical figures of both patriarchs and Gentiles in a complex and nuanced manner—at times pointing out the wrongdoings of the ancestors while also highlighting positive aspects of non-Israelite characters. This is especially true in comparison to Rashi's commentary, which is inclined to judge the patriarchs in a favourable manner while evaluating most Gentile figures in a predominately negative fashion.[9]

A clear demonstration of Naḥmanides's complex character judgment can be found in his commentary on the episode of Abraham and Sarah in Egypt. After migrating to Canaan by divine command, Abraham wishes to evade hunger by descending to Egypt. In his exegesis of this episode, Naḥmanides comments the following:

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9 As Avraham Grossman has shown, Rashi stresses Israel's unique and elevated status in comparison to the other nations; see Grossman, *Rashi* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2012), 169–74. In addition to his emphasis on Israel's special status, Rashi extensively stresses his negative stance toward non-Jews; his attitude toward the "other nations" is very clearly hostile (ibid., 194–95). Hence, it should not surprise us that he incorporated this attitude into his biblical commentary by presenting the forefathers in a most favourable light, while Gentile figures such as Noah, Ishmael, Esau, and Balaam receive very harsh judgment, a phenomenon that Grossman understood as part of Rashi's polemic with Christianity (ibid., 101–6). For a recent work by Grossman that is dedicated to this issue, see his *Rashi and the Jewish-Christian Polemic* [Hebrew] (Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 2021). However, as others have asserted, it is difficult to convincingly argue that a response to Christianity plays a significant role in Rashi's exegesis; see Shaye D. Cohen, "Does Rashi's Torah Commentary Respond to Christianity? A Comparison of Rashi with Rashbam and Bekhor Shor," in *The Idea of Biblical Interpretation: Essays in Honor of James L. Kugel*, ed. Hindy Najman and Judith H. Newman (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 449–72; Daniel J. Lasker, "Rashi and Maimonides on Christianity," in *Between Rashi and Maimonides: Themes in Medieval Jewish Thought, Literature and Exegesis*, ed. Ephraim Kanarfogel and Moshe Sokolow (New York: Michael Scharf Publication Trust of the Yeshiva University Press, 2010), 3–21. It therefore seems that these attitudes in Rashi's commentary can be better explained in terms of ingroup favouritism and outgroup negativity.

> Know that Abraham our father unintentionally committed a great sin by bringing his righteous wife to a stumbling block of sin on account of his fear for his life. He should have trusted that God would save him and his wife and all his belongings for God surely has the power to help and to save. His leaving the land, concerning which he had been commanded from the beginning, on account of the famine, was also a sin he committed, for in famine God would redeem him from death.[10]

In addition, Naḥmanides does not hesitate to criticise Sarah over her harsh treatment of her handmaid Hagar:

> Our mother did transgress by this affliction, and Abraham also by permitting her to do so. And so, God heard her [Hagar's] affliction and gave her a son who would be a wild-ass of a man, to afflict the seed of Abraham and Sarah with all kinds of affliction.[11]

This complex character judgment is found not only in relation to the forefathers of the ingroup Israelite collective, but also concerning Gentile outgroup figures such as Noah and King Abimelech of Gerar. While these figures are judged quite harshly in midrashic literature, and all the more so in Rashi's commentary, Naḥmanides considered them to be righteous men.[12]

Perhaps the most surprising case of a sympathetic judgment of a non-Israelite character can be found in Naḥmanides's analysis of the Balaam narrative. Considered since antiquity as an archenemy of Israel, Balaam is one of the biblical figures provided with the epithet *ha-rašaʿ* [the wicked] in rabbinic sources.[13] While Rashi rationalises Balaam's refusal to join the messengers of Balak as being a result of his arrogance, Naḥmanides provides an alternate explanation, one more sympathetic to his character:

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10   Naḥmanides on Gen 12:10, 1:173.

11   Naḥmanides on Gen 16:6, 1:213.

12   Naḥmanides on Gen 6:9 and Gen 20:2 respectively. For Rashi's stance towards Noah, see his commentary on Gen 6:9; the rabbinic sources for this ambivalence are *b. Sanh.* 108a and *Gen. Rab.* 30:9. For Rashi's negative evaluation of Abimelech, see his commentary on Gen 20:6; for the midrashic source, see *Gen. Rab.* 52:4.

13   See, for example, the dichotomy presented in the mishnaic tractate Avot between "Abraham our father" and "Balaam the wicked": "Whoever possesses these three things is of the disciples of Abraham our father, and [whoever possesses] three other things, he is of the disciples of Balaam the wicked. A good eye, a humble spirit and a moderate appetite he is of the disciples of Abraham our father; an evil eye, a haughty spirit and a limitless appetite he is of the disciples of Balaam the wicked" (*m. Avot* 5:19).

[FOR THE ETERNAL REFUSETH] TO GIVE ME LEAVE TO GO WITH YOU—"*but only with great princes. This teaches us that he was of a haughty spirit and did not want to tell* [*them*] *that he was under the control of God. Therefore* [*he spoke*] *in* [*an*] *arrogant language. It was because of this that Balak sent yet again princes.*" This is Rashi's language. But it is not correct, for Balaam's whole honor consisted of boasting and glorifying himself in [the fact that he received] the word of God! [...] Rather, the meaning [of Balaam's words] is that God did not want him to go at all. But Balak suspected that he was [only] saying so in order to get a greater reward [...]. But Balaam answered him that even for all his money "I cannot go beyond the word of the Eternal, for He is my God."[14]

Here, Naḥmanides understands Balaam's justification as candid, believing that the explanation of God's prohibition for his decline is honest indeed.[15]

As illustrated, Naḥmanides presents a complex attitude towards biblical figures by portraying some *outgroup* non-Israelite characters in a relatively positive light, while also not justifying every action of the *ingroup* patriarchal characters.[16] This phenomenon contrasts with the general tendency of midrashic literature, especially that displayed in Rashi's commentary, presenting the patriarchs in a complimentary manner while depicting the Gentile figures in a very negative fashion.

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14   Naḥmanides on Num 22:13, 4:250–51.

15   In the proceeding sections of his commentary, Naḥmanides continues with this positive presentation of Balaam: while Rashi (on Num 23:16) adopted the midrash depicting Balaam as blessing Israel against his own will "like a person who fixes a nail onto a board" (*Tanḥ. Balaq* 12; *Num. Rab.* 20:16), Naḥmanides interprets him as consciously blessing Israel out of reverence for God's command (Naḥmanides on Num 23:5). According to Naḥmanides, after Balaam understood that cursing Israel was completely against the divine will, he eventually decided to bless Israel, this time out of his own cognisant initiative (Naḥmanides on Num 24:1). Moreover, Naḥmanides rejects Rashi's commentary that states that Balaam wished to remind God of Israel's sin of the calf, presumably in the desperate hope that reminding God of this grave transgression would turn the divine favour against Israel (ibid.).

16   This phenomenon seems to be more than happenstance and reflects a deeper aspect of Naḥmanides's worldview. While it is vital to trace the exact underpinnings of this attitude, this is beyond the scope of the present work. I plan to address this issue in depth in a future paper.

3   Jacob and Esau in Naḥmanides's *Commentary*

In contrast to the cases above, where Naḥmanides does not hesitate to high-light the wrongdoings of the ancestors on the one hand and to provide a nuanced judgment of outgroup characters on the other, his evaluation of Jacob and Esau bears no such balance. In this narrative, Naḥmanides aligns with the classic paradigm of Rashi and most rabbinic literature, which portrays Jacob in a positive light and overlooks ethically disputable behaviour on his part while depicting Esau as a wicked person with malicious intentions.

This is not to say that Naḥmanides lacked the literary material to offer a complex portrayal of the two men; a clear moral judgment of the characters' actions cannot be easily determined from this narrative alone.[17] While the bib-lical narrator clearly disparages Esau for selling his birthright—"Thus did Esau spurn the birthright"[18]—the reader of this story may feel a substantial discom-fort in envisaging Jacob taking advantage of his brother's physical weakness and his unwillingness to feed Esau, who claims to be on the brink of death, until the latter agrees to relinquish his birthright.[19] Naḥmanides, in line with Rashi and the rabbinic tradition, disregards Jacob's questionable method of achieving the birthright and only scrutinises Esau for displaying such scorn for it: "*Therefore, was his name called Edom* since they mocked at him for having sold an honorable birthright for a small dish. For the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty."[20]

Another of Jacob's actions that may provoke critical judgment is the episode where he takes the blessings by disguising himself as Esau, deceiving his blind and elderly father. Here too, the reader is likely to feel uneasy when Jacob pro-claims, "I am Esau, your first-born,"[21] and perhaps even more so when Esau later walks in and comprehends what has happened: "He burst into wild and bitter sobbing, and said to his father, 'Bless me too, Father!'"[22] One way of alleviating a critical judgment of Jacob is to consider that he was not the initiator of this deception, but rather that he was acting on his mother's command, as he was

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17   See Jonathan Grossman, *Jacob: The Story of a Family* [Hebrew] (Rishon LeZion: Miskal—Yedioth Ahronoth and Chemed Books, 2019), 65–67; 121–22; 148; 173–78.

18   Gen 25:34, following the translation of *The Contemporary Torah* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 2006); the subsequent biblical passages cited in this work are also taken from this translation.

19   Grossman, *Jacob*, 65–67; Yair Zakovitch, *Jacob: Unexpected Patriarch*, trans. Valerie Zakovitch (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2012), 23–24.

20   Naḥmanides on Gen 25:30, 1:317. For Rashi, see his commentary, ibid.

21   Gen 27:19.

22   Gen 27:34.

her favourite and she wanted him to receive the divine blessings.[23] While the narrative provides a rationale for Isaac's preference for Esau—"because he had a taste for game"[24]—no explanation is given for Rebekah's affection towards Jacob. Naḥmanides attempts to justify this favouritism while also offering an explanation as to why scripture emphasises the birth order of Esau and Jacob:

> ESAU HER ELDER SON, JACOB HER YOUNGER SON—The reason why scripture mentions this is to accentuate the unusual action of the righteous one (Rebekah), for parents customarily give recognition to the firstborn in blessing, honor and gift, but she, knowing the righteousness of the younger and the wickedness of the elder, went to all this trouble to transfer the blessing and the honor from the elder to the younger.[25]

Based on the description of the narrative until this point—namely, the taking of the blessings—it is difficult to deduce a crystal-clear ethical judgment of either Esau or Jacob. From a plain reading of the narrative thus far, a dichotomous depiction of "Jacob the righteous" vis-à-vis "Esau the wicked" does not seem to emerge. If anything, Jacob is presented as a crafty negotiator, while Esau, from a critical perspective, may seem brutish and impulsive, but not as evil, as Naḥmanides depicts him.

This moral chasm that Naḥmanides creates between the two brothers serves, in his opinion, as a justification for Rebekah's scheme to take the blessings through deceit and Jacob's execution of it. This justification follows suit with Rashi's judgment of the episode, whereby he sees no wrong in Rebekah and Jacob's manoeuvre. Although most rabbinic literature similarly upholds their actions (thus paving the way for Rashi), there are a few substantial midrashic sources that cast the taking of the blessings in a negative light.[26] Naḥmanides, consistent with his negative portrayal of Esau and his positive portrayal of Jacob, overlooks the opinions that may offer a more complex judgment of both characters.

The narrator then gives the reader a depiction of Esau's inner feelings and intentions after being robbed of his blessings: "Now Esau harbored a grudge

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23 This favouritism cannot be divorced from the message that she received from the oracle during her pregnancy: "Two nations are in your womb, Two separate peoples shall issue from your body; One people shall be mightier than the other, And the older shall serve the younger" (Gen 25:23).

24 Gen 25:28.

25 Naḥmanides on Gen 27:15, 1:340.

26 Numerous midrashim take a positive view of Jacob's taking of the blessing; for example, *Ber. Rab.* 65:18; 65:19; 67:4. For implied criticism of this action, see *Ber. Rab.* 67:4; 70:19.

against Jacob because of the blessing which his father had given him, and Esau said to himself, 'Let but the mourning period of my father come, and I will kill my brother Jacob.'"[27] Ascertaining this, Rebekah sends Jacob away to her brother Laban, with the intention that he remain there for a short period, although in reality, he stays there for twenty years.[28] After leaving Haran but before returning to Canaan, Jacob sends emissaries to his brother Esau with the proclaimed intention of finding favour in his eyes. However, these emissaries state nothing of Esau's response: their only testimony presented to Jacob (and to the reader, for that matter) is that Esau is coming towards him accompanied by four hundred men. While Jacob is greatly frightened of this impending encounter, it is not quite clear how we should understand Esau's intentions.[29] Was Esau's vengeance burning with the same intensity it had had twenty years earlier? This ambiguity was incorporated in the medieval Jewish commentaries: while Rashbam understood Esau's advancement towards Jacob as a gesture of love and peace, Rashi interpreted his intentions as malicious.[30] Similar to Rashi, Naḥmanides thus illustrates Esau's initial intention for this meeting: "Scripture, however, does not narrate that the messengers transmitted a word in Esau's name. Instead, he [Esau] kept his wrath in his heart, and he came with his army for the purpose of doing Jacob evil."[31] While this interpretation is plausible and reasonable, it is surely not necessary or definite. The narrative's reluctance to provide the content of the messages, coupled with its opacity concerning Esau's aims, led Naḥmanides to fill in the blanks from his own personal evaluation of Esau's character. Ultimately, however, Esau meets Jacob, causing him no harm. On the contrary, the narrative describes the following: "Esau ran to greet him. He embraced him and, falling on his neck, he

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27   Gen 27:41. On the one hand, the narrator clearly presents the reader with Esau's fatal intentions, and his conspiracy to murder does not present him positively. However, his rage is understandable considering Jacob's actions. Moreover, scripture emphasises that Esau abstained from killing his brother immediately and postponed his plan until after his father's death, so as to avoid causing him grief. It seems, therefore, that the narrative here offers a complex depiction of Esau; as Grossman notes, if the narrative wished to denigrate him, it could have omitted his deliberation altogether, which highlights his sensitivity towards his father (Grossman, *Jacob*, 161).

28   Gen 31:41.

29   Nahum M. Sarna comments the following: "He is 'coming to meet' him, a phrase that can convey either amity or enmity and so underlined the inability to decipher Esau's intentions"; see Sarna, *The JPS Torah Commentary: Genesis* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1989), 224. For a detailed analysis of Esau's intentions, see Grossman, *Jacob*, 346–54.

30   Rashbam on Gen 32:7; Rashi on Gen 32:12.

31   Naḥmanides on Gen 32:8, 1:397.

kissed him; and they wept."[32] This outcome seems to contradict the negative illustration and the malign intentions that Naḥmanides projected on Esau; aware of this difficulty, he proceeds to explain Esau's cordial greeting:

> However, in the end, when Esau saw the great honor that Jacob bestowed upon him [...] his mercy was aroused, and he thought that Jacob is recognizing his birthright and his pre-eminence, as I have explained. And with this he was comforted, for the hearts belong to God, who turns them whither he will.[33]

According to Naḥmanides, Esau's initial purpose was to harm Jacob; however, after observing Jacob's submission and the respect he paid to him, he experienced a change of heart. Nonetheless, lest we attribute this turnabout to independent goodwill on Esau's part, Naḥmanides emphasises that it was the result of divine intervention. His negative portrayal of Esau continues in his commentary on Jacob's command to his servants to create gaps between the numerous herds of tribute sent to Esau: "AND PUT A SPACE BETWEEN DROVE AND DROVE—i.e., in order to satisfy the covetous eye of that wicked man and to amaze him by the size of the gift."[34] Naḥmanides's wording here is almost identical to Rashi's and is in line with the midrash in Berešit Rabbah, which interpreted that Esau's greed would overcome his desire for vengeance, while also labelling him as "that wicked man."[35] This is not the first time that Naḥmanides refers to Esau as "the wicked" in concordance with rabbinic tradition, as we have seen above.[36] Considering that Naḥmanides is not quick to embrace Rashi's hostile evaluation of other Gentile characters, his negative illustration of Esau is quite remarkable.

To summarise what we have seen thus far, many biblical figures are evaluated in a complex manner in Naḥmanides's commentary with respect to both ingroup and outgroup characters. In contrast to Rashi and most rabbinic literature, Naḥmanides does not aspire to justify all the actions of the patriarchs and matriarchs, especially when he is convinced that the plain reading of scripture shows otherwise. Moreover, Naḥmanides passes favourable judgment on the actions of non-Israelite biblical figures such as Balaam. Notwithstanding the above, Naḥmanides's treatment of the Jacob-Esau narrative appears much

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32 Gen 33:4.
33 Naḥmanides on Gen 12:10, 1:173.
34 Naḥmanides on Gen 32:17, 1:401.
35 Rashi on Gen 32:17; for the midrashic source, see *Gen. Rab.* 76:8.
36 In addition to the previous sources, see the concluding section of Naḥmanides's commentary on Gen 36:40, 1:444; 49:31, 1:604.

less balanced. This is especially true concerning his judgment of the charac-
ter of Esau, who is consistently illustrated as a wicked man with malicious
intentions. As noted, this conviction, following the trend of Rashi and rabbinic
sources, is far from a definitive interpretation of the biblical narrative, which
according to a plain reading portrays Esau in a much more complex man-
ner. It comes across as though his balanced characterisation of non-Israelite
figures is completely absent regarding Esau. How are we to understand this
phenomenon?

4 "Today We Are in the Exile of Edom"

It appears that Naḥmanides's typological exegesis is at play here, drastically
affecting his interpretation of the entire Jacob-Esau narrative. Since this story
holds significant typological value, alluding to future historical personalities
and events, this seems to impact the way that Naḥmanides himself perceived
Jacob and Esau on the *pešaṭ* level. Since Jacob and Esau each prefigure their
offspring, Israel and Edom respectively, Naḥmanides may have been inclined
to present Jacob in a positive light, while offering a negative depiction of Esau.

At first glance, this explanation sounds unreasonable; the events of the
other patriarchs also prefigure future events, according to Naḥmanides, so why
should the story of Jacob and Esau be any different? As we have seen earlier,
Naḥmanides himself initiates his method of typological interpretation in his
commentary on the story of Abraham. However, this does not prevent him
from referring to some of his actions as transgressions. Why, then, does he
overlook the questionable behaviour of Jacob while judging Esau so harshly?

While each patriarch prefigures a historical era of Israel, according to
Naḥmanides, the significance he attributes to each one is not equal. According
to him, the episodes in each patriarch's life foreshadow an exile of their off-
spring: Abraham's experiences allude to the exile in Egypt, those of Isaac allude
to the exile in Babylon, while the Jacob narrative alludes to the Roman exile.[37]
Rabbinic literature typologically identified Esau and Edom with the Roman
empire, and from early in the medieval period, Jewish sources developed this

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37 Naḥmanides on Gen 12:10; 26:1; 43:14; 47:28; this threefold typology is succinctly summa-
    rised in the concluding section of his work *Torat Hashem Temima*: "The entire story of
    Abraham is an allusion to and symbol of the first exile (in Egypt), and (the story) of Isaac
    (alluding) to the Babylonian exile, and (the story) of Jacob (alluding) to our exile, as I
    will explain" (Ephraim Kupfer, "The Concluding Portion of Naḥmanides' Discourse 'Torat
    Ha-Shem Temima'" [Hebrew], *Tarbiz* 40 (1970): 72).

allusion to include Christianity as a whole.[38] This identification further vilified the character of Esau, who now served as the biblical personification of the hostile Christian Church. Naḥmanides embraces this typology and consolidates it by stressing the Roman empire's conversion to Christianity under the rule of Constantine the Great:

> We are presently in the exile of Edom [...]. The Edomim [or Romans] were the first to mistakenly follow after the man [Jesus] who claimed that he was the Messiah. They also ascribed godliness to him. When they came to the land of Edom [Italy], their error spread to the nearby city of Rome. There in the days of Constantine who ruled over Rome, the nation of Edom [...] determined their belief in him and established it [as the religion of the empire].[39]

According to Naḥmanides, the exile of Edom is not a historical period, like the exiles of Egypt and Babylon, but rather an ongoing era. The story of Jacob and Esau prefigures the historical events of Israel under Christian rule, ranging from late antiquity in the Roman empire and continuing throughout the Middle Ages to Naḥmanides's generation: "There is yet in this section a hint for future generations, for everything that happened to our father [Jacob] with his brother Esau will constantly occur to us with Esau's children."[40] From Naḥmanides's perspective, the historical unfolding of this narrative is an ongoing process, enduring until his time. The significance of this typological interpretation is also relevant in the historical reality of thirteenth-century Western Europe:

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38 Gerson D. Cohen, "Esau as Symbol in Early Medieval Thought," in *Jewish Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, ed. Alexander Altmann (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967), 19–30. For the origin of this identification, see Israel Jacob Yuval, *Two Nations in Your Womb: Perceptions of Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, trans. Barbara Harshav and Jonathan Chipman (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 10–20. According to Yuval, this typology originated as a Jewish response to the early identification of the church fathers, who perceived Esau, the rejected son, as representing the Jews, while Jacob represented the church; later rabbinic literature reversed this typology by identifying Esau with Christianity and Jacob with Judaism. For a comprehensive review of the rabbinic identification of Esau with the Roman empire, see Irit Aminoff, *Esau, My Brother: Father of Edom and Rome* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Rubin Mass, 2015).

39 Moses Nachmanides, *Writings of the Ramban*, trans. Charles B. Chavel, new rev. ed. (New York: Judaica Press, 2009), 2:651–52.

40 Naḥmanides on Gen 32:4, 1:394.

I have already mentioned that Jacob's descent into Egypt alludes to our present exile at the hand of the "fourth beast," which represents Rome [the wicked] [...] and the exile has exceedingly prolonged itself over us, with its end, unlike the other exiles being unknown. We are in it as the dead, who say "Our bones are dried up, we are completely cut off." But in the end, they will bring us from all the nations as an offering to the Eternal, and they will be in deep sorrow as they will behold our glory, and we will see the vengeance of the Eternal. May He raise us, that we may live in His presence.[41]

The Roman exile is not a distant historical era in Naḥmanides's eyes, but rather the ongoing dynamics of the present reality. From the poetic nature of his wording above, it is evident that Naḥmanides is emotionally engaged and sees himself as personally involved in this continuing Roman exile.[42]

Moreover, this typological identification is significant concerning Naḥmanides's eschatological conception. This is exemplified by his contention with Ibn Ezra concerning the identification of the fourth beast in Daniel's vision, as mentioned in the above commentary. In contrast to Ibn Ezra, who interpreted the fourth beast as foretelling the Islamic caliphate, Naḥmanides argues that it should be identified with the Roman empire, which also represents Christianity.[43] Since Edom constitutes the final exile, the fall of Edom will signify Israel's redemption:

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41   Naḥmanides on Gen 47:28, 1:568–69.

42   As Miriam Sklarz has shown in a different context, Naḥmanides refers to the story of Jacob from a subjective standpoint, including himself and his generation as part of the Edomite exile. This is in comparison to the exiles of Abraham and Isaac, which foreshadow the exiles of Egypt and Babylon respectively and are described from a more distanced and objective perspective (see n. 36 above). See Sklarz, "From Divine Directive to Human Agency: Transition in the Course of Nahmanides' Typological Exegesis of the Patriarchal Narratives," *Jewish Studies Internet Journal at Bar-Ilan University* 14 (2018), https://jewish-faculty.biu.ac.il/files/jewish-faculty/shared/JSIJ14/sklarz.pdf. In this article, Sklarz demonstrates how Naḥmanides shifts from describing Abraham and Isaac as figures who are unaware of the typological significance of their actions to describing Jacob and Moses as figures who are conscious of their actions' typological implications. She ascribes this transition to the crucial typological significance that Naḥmanides clearly attributes to the exile of Jacob.

43   The eschatological vision of the four beasts, representing four kingdoms, is found in Daniel 7. For Naḥmanides's contention with Ibn Ezra concerning the identification of the final animal, see his discussion in *The Book of Redemption* (*Sefer ha-Ge'ulah*) in Nachmanides, *Writings of the Ramban*, 2:679–683.

> From Esau's descendants, [namely, Rome], the [present] exile and the last destruction of the Sanctuary came upon us, just as our Rabbis have said that today we are in the exile of Edom. When he will be vanquished, and he together with the many nations that are with him will be discomfited, we shall be saved out of it [i.e., the exile] forever.[44]

Considering the great typological weight that Naḥmanides places on the episodes of Jacob and Esau, involving critical issues, including redemption and the messiah, the interpretive stakes of these episodes increase in significance. The crucial importance that he attributes to the typological interpretation of this narrative, coupled with his understanding of the Edom exile as an ongoing process that is relevant to his time, can explain why Naḥmanides was inclined to judge the characters of Esau and Jacob in such a dichotomous fashion.

While Naḥmanides states that the Jacob-Esau episodes in scripture allude to the future events of their offspring, that of the medieval Jewish and Christian collectives, it appears that in effect, the trajectory of this signification is bidirectional: Naḥmanides's contemporary historical reality influences the way in which he perceives and fashions the biblical characters of Jacob and Esau. It appears that his evaluation of these biblical figures is coloured by his anti-Christian sentiment.[45]

5 Conclusion

Let us now return to our initial inquiry concerning the relationship between the *pešaṭ* and the typological meaning in Naḥmanides's commentary. As

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44   Naḥmanides on Ex 17:9, 2:244.

45   For Naḥmanides's implementation of typological interpretation as a polemical device against Christianity, see Haas, "Naḥmanides's Typological Exegesis." It should be mentioned here that Miriam Sklarz has demonstrated Naḥmanides's special affection for Aaron in his commentary, suggesting that this should be understood in the context of the Jewish-Christian polemic; see Sklarz, "'The Holy One of the Lord': Aaron in Nahmanides' Commentary," *Revue des études juives* 178 (2020): 391–410. Considering this study, perhaps Naḥmanides's polemic with Christianity influenced his judgment of the characters of other biblical figures in his commentary beyond Jacob and Esau. Nevertheless, one cannot deny the unique typological status that he attributes to the Jacob-Esau narrative, which is unparalleled by any other biblical story. While it is possible that Jewish-Christian relations played a role in Naḥmanides's perception of other biblical characters, it is difficult to know this for certain. In contrast, there is no such speculation with respect to Jacob and Esau; Naḥmanides clearly identifies the story of Jacob as an allusion to the historic reality of Jewish life under Christendom up to his time.

a rule, it seems as though there is a demarcation of these two levels in the commentary. While the actions of the patriarchs are interpreted as foreshadowing the events of their offspring, this typological exegesis, for the most part, does not substantially affect his interpretation of *pešaṭ*. Even though the narrative of Abraham, for example, prefigures one of Israel's later historical periods, this does not prevent Naḥmanides from criticising some of his actions. Notwithstanding, in his commentary on the episodes of Jacob and Esau, this distinction between the plain meaning and the typological meaning is blurred. It appears as if Naḥmanides, to a great degree, casts his prefigurative historical interpretation onto his evaluation of these characters. Esau, simultaneously representing Edom, the Roman empire, and Christianity, is judged by Naḥmanides "on account of his ultimate end."[46] Thus, Naḥmanides views his own generation as part of the Edom exile, the final age preceding the messianic era. In contrast to the narratives of other patriarchs, who prefigure historical periods of the past, the Jacob-Esau story alludes to the later events regarding Jewish-Christian relations, including Naḥmanides's own period. Bearing this in mind, it seems as though he cannot maintain an objective position when judging the actions and intentions of Jacob and Esau. Given the critical typological significance that he attributes to this story, it seems as though Naḥmanides is almost compelled to hold contrasting preconceived evaluations of these two brothers, presuming "the righteousness of the younger and the wickedness of the elder."

As previously mentioned, Wolfson demonstrated how the *mystical* level of interpretation can assist the understanding of the *pešaṭ* level in Naḥmanides's commentary. Accordingly, the mystical interpretation may at times affect his *pešaṭ* interpretation. Considering the analysis above, it seems that Naḥmanides's *typological* interpretation of the Jacob-Esau narrative not only influenced his understanding of the *pešaṭ*, but in effect forced itself upon it by shaping it in the image of his typological interpretation. While Naḥmanides postulates that the episodes of the forefathers serve as a "decree" for the events for their offspring, with respect to the Jacob-Esau narrative, it appears that the events that befall their offspring determine his evaluation of their patriarchs.

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46   *m. Sanh.* 8:5.

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Paulus of Prague and Elchanon Paulus of Prague

The Self-Fashioning of a Jewish Convert in the Era of Confessionalisation

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Abstract

This article focuses on the convert literature that appeared between 1574 and 1582 under two names, Paulus of Prague and Elchanon Paulus of Prague. These two authors seem, on the strength of both their letters and their published writings, to be the same person, who chose to adopt a second identity apparently in order to advance his career as a professional convert first within the circle of Protestant pastors in Nuremberg, as well as among professors at the universities of Leipzig and Helmstedt, and later among Catholics in Vienna. The biography of Elchanon Paulus von Prague is suggestive of a new space available to converts in the German lands during the late sixteenth century, one in which conversion had become a precarious but viable occupation in its own right. His published works were considered capable of fulfilling didactic objectives in a variety of denominational settings and show an increasing interest in kabbalistic techniques in support of Protestant and Catholic dogmas.

Keywords

Paulus of Prague – Elchanon Paulus of Prague – Jewish convert – sixteenth century – Christian Kabbalah – Nikolaus Selnecker

1   Introduction[1]

Writing in the front matter of the first edition of his book, the Jewish convert Elchanon Paulus of Prague records that he completed his *Mysterium novum*

[The New Secret] at the University of Helmstedt on 6 July 1580. Dedicating the volume to the inaugural rector of this bastion of Lutheranism, Henry Julius, Duke of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel, he identifies his objective as "the edification of the church."[2] Besides this German-language dedication, *Mysterium novum*'s front matter also contains a preface in Hebrew rhyming couplets, constructed as an alphabetic acrostic, with the initial letters of each line serving to spell out a vertical colophon: "I, Elhanan son of Rabbi Menaham, nowadays known as Paulus of Prague, wrote this letter in the year 1579. It was finished here in the town of Helmstedt, which is in the land of Saxony, on 11 June."[3] Less than two years later, on 5 February 1582, Elchanon Paulus uses the same Hebrew preamble for a second edition of *Mysterium novum*, which was produced by Michael Apfel's printing house in Vienna.[4] The book's dedication, however, exhibits a surprising religious turn, since the honoree this time was the Habsburg archduke Maximilian. As previously, he claims to be writing for the edification of the church; this time, however, that meant the Catholic Church. Elchanon Paulus had left the principality of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel, a major centre of Lutheran orthodoxy, and relocated to Vienna, a major centre of the Counter-Reformation. However, this transition is merely emblematic of the life of Elchanon Paulus of Prague, who, over the course of his career, lived under a variety of names, in a variety of places, and with a variety of religious affiliations, adapting accordingly.[5]

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manuscripts that proved to be three unknown Yiddish autograph letters that Paulus of Prague sent from Leipzig to his Nuremberg-based Christian Hebraist friends, the father and son Leonhardt and Georg Pfaler. Franziska König thereupon pointed me to an unpublished Roman-character secretarial letter that Paulus sent to the prominent theologian Paul Eber in Wittenberg. It was these four letters and the information they contained that prompted this review of the available information about Paulus and Elchanon Paulus. I discussed the first results of this research at the "Jüdische Migration und Mobilität in der Frühen Neuzeit" workshop organised by the interdisciplinary "Jüdische Geschichte in der Frühen Neuzeit" forum in Düsseldorf in 2008. I am grateful to Rotraud Ries for the invitation and to Yaacov Deutsch, Avraham Oriah Kelman, Anke Költsch, Elke Morlok, Dirk Sadowski, Magda Teter, and, in particular, Michael Terry for a multitude of generous and valuable suggestions and comments.

2   Elchanon Paulus von Prag, *Mysterivm novum: Ein new herrlich vnd gründtlich beweiß aus den Prophetischen Schrifften/ nach der Hebreer* Cabala/ *daß der name Jesus Christus Gottes vnd Marie Son in den fürnemsten Propheceyungen von Messia verdeckt bedeutet/ daß auch er warhafftig sey der verheissene Messias* (Helmstedt, 1580), fol. A vii[r].

3   Elchanon Paulus von Prag, *Mysterivm novum* (1580), fols. A viii[r]–B iii[r].

4   Elchanon Paulus von Prag, *Mysterivm novum: EJn New herrlich/ vnd gründtlich beweiß nach der Hebreer* Cabala *daß aigentlich der Name vnd Tittel des Hern* IESV CHRISTI *Gottes Son/ in den fürnembsten Propheceyungen von* Messia, *verdeckt inn den Hebraischen Buchstaben bedeutent ist* (Vienna, 1582).

5   On Jewish converts in the German lands in the early modern period, see Elisheva Carlebach, *Divided Souls: Converts from Judaism in Germany, 1500–1750* (New Haven, CT: Yale University

The publications credited to Paulus are all in German, and Hebrew-script citations are typically supplemented with transliteration. None of his books appeared in Hebrew or Yiddish editions. The conclusion must be, therefore, that his writings, marshalling ostensible Jewish evidence in favour of Christianity, were meant for the fortifying of Christians, not the persuasion of Jews.[6] They also highlight an additional distinction among the readers of the Jewish convert literature of this period—namely, between Protestant and Catholic audiences—and illustrate the importance of keeping in mind the regional issue of "confessionalisation"—the division of Central Europe along competing Christian denominational lines—when reading such books.[7] By comparing the editions of Paulus's major book from both sides of a confessional faultline, we can see which elements of convert testimony were deemed suitable for Protestant and Catholic readers alike and which elements we should regard as being denominationally determined.

Elchanon Paulus is in many ways typical of early modern Jewish converts in the German-speaking lands; what makes him stand out most conspicuously is his self-fashioning as a professional convert, emphasising, exaggerating, or inventing—and then re-inventing—his Jewish heritage in his ongoing search for support across confessional borders. These changes in his circumstances, as reflected in archival sources, especially letters, and also in his publications, are the focus of this article, which discusses the various identities of the Jewish convert who called himself "Paulus of Prague" and "Elchanon Paulus of Prague" and who published under both names between 1574 and 1582. The scattered sources include a record of Paulus of Prague's Protestant baptism in Nuremberg in 1556, a record of his enrolment at the University of Tübingen in 1560, letters he wrote from Leipzig sometime between 1577 and 1579, and archival references to his time in Helmstedt in 1579 and 1580. In 1580, when he was at the University of Helmstedt, he started calling himself "Elchanon Paulus

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Press, 2001); Yaacov Deutsch, *Judaism in Christian Eyes: Ethnographic Descriptions of Jews and Judaism in Early Modern Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Jonathan Adams and Cordelia Heß, eds., *Revealing the Secrets of the Jews: Johannes Pfefferkorn and Christian Writings about Jewish Life and Literature in Early Modern Europe* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017); Anke Költsch, *Konversion und Integration: Konversionen vom Judentum zum lutherischen Christentum im frühneuzeitlichen Herzogtum Sachsen-Gotha-Altenburg* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2021).

6   See Deutsch, *Judaism in Christian Eyes*, 26. On Jewish literacy in Western script, see Ruth von Bernuth, *How the Wise Men Got to Chelm: The Life and Times of a Yiddish Folk Tradition* (New York: New York University Press, 2016), 80–84.

7   On Jews and confessionalisation, see Heribert Smolinsky, "Konversion zur Konfession: Jüdische Konvertiten im 16. Jahrhundert," in *Konversionen im Mittelalter und in der Frühneuzeit*, ed. Friedrich Niewöhner and Fidel Rädle (Hildesheim: Olms, 1999), 153–70.

of Prague," and further archival sources show him living under this name as a Catholic in Vienna and Passau between 1581 and 1583.

2 Paulus and Elchanon Paulus of Prague in the Eyes of Early Modern and Modern Scholars

Previous scholarship has included some contradictory information about Elchanon Paulus that springs from the conflicting information he provides in his publications. In his early books, published under the name "Paulus von Prag," he represents himself as having been converted in Nuremberg in 1556, while in later publications, published under the name "Elchanon Paulus von Prag," he claims that he was converted in Chelm in 1568.

As early as 1733, Johann Christoph Wolf's *Bibliotheca hebræa* questions whether Paulus of Prague and Elchanon Paulus of Prague are really two authors or one.[8] Wolf inclines toward the view that they were one and the same, while Paul Diamant, author of the only existing study relating to this subject, is disinclined to agree.[9] Others who have touched on the matter in passing, however, have sided with Wolf, as I do, and treated the two as one, albeit unintentionally, implicitly, or explicitly but carelessly.[10]

The editors of the *Jewish Encyclopedia* conflate the two identities of Paulus and Elchanon Paulus in a single encyclopedia entry, titled "Paulus of Prague (Elhanan ben Menahem)," where they mention the two claimed conversions and, taking them at face value, attempt to reconcile them instead of seeing them as conflicting or suspect:

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8   Johann Christoph Wolf, *Bibliotheca Hebræa*, vol. 4 (Hamburg, 1733), 776, no. CCXXIV: "Elchanen vel Elchanon Paulus, Pragensis, non distingvendus à Paulo Pragense." See also Wolf, *Bibliotheca Hebræa*, vol. 1 (Hamburg, 1715), 143, no. 224, and 964, no. 1812; Wolf, *Bibliotheca Hebræa*, vol. 2 (Hamburg, 1721), 1010 and 1011; Wolf, *Bibliotheca Hebræa*, vol. 3 (Hamburg, 1727), 91, no. CCXXIV, and 910, no. MDCCCXII.

9   Paul Josef Diamant, "Elchanan Paulus und seine Beziehungen zu Kaiser Rudolf II.," *Archiv für jüdische Familienforschung* 2 (1917): 17–24.

10   Magnus Daniel Omeis, *Gloria Academiae Altdorfinae* (Altdorf, 1683), 12; Johann Heinrich Zedler, *Grosses vollständiges Universal-Lexicon aller Wissenschafften und Künste*, vol. 26 (Halle, 1740), cols. 1626–27; Julius Fürst, *Bibliotheca judaica: Bibliographisches Handbuch umfassend die Druckwerke der jüdischen Literatur einschliesslich der über Juden und Judenthum veröffentlichten Schriften*, vol. 1 (Leipzig, 1863), 229; Johann de Le Roi, *Die evangelische Christenheit und die Juden. Unter dem Gesichtspunkte der Mission geschichtlich betrachtet*, vol. 1 (Karlsruhe, 1884), 133.

Convert to Christianity; born apparently at Kholm (Chelm), Poland, about 1540; died at Prague about the end of the sixteenth century. He was first baptized at Nuremberg in 1556, was rebaptized at Chelm in 1568, and is said to have died after he had for the second time forsworn the Christian religion.[11]

This report, implying Paulus's ultimate return to his Jewish origins and the recidivist explanation for his multiple baptisms that it suggests, must derive, after a fashion, from the convert Christian Gerson, who states that "of Elchanon Paulus, it was falsely put about that before his death, he repudiated the Christian faith."[12] On the strength of the available evidence, I am persuaded that these multiple identities rather correspond to a single individual, who found it expedient to reinvent himself. It seems most likely that he wished to pose as a learned Jew from a rabbinic background—"Rabbi Elchanon son of Rabbi Manachim"[13] (sic)—who had adopted Christianity at a mature age and to distance himself from the reality of having been a simple Jew who had converted as a youth with little learning and who had only later acquired his eventually impressive skills under the tutelage of Christian Hebraists. In what follows, I will try to summarise what can be said about Paulus and Elchanon Paulus and their respective oeuvres, the better to assess the continuities or discontinuities between the two identities.[14] I will also show how his

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11   Isidore Singer and Max Seligsohn, "Paulus of Prague (Elhanan ben Menahem)," in *Jewish Encyclopedia, Volume 9: Morawczyk—Philippson*, ed. Isidore Singer and Cyrus Adler (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1905), 563–64.

12   Christian Gerson, *Der Jüden Thalmud fürnembster Inhalt und Widerlegung* (Helmstedt, 1609), 621: "Vnd das man Elchanon Pauli auch felschlich nachsaget/ er sey vor seinem Todt wider zu einem Juden worden."

13   Elchanon Paulus von Prag, *Mysterivm novum* (1580), fol. G iv[r].

14   Recent discussions of Paulus/Elchanon Paulus have focused on particular moments in his life. See Carlebach, *Divided Souls*, 94 and 122. For Paulus of Prague in Leipzig, see Anke Költsch, "Jüdische Konvertiten an der Universität Leipzig in der Vormoderne," in *Bausteine einer jüdischen Geschichte der Universität Leipzig*, ed. Stephan Wendehorst (Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 2006), 427–50, esp. 438–39, and Ruth von Bernuth, "Zu Gast bei Nikolaus Selnecker: Der jüdische Konvertit Paulus von Prag in Leipzig," *Jahrbuch des Simon-Dubnow-Instituts* 13 (2014): 15–36; for Elchanon Paulus of Prague in Helmstedt, see Rotraud Ries, *Jüdisches Leben in Niedersachsen im 15. und 16. Jahrhundert* (Hannover: Hahn, 1994), 450; Sabine Ahrens, *Die Lehrkräfte der Universität Helmstedt (1576–1810)* (Helmstedt: Landkreis Helmstedt, 2004), 175; E. Niewöhner, "Paulus von Prag," in *Braunschweigisches biographisches Lexikon: 8. bis 18. Jahrhundert*, ed. Horst-Rüdiger Jarck and Dieter Lent (Braunschweig: Appelhans, 2006), 550–51; for Elchanon Paulus of Prague in Vienna, see Diamant, "Elchanan Paulus und seine Beziehungen zu Kaiser Rudolf II.," and "Elhanan," in *Encyclopaedia Judaica, Second Edition*, ed. Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik (Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2007), 6:315.

self-fashioning as a professional convert worked out within the networks existing between the Lutheran clerics of Nuremberg, Leipzig, and Helmstedt, as well as among Catholics in Vienna, where the renewal movement had started shortly before the convert arrived.

3   Paulus of Prague between Nuremberg and Leipzig

On 21 July 1498, Emperor Maximilian issued a decree of expulsion requiring all Jews to leave Nuremberg forever within the next year.[15] During the three centuries in which the decree remained in force—that is, until their readmission at the beginning of the nineteenth century—Jews could only enter Nuremberg as visitors, but could remain there indefinitely if they declared an interest in converting to Christianity. Seven Jews were, indeed, baptised in Nuremberg over the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.[16] This small number nearly doubles if one also considers converts or candidates for conversion who spent time in Nuremberg after having been baptised elsewhere or before going on to be baptised in some other location. Thus, the future convert writer Christoph Mandel was in Nuremberg in 1529.[17] An unnamed *judeus ex Hassia* [Hessian Jew][18] is reported as having expressed an interest in converting to Christianity in Nuremberg at some point between 1521 and 1541; the prospective convert "Rabbi Mair's son of Frankfurt"[19] was in Nuremberg in 1534; and

15   On the history of Jews in Nuremberg, see Arnd Müller, *Geschichte der Juden in Nürnberg* (Nuremberg: Stadtbibliothek Nürnberg, 1968).

16   Müller, *Geschichte der Juden in Nürnberg*, 113; Andreas Würfel, *Historische Nachrichten von der Juden-Gemeinde welche ehehin in der Reichsstadt Nürnberg angericht gewesen aber Ao. 1499 ausgeschaffen worden* (Nuremberg, 1755), 111, reports one more convert: Wolf Paulus, otherwise known as Michael Meyer, who converted to Christianity in 1581.

17   Alexander Scheiber, "Mendel of Buda in Nuremberg," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 23 (1972): 191–95, maintains that Christoph Mandel, who before conversion had been known as Jacob and had worked as a scribe, originally came from Nuremberg and was a son of Mendel of Nuremberg, whose offspring converted to Christianity—or, as Josel of Rosheim puts it, "took the evil road." In 1529, five years before Christoph Mandel's ultimate conversion, he was allowed to stay in Nuremberg for three months at the request of his patron, George, Margrave of Brandenburg; Gustav Hamann, "Konversionen deutscher und ungarischer Juden in der frühen Reformationszeit," *Zeitschrift für bayerische Kirchengeschichte* 39 (1970): 220–30.

18   See Osiander's letter to Hektor Pömer in Osiander, *Andreas Osiander Gesamtausgabe. Band 6: Schriften und Briefe 1535 bis 1538*, ed. Gerhard Müller and Gottfried Seebaß (Gütersloh: Mohn, 1985), 133–34.

19   See Osiander's letter to Nuremberg's city almoner in Osiander, *Andreas Osiander Gesamtausgabe. Band 5: Schriften und Briefe 1533 bis 1534*, ed. Gerhard Müller and Gottfried Seebaß (Gütersloh: Mohn, 1983), 517.

Paulus Staffelsteiner, who had been received into the Catholic Church before his arrival in Nuremberg, converted to Protestantism there in 1536.[20] There is evidence that some of those who received a temporary residence permit did so wholly or chiefly through the intervention of Andreas Osiander, one of the city's leading pastors until his departure for the University of Königsberg in 1548.[21] Famously, in one case, he is said to have insisted on the admission of a Jew who had no thought of conversion, but whose services he sought as a private tutor in Aramaic.[22] He also applied to the city council on behalf of one "Rabbi Jacob Tirck,"[23] a prospective convert, who was granted a permit in 1536.[24] Osiander, however, was not the only strong supporter of Jewish converts in Nuremberg. The *Schaffer* [provost] of the church of St. Sebald, Leonhard Pfaler, and his son Georg Pfaler, professor of Hebrew at the University of Altdorf, 25 kilometres from Nuremberg, were less prominent Hebraists than Osiander, but were assiduous in their efforts to master the language, and were, like him, keen to establish and maintain close contacts with Jews or ex-Jews.[25]

The relatively significant concentration of converts in Nuremberg is also reflected in the relatively significant number of volumes of apologetic and polemical literature printed there—volumes such as Christoph Mandel's *Das Jesus Christus sey dz/ ewig Götlich wort* [That Jesus Christ Is the Eternal Word of God] of 1536, Paulus Staffelsteiner's *Warhafftig widerlegung/ der grossen verfelschung der Judischen Lerer/ des 22. Psalm* [True Refutation of the Grave Misrepresentation of Psalm 22 by Jewish Teachers] of 1536, or, later, Samuel Friedrich Brenz's *Jüdischer abgestreiffter Schlangenbalg* [Jewish Brood of

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20 Hamann, "Konversionen deutscher und ungarischer Juden," esp. 212–15. See also Osiander's letter to Hieronymus Baumgartner in Osiander, *Schriften und Briefe 1535 bis 1538*, 224–26.

21 For a discussion of Osiander's approach to the Jews with further references, see Anselm Schubert, "Andreas Osiander als Kabbalist," *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 105 (2014): 30–34. See also Gerhard Philipp Wolf, "Osiander und die Juden im Kontext seiner Theologie," in Wolf, *Armut—Judentum—Luthertum: Beiträge zur fränkischen und französischen Kirchengeschichte* (Neustadt: Degener, 2004), 144–76.

22 See Osiander's letter to Nuremberg's city council in Osiander, *Andreas Osiander Gesamtausgabe. Band 3: Schriften und Briefe 1528 bis April 1530*, ed. Gerhard Müller and Gottfried Seebaß (Gütersloh: Mohn, 1979), 335–40. The request was granted for six months in 1529.

23 See Osiander's letter to a Nuremberg mayor in Osiander, *Schriften und Briefe 1535 bis 1538*, 158–59.

24 Hamann, "Konversionen deutscher und ungarischer Juden," 212–21.

25 See "Pfaler, Leonhard," in Philipp Melancthon, *Melanchthons Briefwechel. Band 14: Personen O–R*, ed. Heinz Scheible (Stuttgart: Frommann-Holzboog, 2021), 200; Andreas Würfel and Karl Christian Hirsch, *Lebensbeschreibungen aller Herren Geistlichen, welche in der Reichs-Stadt Nürnberg [...] an der Haupt- und Pfarr-Kirche bey St. Sebald in Nürnberg gedienet haben* (Nuremberg, 1756), 46–47.

Snakes Revealed] of 1614. It was in this city and under these circumstances that a seventeen-year-old Jew named Moses was baptised as a Lutheran at St. Sebald's on 30 January 1556.[26] He was given the Christian name "Paulus," as so often with Jewish converts in honour of their archetype. Little is known of his Jewish background and nothing of the connection to Prague that the appellation "von Prag" would suggest. Indeed, the only autobiographical information that the writer provides in any of the works published under the name "Paulus of Prague" is a solitary reference to his "old and good family, descended from great people who were scrupulous in their Jewish observance and highly regarded by Christian rulers and who have always been true servants of Jews and Christians in the land of Franconia"[27] (the region around Nuremberg). Paulus must have married his wife Anna before he left Nuremberg with her to study in Tübingen in 1560.[28] From Tübingen, he returned to Nuremberg, and at least three of his children were baptised in the same church of St. Sebald in which he himself had been baptised: Clara on 22 May 1564,[29] Johannes on 28 August 1574,[30] and Ottho on 19 July 1576.[31]

Ottho's baptism in Nuremberg, and perhaps Johannes's too, evidently took place after Paulus had left for Leipzig. Neither the year of his departure nor the reason for it is known. As a *terminus post quem*, there is a German letter of April 1566 written in the Latin-alphabet cursive of a professional scribe, presumably in Nuremberg following Paulus's dictation.[32] In it, he tells the professor of Old Testament at Wittenberg, Paul Eber, of the financial support that he had been accustomed to receiving through the good offices of Hieronymus Baumgartner, the member of Nuremberg's sovereign city council charged with the oversight of religious, educational, and charitable affairs.[33] Baumgartner

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26   Landeskirchliches Archiv der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche in Bayern, Nürnberg-St. Sebald, Taufen 1556–1578, Mf.-Sign. S3, 320.

27   Paulus von Prag, *Der Apostel/ Symbolum/ von wort zu wort aus/ dem alten Testament probirt/ vnd erweiset/ in Fragstück gestellet/ durch Paulum von Prag/ itzund zu Leipzig* (Wittenberg, 1580), fol. A ii^v.

28   Heinrich Hermelink, *Die Matrikeln der Universität Tübingen: Register. Band 1: Die Matrikeln von 1477–1600*, reprint ed. (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1954), 152, no. 44: "Prag, Paul (Hebraeus natione)."

29   Landeskirchliches Archiv der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche in Bayern, Nürnberg-St. Sebald, Taufen 1556–1578, Mf.-Sign. S3, 325.

30   Landeskirchliches Archiv der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche in Bayern, Nürnberg-St. Lorenz, Taufen 1562–1580, Mf.-Sign. L2, 228.

31   Landeskirchliches Archiv der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche in Bayern, Nürnberg-St. Lorenz, Taufen 1562–1580, Mf.-Sign. L2, 254.

32   Forschungsbibliothek Gotha, Chart A 126, fol. 306^r–v.

33   On Baumgartner, see Peter Fleischmann, *Rat und Patriziat in Nürnberg: Die Herrschaft der Ratsgeschlechter vom 13. zum 18. Jahrhundert* (Nuremberg: Verein für die Geschichte der Stadt Nürnberg, 2008), 2:765–67.

had begun seeing to his needs, wrote Paulus, on the strength of an intervention on his behalf made by Philipp Melanchthon. Melanchthon died in April 1560, so Paulus's support will likely have begun at some point before then. Baumgartner himself died in December 1565, which was evidently followed by the discontinuation of his support, since Paulus, implicitly casting Eber as Melanchthon's spiritual heir, appeals to him to intervene for him with Baumgartner's successor in charge of charitable distributions, Joachim Haller.[34] Paulus refers to the hardship resulting from the religious choice he had made, since as a convert, there was no one but his new co-religionists to whom he might now turn.[35]

Whether Eber ever wrote to Haller (and, if so, with what success) is unknown. What is clear, though, is that early modern German municipal authorities were preoccupied with the burden of poor relief, loath to maintain non-natives, and liable to expel them if they were unable to support themselves.[36] If Paulus failed to secure a continuation of his convert stipend, therefore, he may have left Nuremberg, or have been forced to do so, as early as 1566. Even if he succeeded in the short term, it is apparently the case that this source of funds did eventually dry up, since letters that he would later write from Leipzig are full of regret at not being in Nuremberg and imply that he had not left voluntarily. An alternative scenario, in which Paulus was obliged to leave Nuremberg and unable to return as a result of some civil action against him, or because he had become involved in one kind or another of controversy or interpersonal unpleasantness, is opened up by an obscurely worded sentence in the second of these Leipzig letters. Attempting to recover the right to live in Nuremberg, he writes to Leonhardt Pfaler that "the arguments are not as important as people make out. In future, I wish to show only goodwill so that nobody can possibly have any complaint against me."[37] Perhaps it was both contentiousness and impecunity, one leading to the other, that determined his fate.

It is unclear when Paulus relocated to Leipzig. It seems a fair assumption that he was there as early as 1574, when his first book was published there, and quite possibly for a number of years before that as well. In Leipzig, Paulus lived at some point in the home and under the protection of the prominent Lutheran theologian and hymnodist Nikolaus Selnecker, who had also once lived in Nuremberg.[38] It was from Leipzig that Paul wrote three letters in his

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34 Forschungsbibliothek Gotha, Chart A 126, fol. 306[r–v].
35 Forschungsbibliothek Gotha, Chart A 126, fol. 306[v].
36 On pauperism, see Wolfgang von Hippel, *Armut, Unterschichten, Randgruppen in der Frühen Neuzeit* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1995).
37 Forschungsbibliothek Gotha, Chart A 127, fol. 35[r].
38 On Selnecker, see Ernst Koch, "Selnecker, Nikolaus (1530–1592)," in *Theologische Realenzyklopädie*, ed. Gerhard Müller (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2000), 31:105–8. On Selnecker

own hand, in a script with which he was entirely at home: an Ashkenazic semi-cursive Hebrew.[39] That he could not have made use of the Latin alphabet for this purpose is at least suggested by his employment of a professional scribe in his address to Eber.[40] Certainly, that letter was written a decade earlier than his letters from Leipzig, but even that was a decade after his conversion to Christianity, and if he had not made the transition from Hebrew to Latin characters in the course of ten years, it is perfectly credible that he might well not have done so in twenty. This impression that he may never have made the transition to German script is only reinforced by (admittedly undated) notes in his hand that comprise Hebrew quotations and a translation into the vernacular, which he nevertheless writes in Hebrew characters.[41] In that case, assuming that he wrote the books that were published in German under his name, he must have had assistance in the form of transcription at a minimum.

The three letters from Leipzig, though undated, can be placed between 1577 and 1579. Like the 1566 letter to Paul Eber in Wittenberg, the Leipzig letters and the abovementioned notes somehow entered and survived in Eber's estate. Two of them are addressed to Leonhard Pfaler, who first took orders as a deacon in 1545 and ended up becoming provost of St. Sebald's in 1573. The third letter is addressed to Pfaler's son, Georg, who, following in his father's footsteps, studied theology at Wittenberg, took holy orders, and served as a professor of Hebrew at the University of Altdorf from 1578 or 1579 until his early death in 1584.[42] The letters show the intimacy between Paulus and Pfaler senior, who

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and Paulus of Prague, see von Bernuth, "Zu Gast bei Nikolaus Selnecker." See also Johann Benedict Carpzov, "Dem Christlichen Leser," in Friedrich Albrecht Christiani, *Epistola ad Ebræos ex Græco in purum idioma Hebræum verbotenus & accurate translatum* (Leipzig, 1676), 43–48, esp. 47: "Es mangelt uns allhier in Leibzig nicht an Exempeln beständiger aus dem Jüdenthumb bekehrten Christengenossen/ und zehle ich unter meinen Antecessoren in der Profession der heiligen Hebräischen Sprache einen gebohrenen Juden/ nahmens Anthonius Margarita/ der zu Lutheri Zeit auff unserer Universität gelehret/ und wider die Juden ein groß Buch von Jüden-Glauben geschrieben. Etwan funfftzig Jahr hernach hat ein anderer getauffter Jude/ mit nahmen Paulus von Prag/ allhier gelebet." On Carpzov, see J.H. Chajes, "Durchlässige Grenzen: Die Visualisierung Gottes zwischen jüdischer und christlicher Kabbala bei Knorr von Rosenroth und van Helmont," *Morgen-Glantz* 27 (2017): 109–11.

39 Two letters to Leonhardt Pfaler; see Forschungsbibliothek Gotha, Chart A 127, fols. 31^{r-v} and 34^r–35^v. For the third letter to Georg Pfaler, see fol. 36^{r-v}.

40 Forschungsbibliothek Gotha, Chart A 126, fol. 306^{r-v}.

41 Forschungsbibliothek Gotha, Chart A 127, fols. 32^r–33^v.

42 On Georg Pfaler, see Omeis, *Gloria*, 23 and 98; Georg Andreas Will and Christian Conrad Nopitsch, *Nürnbergisches Gelehrten-Lexicon, Band 3: N–S* (Nuremberg, 1757), 137–39; Georg Andreas Will, *Geschichte und Beschreibung der Nürnbergischen Landstadt Altdorf* (Altdorf, 1796), 247.

must have been the mentor from his Nuremberg days. Paulus conveys confidential information on such matters of church politics as the Formula of Concord, the controversial Lutheran creed drawn up by Selnecker and others and promulgated by the elector of Saxony in 1577, and there is gossip about Selnecker's long-running theological dispute with Christoph Herdesanius.[43] On one occasion, Paulus apologises to Pfaler for failing to discuss "everything" with Selnecker because of a visit on the part of Selnecker's son-in-law, in front of whom he was wary of speaking too openly.[44] From this, Paulus seems to emerge more as a channel than a back-channel of communication between Pfaler and Selnecker.

Along with all the news from Leipzig, Paulus manifests a keen interest in what was going on in Nuremberg. He sends greetings to a circle of Protestant theologians, many of them students of Melanchthon and some of them part of the controversy surrounding the Lutheran Formula of Concord, among them Laurentius Dürnhofer, Nicolaus Herold, Moritz Heling, and Pfaler's son-in-law, Heinrich Schmidel.[45] Paulus congratulates Georg Pfaler on his appointment at Altdorf, asks questions about the new Protestant university serving Nuremberg that had been founded there and is especially eager to hear about faculty recruitment.[46] He also suggests that should the university prove successful in attracting enrolment, he could send his wife out to Altdorf to do the students' laundry, as she had in Tübingen—presumably when Paulus was studying there almost twenty years earlier.[47] This suggests that Paulus's wife and children may well have remained in Nuremberg when he left for Leipzig. If, as is likely enough, his wife, Anna, was a Nuremberg native, she may, unlike her husband, have been entitled to public assistance, or at least have been

43   Forschungsbibliothek Gotha, Chart A 127, fol. 34ʳ. On Herdesanius, see Irene Dingel, *Concordia controversa: Die öffentlichen Diskussionen um das lutherische Konkordienwerk am Ende des 16. Jahrhunderts* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1996), 213–25. See also von Bernuth, "Zu Gast bei Nikolaus Selnecker," 30.

44   Forschungsbibliothek Gotha, Chart A 127, fol. 34ʳ.

45   Forschungsbibliothek Gotha, Chart A 127, fol. 35ʳ. On the controversy, see Dingel, *Concordia controversa*, 207–79; Karl Schornbaum, "Nürnberg im Geistesleben des 16. Jahrhunderts (Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Konkordienformel)," *Mitteilungen des Vereins für Geschichte der Stadt Nürnberg* 40 (1949): 1–96. See also "Dürnhofer, Laurentius," in Philipp Melanchton, *Melanchthons Briefwechel. Band 11: Personen A–E*, ed. Heinz Scheible and Corinna Schneider (Stuttgart: Frommann-Holzboog, 2003), 375–76; "Heling, Moritz," in Melanchthon, *Melanchthons Briefwechel. Band 12: Personen F–K*, ed. Heinz Scheible and Corinna Schneider (Stuttgart: Frommann-Holzboog, 2005), 260–61. On Schmidel (Schmiedel), see Würfel and Hirsch, *Lebensbeschreibungen*, 12–15.

46   Forschungsbibliothek Gotha, Chart A 127, fol. 36ʳ.

47   Forschungsbibliothek Gotha, Chart A 127, fol. 31ᵛ.

immune from expulsion from the city as an indigent. Similarly, if Paulus was expelled from Nuremberg for perceived misconduct, she and the children need not have followed him. If Paulus had, in fact, been separated from his family by financial necessity, it would make all the more intelligible his preoccupation throughout the letters with his precarious situation and his intense desire to return to Nuremberg. It appears from one of the Leipzig letters that he had petitioned the Nuremberg city council to accept him back, which had proved unsuccessful.[48] Pfaler is asked to proofread and forward another appeal, in the form of a letter to Hieronymus Baumgartner the Younger.[49]

Despite the studying he may have done in Tübingen (and it is probable that he was there only very briefly), it is clear that Paulus had not gone on to fill any kind of professional or ecclesiastical position and had always relied on alms. However, in one of the letters from Leipzig, he explains that there would, in future, be no need for the city of Nuremberg to support him were he allowed to return, for now, after further study in Leipzig, his command of Hebrew—undoubtedly meaning Hebrew grammar—was sufficiently strong for him to earn a living by teaching it.[50]

The employment of Jews, especially converted Jews, as Hebrew tutors in universities and schools and on a private basis was a conspicuous phenomenon of the early modern period—witness, for example, the previously mentioned case of Osiander and his Jewish Aramaic tutor.[51] Strikingly, though, at the time of his conversion, Paulus of Prague did not know Hebrew well enough, or formally enough, to be of any use to Christian students of the language.[52] It was only years afterwards, having studied Hebrew as a Christian, with Christian teachers, that he acquired the skills that Jewish converts were, at least ideally, supposed to bring with them to the Christian table.

Leipzig played a crucial role in Paulus's self-fashioning as a converted Jew. There, he learned Hebrew, or relearned it *comme il faut*, in the grammatically

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48   Forschungsbibliothek Gotha, Chart A 127, fol. 34ᵛ.

49   Forschungsbibliothek Gotha, Chart A 127, fol. 35ʳ.

50   Forschungsbibliothek Gotha, Chart A 127, fol. 35ʳ.

51   Forschungsbibliothek Gotha, Chart A 127, fol. 34ᵛ. On Jewish converts as teachers of Hebrew, see Stephen G. Burnett, "Jüdische Vermittler des Hebräischen und ihre christlichen Schüler im Spätmittelalter," in *Wechselseitige Wahrnehmung der Religionen im Spätmittelalter und in der Frühen Neuzeit, Teil 1: Konzeptionelle Grundfragen und Fallstudien*, ed. Ludger Grenzmann, Thomas Haye, Nikolaus Henkel, and Thomas Kaufmann (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2009), 173–88; for Leipzig, see Költsch, "Jüdische Konvertiten an der Universität Leipzig."

52   He can hardly, however, have been entirely unschooled before his conversion since his Leipzig letters are written in a very fine Ashkenazic semi-cursive hand, entirely unlike Christian Hebraist hands of the period.

grounded academic fashion of the time, at around the age of thirty, give or take. His newly awakened intellectual interests also show through in the book exchange that he conducted with the Pfalers; Paulus sent them a work on Hebrew grammar, asked for works of convert literature like those of Christoph Mandel, which he had hitherto been unable to obtain, and offered in exchange another grammar, this time covering Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek.

Finally, it was in Leipzig that books were first published under Paulus's name. We have seen that he still chose to write German in Hebrew script in the late 1570s and would likely have struggled to do otherwise. Thus, it is highly probable that he had help with his first book, which was printed in German in Leipzig in 1574 and bore the following extended title:

> *Gründtliche vnd klare beweisung aus heimlichen Wörtern vnd Buchstaben heiliger Göttlicher schrifft/ Das im Göttlichen Wesen Drey unterschiedene Personen/ und das Gottes Son der verheissene Messias/ von einer Jungfrawen geboren/ vnd für die gantze Welt am Creutze gestorben/ zu der zeit/ die in der heiligen Schrifft durch die Wörter vnd Buchstaben ist bestimpt vnd angezeigt worden. Desgleichen auch Fünff starcke beweisunge aus Mose/ den Propheten/ vnd der Jüden eigenen Büchern/ das Messias für 1574 Jarn komen/ vnd aller Jüden hoffen vnd harren vmbsonst vnd vergebens sey/ Zu sterckung Christliches Glaubens auffs kurtzte zusammen gezogen Durch Paulum von Prag/ im Jar nach Christi Geburt 1556. zum Christlichen Glauben in Nürenberg bekert/ vnd durch die Christliche Tauffe/ der heiligen Christlichen Kirche eingeleibet.*

> [A Solid and Clear Proof According to the Secret Meaning of Words and Letters from Holy Scripture That There Are Three Distinct Persons in God's Being and That God's Son Is the Promised Messiah, Who Was Born of a Virgin and Died for the World upon the Cross at the Time Intimated in the Words and Letters of Holy Scripture. In Addition, Five Strong Proofs from Moses, the Prophets, and Jewish Writings That the Messiah Came 1574 Years Ago and That the Hoping and Waiting of All Jews Is for Nothing and in Vain. Briefly Presented to Strengthen the Christian Faith by Paulus of Prague, Converted to the Christian Faith in Nuremberg in the Year 1556 AD, and through Christian Baptism Incorporated into the Holy Christian Church.]

As promised, the book presents a defence of the Trinity, one of the most common topics of Christian Kabbalah, followed by an attempt to prove that Jesus was the Messiah. Paulus styles himself a convert on the title page, but the book

itself contains little distinctively Jewish content, aside from the occasional
kabbalistic technique of interpreting isolated words or phrases from the Bible
numerologically or as if they were acronyms—invoking, that is, the herme-
neutical principles of *gimaṭriyah* and *noṭariqon*. Two years later, in 1576, Paulus
published a second edition, again in Leipzig, this time adding a reworked ver-
sion of Luther's *Small Catechism* with questions and answers that create the
appearance of addressing specifically Jewish prospective converts. Appended,
too, is a tract on the resurrection of the dead, which simply gathers putative
prooftexts for this doctrine from both the Old and New Testaments.

Only a year later, in 1577, the same book appeared in a third edition, this
time with a preface by Selnecker, Paulus's Leipzig host at the time. Selnecker's
endorsement is not so much a rave review as a cautious commendation. He is
critical of Paulus's attempt to prove the claims of Christianity by such kabbalis-
tic methods as *noṭariqon*, which he believes to be no more than *ein lustig spiel*
[an amusing game].[53] Nevertheless, he sees the book as fulfilling a valuable
function in underscoring the *verstockung* [stubbornness] and *blindheit* [blind-
ness] of the Jews and in providing an enjoyable popular read for Christians.[54]

The process of self-fashioning as an authoritative ex-Jew continues in his
next book, the last work published under the name "Paulus of Prague": *Der
Apostel/ Symbolum/ von wort zu wort aus/ dem alten Testament probirt/ vnd
erweiset/ in Fragstück gestellet/ durch Paulum von Prag/ itzund zu Leipzig* [The
Apostles' Creed Vindicated and Substantiated Word by Word from the Old
Testament. Presented Catechetically by Paulus of Prague, Now in Leipzig].[55]
It is in the preface to this volume that Paulus lays claim to a scrupulously
observant and highly regarded Jewish family background. The function of this
claim is to make more compelling his declaration that it was on the strength
of the arguments presented in this book that he was persuaded to leave his
family—not just an ordinary family, but an "old and good family"—"in order
to choose their worst enemy, the crucified Jesus," as his Saviour and Redeemer.[56]
Der Apostel/ Symbolum was, according to its title page, written in Leipzig, and
Paulus dedicates the book to the elector of Saxony. In this dedication, however,
he expresses his gratitude for the prince's financial support for as long as he
lived under his sovereignty in Leipzig. Sometime before the publication of his

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53   Paulus von Prag, *Gründtliche vnd klare beweisung,* fol. A vi[r].
54   Paulus von Prag, *Gründtliche vnd klare beweisung*, fol. A vii[v]. The anti-Jewish tropes of
      blindness and stubbornness are based on New Testament readings such as John 12:40 and
      2 Cor 3:14.
55   Paulus von Prag, *Der Apostel/ Symbolum.*
56   Paulus von Prag, *Der Apostel/ Symbolum*, fol. A ii[v].

book in 1580, therefore, he had left town. Paulus was now credited with two recent books, one of them published in three editions, but at the same time, he was, as a man of around forty, as dependent on handouts as he had been since his conversion about twenty-four years earlier, estranged from the alleg-edly affluent family in which he had grown up and cut off from the wife and children he seems to have left behind in Nuremberg, a city in which he was forbidden to reside. It is around this point that Paulus of Prague disappears from the documentary record—more or less.

On 11 June 1579, a student named Paulus of Prague enrolled for the fifth semester of the newly founded University of Helmstedt.[57] While it can-not be proved conclusively that this is our Paulus of Prague, there seems every reason to believe that it is. Chronologically, it makes for a perfect fit with his departure from Leipzig; geographically, Helmstedt was not far away—only 170 kilometres northwest of Leipzig; and on a personal level, his patron Selnecker had close ties both with the theologians at the University of Helmstedt, or "Academia Julia," and with its eponymous founder, Julius, Duke of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel. From 1572 until his return to Leipzig in 1577, Selnecker had served in Wolfenbüttel as general superintendent of the consis-tory of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel, an office approximately equivalent to that of bishop, and also as court chaplain there. It was during this time, in 1576, that the University of Helmstedt was inaugurated within his spiritual jurisdiction. It is thus entirely probable that Paulus first learned about the university and its professors in Selnecker's home and that he made the most of this inside information in order to insinuate himself there.

After being recorded in the register of students in 1579, however, the name "Paulus of Prague" finally disappears for good. In the same year, however, the name "Elchanon Paulus of Prague," also appertaining to a convert, makes its debut—this, too, in the records of the University of Helmstedt.[58] If this is a quite distinct Elchanon Paulus who materialises at the same time and in the same place as that in which Paulus dematerialises, then it is probably fair to say that this is quite a coincidence.

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57   Paul Zimmermann, *Album Academiae Helmstadiensis*, vol. 1.1: *Album Academiae Juliae: Studenten, Professoren etc. der Universität Helmstedt von 1574–1636* (Hannover: Selbstverlag der Historischen Kommission, 1926), 22.

58   Niedersächsisches Landesarchiv Hannover, Cal. Br. 21, no. 3936. See also Zimmermann, *Album Academiae Helmstadiensis*, 386.

4　　Elchanon Paulus of Prague in Helmstedt

At around the same time as "Paulus of Prague" appears in the register of students at Helmstedt, the university engages one "Elchanon Paulus of Prague" to do some Hebrew teaching. It is also recorded that he was a successful teacher, but that he could not be hired as a regular instructor because the university regulations required proficiency in Latin from anyone appointed to a paid teaching position, which Elchanon Paulus did not possess. Thus, "robbed of his wife and children," he lived in great poverty, compensated for his labours only with free meals.[59]

The following year, Elchanon Paulus published his most famous book, *Mysterium novum*, in Helmstedt, described on the title page as *Ein new herrlich vnd gründtlich beweiß aus den Prophetischen Schrifften/ nach der Hebreer Cabala/ daß der name Jesus Christus Gottes vnd Marie Son in den fürnemsten Propheceyungen von Messia verdeckt bedeutet/ daß auch er warhafftig sey der verheissene Messias* [A new, magnificent, and solid proof from the writings of the prophets and according to the Hebrew Kabbalah that the chief messianic prophecies secretly intimate that the Messiah's name is that of Jesus Christ, God's and Mary's son, and that he is indeed the promised Messiah. With an earnest admonition from the author to all Jews]. The title page of *Mysterium novum*, the first book published under the name "Elchanon Paulus of Prague," resonates with what seem like near-unmistakable echoes of language previously employed on the title page of *Gründtliche vnd klare beweisung* [Solid and Clear Proof], the first work by Paulus of Prague, which was published six years earlier, with the first of these resemblances occurring immediately in what seems like a reworking of the title of the earlier book, *Gründtliche vnd klare beweisung*, in the title *Mysterium novum: Ein new herrlich vnd gründtlich beweiß* [A New, Magnificent, and Solid Proof]. Moreover, *Gründtliche und klare beweisung* and *Mysterium novum* exhibit a special interest in the ability of precisely the same set of Jewish exegetical traditions to demonstrate Christian claims. The major difference between the two books is the knowledge of Hebrew on the part of the author that they reflect. Whereas Paulus uses only isolated Hebrew words, Elchanon Paulus quotes rather more extensively in Hebrew in what are generally far more ambitious expositions, which seems to fully justify Joseph Blau's judgment that his work contains "some of the better alphabetical tricks of the Christian cabalistic literature."[60]

59　　Niedersächsisches Landesarchiv Hannover, Cal. Br. 21, no. 3936.

60　　Joseph Leon Blau, *The Christian Interpretation of the Cabala in the Renaissance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1944), 76.

Elchanon Paulus's prooftexts usually consist of brief quotations from the Hebrew Bible, to the numerical value of whose letters he must match, or rather invent, some phrase with the same numerical value that makes the biblical text intimate the messiahship of Jesus. Predictably, he gives this treatment to several of the phrases from the book of Isaiah commonly invoked by Christian apologists. This is the case, for example, with the words שְׁמוֹ פֶּלֶא [his name (shall be called) wonderful] (Isa 9:5 in Jewish and 9:6 in Christian Bibles).[61] The sum total of these Hebrew letters is 457, a number that allows him to spell out ישועה בן דוד. A different technique, *noṭariqon* instead of *gimaṭriyah*, with a similar effect, is in play in Paulus's interpretation of some earlier words from that same famous verse, יֶלֶד יֻלַּד לָנוּ בֵּן נִתַּן לָנוּ וַתְּהִי הַמִּשְׂרָה עַל-שִׁכְמוֹ [a child is born, a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder]. Take the first letter of each of the eight Hebrew words involved, shift them around a bit, and there you have it: ישוע בן יה.[62] To produce this result, however, some sleight of hand is required, viz., the silent suppression of both instances of the word לנו [unto us] that occur within what is, truth be told, not an eight-word but a ten-word phrase.[63]

On one occasion, Paulus works his usual numerological magic on the liturgy of the synagogue, specifically that for the festival of Sukkot. At issue are the obscure first two words of the refrain אֲנִי וָהוֹ הוֹשִׁיעָה נָא [ani vaho please save [us]]. First, he points out that both אני and והו are among the supposed seventy-two three-letter names of God, information that he or a collaborator might have gleaned from Pietro Galatino's *De arcanis catholicae veritatis*, where they are all conveniently tabulated.[64] That fact, and some explanation of the concept of the seventy-two divine names, is also and fundamentally provided by Rashi in his commentary on the talmudic tractate Sukkah. Rashi proceeds to cite a *gimaṭriyah* as support for the view that אני והו additionally means "Please, God." That is to say, it is synonymous with the first two words of that other Sukkot refrain, אָנָּא ה׳, since both share the numerical value of 78.[65] For Paulus, however, 78 has a different numerological significance: that number could also be reached by combining the values of בן (52) and the Tetragrammaton (26), so that the hidden meaning of the Jews' mysterious refrain was demonstrably, he contended, "Son of God, please save us!" The kabbalistic examples in this

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61   Elchanon Paulus von Prag, *Mysterivm novum* (1580), fol. Di^v.

62   Elchanon Paulus von Prag, *Mysterivm novum* (1580), fol. Dvi^r.

63   Elchanon Paulus von Prag, *Mysterivm novum* (1580), fol. Dvi^r, quotes it as "a Hebrew verse" without referencing the Bible: יֶלֶד יֻלַּד בֵּן נִתָּן וַתְּהִי הַמִּשְׂרָה עַל-שִׁכְמוֹ. See also fol. Di^v, where he quotes Isa 9:6 correctly.

64   Petrus Galatinus, *De arcanis catholicae veritatis* (Ortona, 1518), fol. 58^r.

65   *b. Sukkah* 45a.

book and its second edition were quoted in the following centuries by con-
verts and Protestant theologians such as Christian Gerson, the Lutheran pastor
Johann Müller, Antonia von Württemberg's teacher Jakob Strölin, and others.[66]
Moreover, Elchanon Paulus prefaces *Mysterium novum* with the long preamble
mentioned at the start of this article. Elchanon Paulus of Prague, then, as he is
styled on the title page of *Mysterium novum*, is also content to be "nowadays
known as Paulus of Prague."[67] This literary activity is datelined Helmstedt six
weeks before "Paulus of Prague" matriculates at the university there.

Contradicting the register of baptisms at St. Sebald's in Nuremberg, where
Paulus's original name is given as Moses, the *Mysterium novum* acrostic makes it
clear that the Hebrew name "Elchanon" was the name by which, so he claimed,
he had gone as a Jew. The retention of the Jewish name in combination with
the Christian name, rather than the displacement of the former by the latter, is
distinctly unconventional. If one supposes, however, that Paulus was starting
to stage himself as a convert in a more professionalised way, a new desire to
possess recognisably Jewish as well as Christian markers becomes understand-
able. If his combination of names can be satisfactorily accounted for by the
supposition that he wished to present himself in as impressively (ex-)Jewish
a light as possible, then his arrival in Helmstedt provided an opportunity and
perhaps suggested the idea, for here, at last, he was not surrounded by peo-
ple intimately acquainted with the facts of his life story, as they had been in
Nuremberg and Leipzig. Here, the more alien he appeared to have been once
upon a time, and the higher his status had once been among Jews, the more
intriguing and valuable this would make anything that he might have to offer
to the Christians, upon whose interest in him he was entirely dependent.

This hypothesis seems to work for, and be reinforced by, the other discrep-
ancies between what Paulus of Prague had said of himself and what Elchanon
Paulus of Prague now says, all of which makes some sense if construed
as being intended to beef up his Jewish legitimacy. First, there is the Polish

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66　Gerson, *Der Jüden Thalmud*, 300; Johann Müller, *Judaismus oder Jüdenthumb/ Das ist
　　Außführlicher Bericht von des Jüdischen Volckes Vnglauben/ Blindheit vnd Verstockung
　　(Hamburg, 1644), 53–54. See also the letter from Strölin Johann Steudner of 14 April 1662
　　in Reinhard Gruhl, *Die kabbalistische Lehrtafel der Antonia von Württemberg: Studien und
　　Dokumente zur protestantischen Rezeption jüdischer Mystik in einem frühneuzeitlichen
　　Gelehrtenkreis* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016), 382–85. On Antonia's interest in Kabbalah, see
　　Elke Morlok, "The Kabbalistic 'Teaching Panel' of Princess Antonia: Divine Knowledge
　　for both Experts and Laity," *Church History and Religious Culture* 98 (2018): 56–90. For
　　more examples, see Martin Friedrich, *Zwischen Abwehr und Bekehrung: die Stellung der
　　deutschen evangelischen Theologie zum Judentum im 17. Jahrhundert* (Tübingen: Mohr
　　Siebeck, 1988), 70.

67　Elchanon Paulus von Prag, *Mysterivm novum* (1580), fols. A viii^v–B i^r.

dimension: in presenting himself on the title page of *Mysterium novum* as having been baptised in the eastern city of Chelm—a convenient choice, if he was fibbing, for being one of the most remote of all the major Polish Jewish communities—Elchanon Paulus may have been playing on Poland's prestige as a centre of Jewish learning, which was at an all-time high in the mid- and late sixteenth century. In addition, perhaps purely to lend credence to his Polish provenance, he had with him in Helmstedt two documents described as letters of protection, one from Sigismund II August (king of Poland from 1548 to 1572) and another from his successor Henry (de Valois, king of Poland from 1573 to 1575). Whatever the nature of these documents, whether recommendations or mere passports, genuine or forged, there is no record of their issuance in Polish sources.[68]

Not only does Elchanon Paulus claim to have come from Poland, the land of Jewish learning, but he is also, he says, of learned lineage, a claim that the old original Paulus may also be making when he says, in his last publication under his old name, that he is "descended from great people," perhaps a first sign of the self-aggrandisement to come. Not only that, however, but Elchanon Paulus claims, as Paulus never does, that he himself had been a rabbi among the Jews. As for the discrepancy between the year of conversion stated by Paulus (1556) and that stated by Elchanon Paulus (1568), if the new, improved Paulus wished to present his pre-conversion self as a sage and a person of consequence in the Jewish community, he could hardly admit to having undergone baptism aged seventeen.

The projection of an enhanced Jewish persona, in line with the more advanced Jewish learning that he had acquired in Leipzig, may indeed have contributed to a certain success that now followed. Thus, in a letter dated 16 September 1579, Martin Chemnitz, superintendent of the consistory of Brunswick and as influential as any second-generation Lutheran leader, wrote to the private secretary and confidant of Duke Julius of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel, Wolf Ewerdes, that he had read Elchanon Paulus's *Mysterium novum* and had liked it so much that he urged that the convert be encouraged to publish more—especially on the subjects of his conversion and Jewish rituals, in a style similar to that of Anthonius Margaritha's books.[69]

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68   No such letter is listed in Mathias Bersohn, *Dyplomataryusz: Dotyczący żydów w dawnej Polsce na źródłach archiwalnych osnuty (1388–1782)* (Warsaw: Druk E. Nicz, 1910), or in Teodor Wierzbowski, *Matricularum regni Poloniae summaria*, vols. 1–5.1 (Warsaw: C. Kowalewski, 1905–1919).

69   Niedersächsisches Landesarchiv Hannover, Cal. Br. 21, no. 1014, fol. 17.

The fledgling university community in Helmstedt was particularly proud and supportive of its Elchanon Paulus, and a number of faculty members assisted him in various ways. Johannes Borcholt, professor of law, and Tilemann Hesshus, professor of theology, jointly petitioned the duke, praising Elchanon Paulus's abilities as a teacher and asking that he be accorded a personal grant from the royal household, to compensate in some measure for the university's statutory inability to pay him.[70] Another admirer was Hesshus's son-in-law Johannes Olearius, the first professor of Hebrew at Helmstedt, where he taught from 1578 until 1581 (which includes Elchanon Paulus's time there, most likely from the spring of 1579 until the summer of 1580). "For the benefit of students of the Illustrious Julian Academy," Olearius produced a polyglot edition of that favourite with teachers of biblical Hebrew, the book of Jonah, in which the text appears in the Masoretic, Septuagint, Vulgate, and Luther versions.[71] The booklet also contains two original Hebrew poems. One, signed by Olearius and addressed to his students, is all threats and promises: a person who, lazily or piggishly, chooses not to apply himself assiduously to Hebrew, "zanaḥ yesod tevunah," has repudiated the foundation of understanding; conversely, the divine reward for effort expended in this endeavour is incalculable.[72] In the other piece of new verse in this volume, Elchanon Paulus bestows a succession of blessings and compliments on Olearius in what the honoree describes as "a most ingenious poem, in which the author's name appears in acrostic form and where each verse uses every letter of the alphabet just once"—as, indeed, it does.[73] Olearius still remembered his colleague

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70   Niedersächsisches Landesarchiv Hannover, Cal. Br. 21, no. 3936.

71   [Johannes Olearius], *Propheta Ionas quadrilinguis: Hebraice, Græce, Latine, Germanice. In gratiam Studiosorum Illustris Academiæ IVLIAE, ut versionum diuersitas ad fontem Hebraicæ originis tanto facilius examinari poßit* (Helmstedt, 1580). No explicit statement of responsibility appears in this booklet, but Elchanon Paulus's poem in praise of Olearius must serve to identify the latter as the compiler. Elchanon Paulus could not have written the work himself; he knew no Latin, and all the more so would have known no Greek, nor was he capable of writing in German unaided.

72   [Olearius], *Propheta Ionas quadrilinguis*, fol. B 8ʳ. Elchanon Paulus makes much the same point in his dedication of *Mysterium novum* to Duke Henry Julius, which was also published in Helmstedt in 1580. Praising the duke for his command of languages, he insists that the chances of unlocking "the secrets of our Christian faith" are dependent not only on the extent of application to Bible study, but also on the ability to study the Old Testament in "holy Hebrew" and the New Testament in Greek and not just reading the Bible in Latin or in German translation: Elchanon Paulus von Prag, *Mysterivm novum* (1580), fol. A iiᵛ.

73   [Olearius], *Propheta Ionas quadrilinguis*, fol. B 8ᵛ.

fondly and tellingly in 1588, when he referred to him as "my rabbi, Paulus Elkana of Prague."[74]

When, in the spring of 1580, after only a year at the University of Helmstedt and just as life may have started to look as if it was finally going his way, Elchanon Paulus requested a leave of absence to go "back" to Poland on some matter of personal business, the university remained supportive, furnishing him with a testimonial or letter of intent indicating its desire to continue his employment.[75] The university even petitioned the duke once more on his behalf, this time for a travel grant, which was forthcoming; however, the absence of any further reference to him in the university's archives suggests that he never again graced Helmstedt with his presence.

If Paulus from Nuremberg and Elchanon Paulus from Chelm are the same man, as they seem to be, perhaps he left Helmstedt in something of a panic, fearing imminent exposure as a bit of an impostor. If, indeed, he had souped up his biography, how he ever expected to get away with it is a mystery. Ties between the Protestant strongholds of Saxony and Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel were particularly strong, and even if the exchanges between the theologians of the two states were not always harmonious, they were nevertheless continuous, with protagonists including, prominently, the patron of his Leipzig days, Nikolaus Selnecker.

5   Elchanon Paulus of Prague in Vienna

If Elchanon Paulus had no genuine previous connection with Poland, there seems no reason why he should have gone there upon leaving Helmstedt, and it is evident that he was living in Vienna by 1581 if not sooner, for in that year he published his next work in that city:[76] *Ein tröstlich/ vnd zu lesen sehr nutzliches*

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74   Johannes Olearius, "Doctissimo atque ornatissimo D.M. Philippo Gallo Halensi," in *Summa doctrinae Christianae, articulis XXI. Confessionis Augustanae prioribus comprehensa*, ed. Philipp Hahn (Wittenberg, 1588), fol.)(8ᵛ.

75   Niedersächsisches Landesarchiv Hannover, Cal. Br. 21, no. 3936.

76   Elchanon Paulus was not the first writer of convert literature to settle in Vienna. Notably, Luther's favourite such authority, Anthonius Margaritha, occupied a position at the University of Vienna from 1537 to 1542 after teaching in Leipzig and elsewhere. For more on Margaritha, see Maria Diemling, "Anthonius Margaritha on the 'Whole Jewish Faith:' A Sixteenth-Century Convert from Judaism and His Depiction of the Jewish Religion," in *Jews, Judaism, and the Reformation in Sixteenth-Century Germany*, ed. Dean Philipp Bell and Stephen G. Burnett (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 304–33; Stephen G. Burnett, "Luther's Chief Witness: Anthonius Margaritha's *Der gantz Jüdisch glaub* (1530/1531)," in Adams and Heß, *Revealing the Secrets of the Jews*, 183–200.

buch/ wider den grewlichen jrrthumb der verstockten Juden/ sie zu vberweysen/
nit allein auß den Prophetischen schrifften/ sonder auch auß jren fürnembsten
Rabbinern schrifften selbst/ welche zum theil geschriben sein lang vor Christi
geburt/ vnd zum theil auch hernach [A Reassuring and Extremely Useful Book
to Read against the Damnable Errors of the Contumacious Jews—To Refute
Them Not Only from the Writings of the Prophets, But Also from the Principal
Rabbinic Texts, Some of Which Were Written Long Before Christ's Birth and
Others after It]. This book contains a new Hebrew poem and its seven chap-
ters present themselves as addressing Jews directly, starting with an oration to
the Jewish community of Frankfurt in the first chapter, which, according to the
text, he claimed to have visited in 1579. With Hebrew words in the margins,
highlighting names, book titles, and important concepts, he continues his
effort to demonstrate the validity of Christian beliefs. In this *Buch/ wider den*
grewlichen jrrthumb der verstockten Juden, he bases his claims on Jewish liter-
ature, primarily the Talmud, but also with reference to such medieval writers
as Ibn Ezra, Maimonides, and David Kimhi—further evidence of his expanded
Jewish learning.

The book was dedicated to Archduke Ernest, who resided in Vienna and
administered Lower Austria between 1576 and 1596 and who was one of the
driving forces behind the Catholic renewal there.[77] The majority of the popu-
lation of Vienna and also of the Austrian nobility was Protestant at this time,
but Ernest was heavily involved in proscribing Protestant services and clos-
ing Protestant churches, schools, and bookshops. Elchanon Paulus arrived at a
time of extreme religious tension, with the election of the Lutheran Johann
Baptist Schwarzenthaler as rector of the university being annulled and the
influential Gnesio-Lutheran Josua Opitz being expelled from Vienna in 1578.
The university's Catholic revival was reinforced when the Protestant-born
Melchior Khlesl became chancellor in 1579 and proceeded to ensure that
the professors who taught at the university were exclusively Catholic. Khesl
remained chancellor until his death in 1630, in which year he can be found
advocating the compulsory attendance of Vienna's Jews at conversionary ser-
mons to be delivered in Hebrew in the university's main auditorium.[78]

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77   On Ernest and the Counter-Reformation, see Viktor Bibl, "Erzherzog Ernst und die Gegen-
      reformation in Niederösterreich (1576–1590)," *Mitteilungen des Instituts für Österreichische*
      Geschichtsforschung 6 (1901): 575–96.

78   A report describing this suggestion is reprinted in Gerson Wolf, "Zur Geschichte der
      Judentaufen in Oesterreich," *Die Neuzeit* 3 (1863): 47 and 58. On Khlesl, see Rona Johnston,
      Howard Louthan, and Tadhg Ó hAnnracháin, "Catholic Reformers: Stanislas Hosius,
      Melchior Khlesl, and Péter Pázmány," in *A Companion to the Reformation in Central*
      Europe, ed. Howard Louthan and Graeme Murdock (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 204–10.

Elchanon Paulus—having lived through times of theological tension in various Lutheran towns and having been highly aware of these tensions, as evident from his letters—must also have known about this situation in Vienna and must have chosen to side with the Catholics, the option that undoubtedly offered stronger prospects for financial support. In his dedication to Archduke Ernest, however, he steers clear of Christian divisions, alleging that he has written his book to heal the blind and stubborn Jews and stressing that he, as a born Jew, is especially well-suited to this task.

Aside from Jews, who would not and, on the whole, could not have read his book, Paulus mentions a second target audience: Christians hankering for the forbidden fruit of the esoteric knowledge the Jews supposedly possessed. This supposition, according to him, can lead to a weakening of faith, theological misapprehension, and superstition, as it formerly did in his own case.[79] This self-critical condemnation of Christian Kabbalah can be seen both as furnishing his new patrons with an attack on Protestantism, with its emphasis on biblical languages, and as an act of contrition for Paulus's own Lutheran past, and he continues this "confessionalised" critique in his next publication.

Here, another tendency also becomes stronger, as it does in his personal letters. The writings produced before Paulus's arrival in Vienna lack neither unfriendly expressions regarding the Jews nor specific accusations, but in such passages, they are usually described as blind and veiled. His *Buch/ wider den grewlichen jrrthumb der verstockten Juden*, however, displays a somewhat more strident anti-Jewish tone, in which the Jews are described as mischievous, a lost cause since the destruction of the Temple, and rightly punished through exile.

In 1582, also in Vienna, Elchanon Paulus published a second edition of what was to remain the most substantial of his books, *Mysterium novum*, which was first printed in Helmstedt in 1580. The book underwent a number of important changes in both form and content. The supplementary material that makes the Vienna 1582 printing of *Mysterium novum* a true second edition and not merely a reprint also includes a graphical summary of kabbalistic methods and an explanation of the kabbalistic method of *temurah*.[80]

The revisions to *Mysterium novum* also include a more aggressive tone towards the Jews. In the 1580 Protestant first edition, the Jews are referred to as "Teuffels volck" [the devil's people], and in the Hebrew poem that precedes the main text, Elchanon Paulus claims that the Jews slander kings and princes and that they threatened him as a convert.[81] In the 1582 Catholic edition, however,

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79   Elchanon Paulus von Prag, *Ein tröstlich/ vnd zu lesen sehr nutzliches buch*, b iʳ.
80   Elchanon Paulus von Prag, *Mysterivm novum* (1582), fols. A iiᵛ and B iʳ.
81   Elchanon Paulus von Prag, *Mysterivm novum* (1580), fol. B iʳ.

all this is retained, but there are also additional claims that the Jews mock Jesus and Mary in plays and at parties and that they call Christians by nasty names. He alleges that the Jews leave blank spaces in the daily prayer book where the names of Christian rulers are to be inserted in order to curse them.[82] The reason that he provides for this Jewish self-censorship is that there have come to be too many Christians nowadays who understand Hebrew. This precaution, however, does not, he says, extend to the liturgy for the holidays, where the curses remain explicit in the festival prayer book and in the penitential prayers and seasonal hymns ("Magxor," "Selichos," and "Iozeros" respectively).[83]

Many of the changes in the Vienna edition of *Mysterium novum* seem attributable to Elchanon Paulus's confessional turn, and, as with the books produced under Protestant auspices, he must have had professional help with preparing his Catholic publications. This is confirmed by Johann Caspar Neubeck, the Catholic bishop of Vienna and former rector of the University of Freiburg, who, in 1583, wrote in a letter to Rudolf II after meeting with Elchanon Paulus in which he explained that the convert had published two books a year ago—clearly his *Buch/ wider den grewlichen jrrthumb der verstockten Juden* (1581) and the second edition of *Mysterium novum* (1582)—which were examined and revised before publication by the Vienna theology faculty.[84]

Confessionalisation elicits changes from Elchanon Paulus that reflect his new allegiance and, most obviously, his pursuit of new patronage. Thus, he changes the dedicatee, substituting for the sixteen-year-old inaugural rector of the new model Lutheran university at Helmstedt, Duke Henry Julius of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel,[85] a dedication to Emperor Rudolf's twenty-three-year-old brother Archduke Maximilian, the future hardline Catholic ruler of Further Austria.[86] The language of the original dedication, however, is still used in part, with additions and eliminations that must have derived from the guidance he received from the theology faculty. The author eliminates all references to the study of Hebrew and to the Christian kabbalists mentioned by

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82   Elchanon Paulus von Prag, *Mysterivm novum* (1582), fols. G iii^v–G iv^r.

83   Elchanon Paulus von Prag, *Mysterivm novum* (1582), fol. G iv^r.

84   See Vienna, Diözesanarchiv, Protocollum Episcopatus Viennensis Anni 1581–1587 (WP 7), fol. 394^r. Linguistic revision is also visible in the second edition of *Mysterium novum*, with the Austrian norms of the new readership reflected in the introduction of characteristics of the Upper German dialect, but the changes are not consistent and most of the text stays as is.

85   This is the same Duke Henry Julius well-known for his enthusiasm for expelling Jews from his realm after succeeding his father, Duke Julius.

86   Elchanon Paulus von Prag, *Mysterivm novum* (1582), fol. a ii^r.

name in the first edition of *Mysterium novum*, notably Reuchlin and Galatinus.[87] The revised text also features a few Catholic cosmetic touches, most obviously allusions to Mary, the saints, and the martyrs, but it also includes a lengthy excursus on the divisions among the Jews throughout history. This discussion opens with the claim that the Jews make theological hay from Christendom's division into "Secten und Spaltungen"[88] [sects and divisions] and then goes on to show how the Jews themselves were divided from early on and that the divisions among them were even deeper than those among the Christians.[89] The references extend from divisions during the First and Second Temple periods up to the late Middle Ages and the contemporary antipathy between philosophers and kabbalists.

In the 1580 *Mysterium novum*, kabbalistic exegesis is described positively, with many examples, as a Jewish method of elucidating additional levels of meaning in a given biblical verse. In the 1582 *Mysterium novum*, however, Kabbalah is depicted with seemingly greater reservations, as a secret teaching passed down orally among the elite until, after the destruction of the Temple, some of its content was committed to writing. This material, however, is "sehr dunckel vnd verdeckt" [very dark and concealed].[90]

On 16 May 1582, the ledgers of the Viennese *Hofkammer* [royal treasury] record a grant of twenty thalers made to Elchanon Paulus of Prague as a reward for his manuscript and published writings "against the Jews of Prague."[91] This is quite a mischaracterisation of his works, since they are "against the Jews" chiefly in the oblique sense that they claim to find hints supportive of Christian belief in biblical, rabbinic, and kabbalistic literature—and in this, they are not particularly "against the Jews of Prague."

There was, however, another Jewish convert in Vienna: Paulus Weidner, a convert physician and professor of Hebrew at the University of Vienna, who in 1562 published a missionising sermon that he had preached to the Jews of

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87 On the danger of studying Hebrew as a theme in confessional polemics, see, for instance, Johann Eck, *Ains Jüdenbüechlins verlegung: darin ain Christ/ gantzer Christenhait zu schmach/ will es geschehe den Juden vnrecht in bezichtigung der Christen kinder mordt* (Ingolstadt, 1541), Q i^{r-v}.

88 Elchanon Paulus von Prag, *Mysterivm novum* (1582), fol. H ii^{r}.

89 On Jewish converts writing on divisions and sects among Jews, see Carlebach *Divided Souls*, 62–64.

90 Elchanon Paulus von Prag, *Mysterivm novum* (1582), fol. a ii^{v}.

91 Vienna, Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Allgemeines Verwaltungs-, Finanz- und Hofkammerarchiv, Alte Hofkammer, Hoffinanz, vol. 371-E [1582], fol. 282^{v}: "Elihanon Pauli von Prag wegen ezlichen gedruckhten pücher wider die juden zu Prag [...] beim hofzalmaisterambt durch geschafftl verorndtnet 20 fl."

Prague.[92] There is also a seventeenth-century manuscript of his sermon in Hebrew characters.[93] It is unclear whether Elchanon Paulus and Weidner, who also worked as a censor of Hebrew literature in Vienna, encountered each other. Weidner's writings, however, might have inspired Elchanon Paulus to attack the Jews of Prague in a fresh petition to Rudolf asking for more money dated 9 August 1583, in which he enlarges on the details of his supposed Jewish past in Chelm. In this long letter, he accuses the Jews of Chelm of having taken his (still Jewish) wife and children and all his personal belongings to Prague.[94] No reason is offered for this peculiar alleged action, but whether or not the Prague dimension is new, what is probably not new is the suggestion that the Jews had somehow impeded his family's conversion, for that seems implicit, in light of this Vienna document, in what the people in Helmstedt had been given to believe: that he had been "robbed" of his wife and children. In this new letter to Rudolf, Elchanon Paulus adds that the Jews of Prague had even attempted to poison his son for expressing a willingness to convert to the Catholic faith—an accusation that is all the more piquant given that it comes from someone who had probably never formally converted to Catholicism himself.[95] It is almost as if he were making up for failing to attack the Prague Jewish community in print—something for which he had, nevertheless, been rewarded.

Assuming that Elchanon Paulus's story has no basis in fact, telling it may have involved a significant element of risk, not least because Prague was where Rudolf resided. This is not the only aspect of his letter, however, that may

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92   Paulus Weidner, *Ein Sermon* [...] *den Juden zu Prag Anno* MDLXI *den 16 Aprilis in jrer Synagoga geprediget* (Vienna, 1563). A second edition was published in 1569. On Paulus Weidner, see Smolinsky, "Konversion zur Konfession," 160–62, and Paul Josef Diamant, "Paulus Weidner von Billerburg (1525–1585): Kaiserlicher Leibarzt und Rektor der Wiener Universität," *Mitteilungen des Vereines für Geschichte der Stadt Wien* 13/14 (1933): 57–64.

93   The manuscript is preserved in a compendium in the Bodleian Library (Oxford, Bodleian Library, Mich. 121) along with several anti-Jewish writings as well as a polemic against Martin Luther. See Rebecca Voss, *Umstrittene Erlöser: Politik, Ideologie und jüdisch-christlicher Messianismus in Deutschland, 1500–1600* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2011), 27, and Debra Kaplan, "Sharing Conversations: A Jewish Polemic against Martin Luther," *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 103 (2012): 41–63.

94   It is preserved in a secretarial copy: Vienna, Diözesanarchiv, Protocollum Episcopatus Viennensis Anni 1581–1587 (WP 7), fol. 392[r].

95   This accusation bears parallels to the seventeenth-century case of Simon Abeles in Prague. See Elisheva Carlebach, "The Death of Simon Abeles: Jewish-Christian Tension in Seventeenth-Century Prague," The Third Annual Herbert Berman Memorial Lecture, Center for Jewish Studies, Queens College, CUNY, November 7, 2001 (New York: Queens College, 2003); Rachel Greenblatt, "Saint and Countersaint: Catholic Triumphalism and Jewish Resistance in Baroque Prague's Abeles Affair," *Jewish History* 30 (2016): 61–80.

contain a hint of bravado. If his purportedly tragic circumstances as a victim of Jewish bigotry made Elchanon Paulus seem all the more worthy of a sympathetic hearing, it was nevertheless not charity that he was requesting, but rather sufficient imperial support to allow him to publish a Hebrew translation of the New Testament that he claimed to have made.[96] Such a translation had already been completed by the Austrian Erasmus Schreckenfuchs, who lived in Nuremberg and died in 1579, but it remained in manuscript. The first edition of the New Testament in Hebrew to make it into print was that of Elias Hutter, which was published in Nuremberg in 1599. If Elchanon Paulus, too, had completed such a major undertaking, there is no known surviving trace of it, nor is there any known contemporary reference to it. His claim is further complicated by the fact that he goes on to ask for additional funding for a student assistant, on the grounds that he is not well-versed in writing.[97] Presumably, the shortcoming to which he alludes is the limited ability to write (and read) German in Roman letters that was characteristic of sixteenth-century Ashkenazic Jews—the state of affairs evident in Paulus's letters from Leipzig, written three to five years earlier, all in Hebrew script, or in his employment of a scribe to write back to Paul Eber in 1566. This is indirectly supported by Olearius, who, in the same passage in which he attributes Paulus's conversion to his reading of the Gospel of Matthew in Hebrew translation, states that Jews do all their reading in Hebrew script, that only a few know Latin, and that they neglect German.[98] It is not obvious why Paulus would have needed help writing in German if his project involved the publication of the New Testament in Hebrew, but perhaps he was asking for help with the German correspondence liable to arise in connection with his project.

All that can be said on the basis of Elchanon Paulus's letter to Rudolf is that he was on the defensive regarding his financial probity, offering the explanation that he had taken a round trip from Vienna in order to visit Urban von Trennbach, prince-bishop of Passau, as a justification for having gone through the money previously granted to him.[99] To strengthen his overall credibility,

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96   Vienna, Diözesanarchiv, Protocollum Episcopatus Viennensis Anni 1581–1587 (WP 7), fol. 392ʳ.

97   Vienna, Diözesanarchiv, Protocollum Episcopatus Viennensis Anni 1581–1587 (WP 7), fol. 392ᵛ.

98   Olearius, "Doctissimo atque ornatissimo D.M. Philippo Gallo Halensi," fol.)(8ᵛ. On the reading ability of converts in the eighteenth century, see Költsch, *Konversion und Integration*, 328–29, and on Yiddish as a language of conversion, see Aya Elyada, "Yiddish—Language of Conversion? Linguistic Adaptation and Its Limits in Early Modern Judenmission," *The Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 53 (2008): 3–29.

99   Vienna, Diözesanarchiv, Protocollum Episcopatus Viennensis Anni 1581–1587 (WP 7), fol. 392ʳ.

he presented seven supporting documents along with his petition. These credentials are not present in the archives and may have been returned, but his application to the emperor was forwarded to the bishop of Vienna for review. According to a list prepared in that connection by a secretary, the attachments comprised the two letters of protection from the Polish kings Sigismund August (1 May 1569) and Henry (20 May 1574) that had been in Elchanon Paulus's possession in Helmstedt; a letter from Henry Julius, Duke of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel, rector of the University of Helmstedt, dated 13 July 1580; a letter from the vice-chancellor of the university, Dethard Horst, dated 19 April 1580, evidently acceding to his request for a leave of absence; a letter from Jacobus de Zeelander, prefect of the Jesuit College in Vienna, dated 20 September 1582;[100] another letter from the Jesuit College, dated 4 October 1582, from an unidentified individual; and finally, a letter from von Trennbach dated 13 March 1583.

Johann Caspar Neubeck, the Catholic bishop of Vienna to whom the request had been referred, met with Elchanon Paulus and found in his favour, complimenting his writings as having value not only "pro conuertendis Judaeis catholicae Ecclesiae" [for the conversion of Jews to the Catholic Church], but also "pro conuincendis haereticis" [for the disabusing of heretics].[101] Accordingly, on 3 September 1583, it was decided that the convert would receive a retainer of one thaler per week from the treasury [*Vizedomamt*] of Vienna.[102]

This happy news is the last we hear of Elchanon Paulus of Prague directly. There are no records of later payments being made to him and there are also no further publications under any of his names. Given that Elchanon Paulus had lived his entire adult life sustained by a mixture of alms and grants that were frequently a matter of public record, the lack of any further reference may suggest that he stopped living as a professional convert either because he died shortly after 1583 or because he found a different way of supporting himself. Given, also, that Bishop Neubeck required that all his future publications should be—like those of all other writers—reviewed and made subject to censorship by the theology faculty as well as the municipal authorities, his

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100   De Zeelander, a Jesuit priest from Brussels, served as "praefectus convictorum" of the Jesuit College in Vienna from 17 April 1581 until 15 February 1583, according to Ladislaus Lukács, *Catalogi personarum et officiorum provinciae Austriae S.I. 1: 1551–1600* (Rome: Institutum Historicum S.J., 1978), 398. In this capacity, therefore, as prefect of the college's hall of residence for noble students, he may have employed Elchanon Paulus to tutor his charges and provided him with a letter of reference in that connection.

101   Vienna, Diözesanarchiv, Protocollum Episcopatus Viennensis Anni 1581–1587 (WP 7), fol. 394ʳ.

102   Vienna, Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Allgemeines Verwaltungs-, Finanz- und Hofkammerarchiv, Alte Hofkammer, Hoffinanz, vol. 379-E [1583], fol. 310ᵛ.

life as a Catholic in Vienna may have been further complicated by the discovery of the fact that as early as 1582, he was listed as "Elchanon Paulus Pragensis" in the *Index librorum prohibitorum* among authors of the first class; that is, heretics whose entire work was banned.[103] The basic picture seems to be that in Vienna, a very different milieu from Nuremberg, Leipzig, and Helmstedt, (Elchanon) Paulus was able to get by as a professional convert, at least for a while, but it was only in Protestant-ruled lands that his Christian apologetics could be appreciated.

6   Conclusion

To conclude, if Paulus of Prague is chiefly of interest as an example of post-conversion self-transformation in order to better satisfy the desires of his new co-religionists, then he is all the more interesting for having transformed himself several times. It is not only the makeover that his life story receives in Helmstedt that is striking, but also the confessional realignment that takes place in next to no time thereafter. It is not as if, arriving in Vienna, Elchanon Paulus would have found Catholicism his only religious option. To the contrary, the Austria of this period had a Lutheran majority, and it was only recently that an all-out effort to restore Catholic dominance had begun. As to the principal players in this phase of the Austrian Counter-Reformation, they are, of course, the Habsburgs and the Jesuits, particularly the faculty of the Jesuit College in Vienna, plus, as far as the episcopate is concerned, Bishop Neubeck of Vienna and Bishop von Trennbach of Passau—precisely the party with whom he throws in his lot.[104]

Paulus was championed in the 1570s by Selnecker, who, with Chemnitz, literally defined Lutheran orthodoxy; during the academic year 1579/80, at the brand new University of Helmstedt, preoccupied with Lutheran authenticity, he was even embraced by Tilemann Hesshus, the most zealous purist of them all, the scourge of Zwinglians and Catholics alike; and there he was in 1581 to 1583 not merely in Catholic circles, but, *Zelig*-like, in the thick of

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103   See *Index librorum authorumque S. sedis apostolicae sacrique Concilii Tridentini authoritate prohibitorum* (Munich, 1582), F 2ᵛ, and also *Index librorum prohibitorum* (Cologne, 1598), 15. For the reference to Elchanon Paulus's work being liable to review by the censors, see Vienna, Diözesanarchiv, Protocollum Episcopatus Viennensis Anni 1581–1587 (WP 7), fol. 394ᵛ.

104   See Kurt Mühlberger, "Kaiser Maximilian II. und die Universität Wien," in *Kaiser Maximilian II.: Kultur und Politik im 16. Jahrhundert,* ed. Friedrich Edelmayer and Alfred Kohler (Vienna: Verlag für Geschichte und Politik, 1992), 203–30.

it—evidently eager to be close to the action, right on the front line in the battle against Lutheranism. Little wonder that Bishop Neubeck, who was specifically appointed for the purpose of combatting Protestantism, should have taken kindly to an Elchanon Paulus who was so determined to give satisfaction that in preparing the Vienna edition of his *Mysterium novum*, he saw fit to present as new front matter the explanation for why Jews were not flocking to embrace Christianity. It was, simply enough, the fault of the Protestants when the Jews supposedly say to the Christians: "Seyt jhr Christen doch selbst miteinander nit eins in ewren Glauben/ vnd seind viel Secten vnd spaltungen zwischen euch" [You Christians, you are at odds among yourselves and have so many sects and factions amongst you].[105]

In summary, the stories of Paulus and Elchanon Paulus, taken together, provide an early modern convert story that shows how such individuals could—and might have been forced to—navigate religious networks across denominational frontiers. Universities and their environs in both Protestant and Catholic lands could provide a haven for Jewish converts, but this might be only for the short or medium term. Paulus's story offers a case study of how Jewish converts to Christianity occupied a new space in a sixteenth-century Central Europe where conversion had become a distinct career option, though a precarious one. Converts were looked to for specific qualities and qualifications, and their writings were considered capable of fulfilling didactic objectives in a variety of denominational settings. The liminal space that the convert had once unwillingly occupied became institutionalised: universities and princely courts, where the convert's real or imagined expertise was appreciated, offered the realistic prospect of some kind of livelihood, status, and community. This environment offered a venue for mutual enrichment among Christian Hebraists and converts, who learned from one another and assisted one another with their publications. Converted Jews, however, formed, with exceptions, a kind of underclass among academic Hebraists.[106] Disadvantaged by their lack of a Western classical education, their value as trophies and as

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105   Elchanon Paulus von Prag, *Mysterivm novum* (1582), fol. Hii[r].

106   Burnett, "Jüdische Vermittler," counted thirty Jews and Jewish converts among the 126 professors of Hebrew in sixteenth-century Europe. See also Carlebach, *Divided Souls*, 129–37. An example from the seventeenth century is Johan Kemper (Moshe ben Aharon ha-Kohen) of Kraków, who studied at the University of Altdorf from 1696 until 1697 and stayed with the professor of Oriental studies, Johann Christoph Wagenseil, before he taught Hebrew at the University of Uppsala. See Níels P. Eggerz, "Purim in Altdorf: Johann Christoph Wagenseils Interesse am Jiddischen und dessen Kultur sowie seine Zusammenarbeit mit Johann Christian Jakob (Johan Kemper) und jüdischen Konvertiten im Allgemeinen," *Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte* 71 (2019): 176–201.

scholarly informants depended not only on what these converts all had in common—their Jewish mystique—but also on what differentiated them from one another, and this was a matter of the pre-conversion Jewish learning that they brought with them, or were believed to have brought with them. Whether the original motivation of these converts was sincere or calculating, naïve or cynical, they must later have found themselves under enormous pressure to live up to their patrons' expectations. The story of Paulus is, apparently, that of an ex-Jew who only in midlife, after years as a Christian, was finally in a position to present himself as a high-status convert, a desirable catch.

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"I Am Not Inferior to Them"

Solomon Ibn Da'ud's Introductions to His Arabic-to-Hebrew Philosophical and Medical Translations

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Abstract

This paper contributes to the growing scholarly understanding of the early thirteenth-century Arabic-to-Hebrew translation movement by examining the person, contextual milieu, and translational ethos of Solomon ibn Da'ud (active ca. 1205–1233). Solomon, who translated works by Ibn al-Sīd al-Baṭalyawsī, Ibn Sīnā, and Ibn Rušd, furnished each translation with an introductory section. These three prefaces outline his original theory of translation, which offers an alternative to Ibn Tibbon's and Maimonides's models that is somewhat closer to al-Ḥarizi's perspective. Furthermore, they offer a glimpse into the complex personality of an author who claimed to be the first to translate medical works into Hebrew despite the existence of Maimonides's works, which were already in circulation, and who spuriously claimed to have commentated on Ibn Sīnā when in reality, he was plagiarising an earlier commentary on the former by Ibn Rušd.

1 Introduction[1]

The first translations of philosophical texts[2] from Arabic into Hebrew[3] can be traced back to the late tenth or early eleventh century. The translation movement gained impetus after several scholarly families fled the Almohade persecutions in the Iberian Peninsula and settled in southern France in the middle of the twelfth century.[4] By the thirteenth century, the standardisation of the Hebrew philosophical lexicon was underway.[5]

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2 "Philosophy," for the authors mentioned throughout this paper, included both natural sciences and metaphysics. On this, see Harry A. Wolfson, "The Classification of the Sciences in Medieval Jewish Philosophy," in *Studies in the History of Philosophy and Religion*, ed. Isadore Twersky and George H. Williams (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1974), 493–550. However, the practitioners of natural sciences and philosophical metaphysics had different roles in the Jewish societies of their times. The first *scientific* work to have been translated was Aristotle's *Meteorology* in 1210. On this, see Steven Harvey, "Arabic into Hebrew: The Hebrew Translation Movement and the Influence of Averroes upon Medieval Jewish Thought," in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Jewish Philosophy*, ed. Daniel H. Frank and Oliver Leaman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 258–80.

3 For the influence of Arabic on Medieval Hebrew, see Salo Wittmayer Baron, "Linguistic Renaissance," in Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews, Volume 11: High Middle Ages, 500–1200* (New York: Columbia University Press; Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1965), 3–61; Joshua Blau, "The Influence of Middle Arabic on the Hebrew of Arabic Speaking Jews" [Hebrew], *Meḥkharim be-Lašon* 1 (1985): 243–50; repr. in Blau, *Studies in Hebrew Linguistics* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1996), 264–71; Eduard Yechezkel Kutscher, *A History of the Hebrew Language*, ed. Raphael Kutscher (Jerusalem: Magnes Press; Leiden: Brill, 1982), pp. 161–67, §§272–74; Ángel Saenz-Badillos, "Medieval Hebrew," in Saenz-Badillos, *A History of the Hebrew Language*, trans. John Elwode (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 267–87; Chaim Rabin, "A Sketch of the Development of Literary Hebrew," in Rabin, *The Development of the Syntax of Post-Biblical Hebrew* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 1–83; Moshe Goshen-Gottstein, *Syntax and Vocabulary of Medieval Hebrew as Influenced by Arabic*, ed. Sarga Assif and Uri Melammed (Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi Institute, 2006); Esther Goldenberg, "Hebrew Language [Medieval]," in *Encyclopedia Judaica, Second Edition*, ed. Fred Skolnik and Michael Berenbaum (Detroit: Thomson Gale, 2007), 8:650–71.

4 For a map of the Almohad governorships in Northern Africa and the south of the Iberian Peninsula until the reign of al-Mustanṣir (1214–1224), see Pascal Buresi and Hicham El Aallaoui, eds. and trans., *Governing the Empire: Provincial Administration in the Almohad Caliphate (1224–1269). Critical Edition, Translation, and Study of Manuscript 4752 of the Ḥasaniyya Library in Rabat Containing 77 Taqādīm ("Appointments")* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 62.

5 The genesis of Hebrew philosophical language throughout the Middle Ages has not yet been systematically mapped in a dynamic way that reflects its dialectical evolution. An example

This paper aims to deepen the scholarly discourse about this period by casting light on Solomon ibn Da'ud, an enigmatic figure who has yet to receive comprehensive academic attention.[6] Known for translating Ibn al-Sīd al-Baṭalyawsī's *K. al-Dawā'ir al-Wahmīyah* [The Imaginary Circles] (henceforth *K. al-Dawā'ir*[7]) between 1205 and 1226, he also, having added the patronym "b. Abraham," undertook the joint translation of Ibn Rušd's *K. Kullīyāt fī al-ṭibb* [Generalities on Medicine] (henceforth *K. Kullīyāt*) and Ibn Sīnā's *K. Urǧūzah fī al-ṭibb* [Poem on Medicine] (henceforth *K. Urǧūzah*) in 1233, appending a "commentary" to the latter.

Aiming to reveal as much as possible about Solomon's persona, contextual milieu, and translational methodology, this article will first recapitulate what has been said about him in contemporary academic literature and will then

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is Gad Freudenthal, "*Ketav ha-da'at* or *Sefer ha-Sekhel we-ha-muskalot*: The Medieval Hebrew Translations of al-Fārābī's *Risālah fī'l-'aql*. A Study in Text History and in the Evolution of Medieval Hebrew Philosophical Terminology," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 93 (2002): 29–115, where the author analyses the first philosophical terminology coined in Hebrew in the mid-twelfth century with the כתב הדעת, a paraphrased translation of al-Fārābī's *Risalah fī al-'aql* (one of the earliest Hebrew translations of a philosophical work written by a non-Jewish author, which crafted the first philosophical vocabulary in Hebrew), and reconstructs the history of the translation of عقل into דעת or שכל from the eleventh to fourteenth centuries, showing non-linear progression of translation methods and terminological variances. The primary resources for medieval Hebrew philosophical language are Jacob Klatzkin, *Thesaurus philosophicus linguae hebraicae*, 5 vols. (Leipzig: Ex Officina August Pries-Verlag Eškol A.G., 1928–1933), the PESHAT in Context database, and, specifically for "Arabised Hebrew," Goshen-Gottstein, *Syntax and Vocabulary of Medieval Hebrew*. For philosophical language prior to Judah Ibn Tibbon, see Israel Efros, "Studies in Pre-Tibbonian Philosophical Terminology," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 17 (1926): 129–64. For Šem Ṭov Falaquera's philosophical lexicon, its Arabic roots, and its differences from that of Samuel Ibn Tibbon, see Mauro Zonta, *Un dizionario filosofico ebraico del XIII secolo. L'introduzione al "Sefer De'ot ha-Filosofim" di Shem Tob ibn Falaquera* (Turin: Silvio Zamorani, 1992). For conflicting ways of rendering the Arabic text of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* Δ into Hebrew in two translations undertaken between the middle of the thirteenth century and the first half of the fourteenth century, probably in Provence, see Yehuda Halper, "Revision and Standardisation of Hebrew Philosophical Terminology in the Fourteenth Century: The Example of Averroes's Long Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics Δ," *Aleph* 13 (2013): 95–137. For the history of the study of Medieval Hebrew philosophical terminology in the twentieth century, see Resianne Fontaine, "The Study of Medieval Hebrew Philosophical Terminology in the Twentieth Century: Klatzkin's *Thesaurus* and Later Studies," *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 7 (2000): 160–81.

6   The only incipient consideration of Solomon is Ayala Eliyahu, "Ibn al-Sīd al-Baṭalyawsī and His Place in Medieval Muslim and Jewish Thought. Including an Edition and Translation of *Kitāb al-Dawā'ir al-Wahmīyah*, known as *Kitāb al-Hadā'iq*" [Hebrew] (PhD diss., Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2010), 1:177–80.

7   M. Zonta translates the title as "Book of the Intellectual Spheres" (Mauro Zonta, "Medieval Hebrew Translations of Philosophical and Scientific Texts: A Chronological Table," in *Science in Medieval Jewish Cultures*, ed. Gad Freudenthal (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 60, #447).

address the introductions he wrote for his translations. The Hebrew text and an English translation of these three introductions can be found in the appendix.

2   Solomon, the Translator

Solomon's enigmatic identity, akin to a puzzle with missing pieces, adds another layer of complexity to the scholarly understanding of the early thirteenth-century Jewish landscape of authors and translators, and there is not much that can definitively be said about him. The question of the identity of—and the identification between—the authors of the translations of the *K. al-Dawāʾir*, the *K. Kullīyāt*, and the *K. Urğūzah* has been floating among scholars[8] for a long time without being explicitly considered. When dealing with the *Kullīyāt*, Eliakim Carmoly designated Solomon as its "author": he categorised him among a group of "minor doctors," stating that he lived in the fourteenth century, and described the text as "a general treatise on theoretical and practical medicine based on Avicenna and Averroes."[9] Heinrich Gross contested Carmoly's stance, emphasising that Solomon was a translator, not an author, and advocated for a timeframe preceding the fourteenth century.[10] George Sarton simply noted Solomon's existence in an "unknown time."[11] Neither Adolf Neubauer[12] nor Moritz Steinschneider[13] ventured to speculate

8   This debate is rooted in the rich tradition of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums*. The enduring relevance of the conclusions reached by its scholars underscores the profound potency of their scholarship, testifying to their lasting influence. On this, see Julius Carlebach, ed., *Wissenschaft des Judentums. Anfänge der Judaistik in Europa* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1992).

9   Eliakim Carmoly, "Autres praticiens espagnols," in Carmoly, *Histoire des medécins juifs anciens et modernes* (Brussels, 1844), 1:103 n. 1. He consulted MS Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, hebr. 1172, one of three manuscripts of the *Kullīyāt*, alongside MSS St. Petersburg, Institute of Oriental Manuscripts 81 and Oxford, Bodleian Library, Opp. 176 (Neubauer 2112). For the manuscripts, see below.

10   Heinrich Gross, "Geschichte der Juden in Arles (Fortsetzung)," *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums* 28 (1879): 125 and n. 3. He was also referencing MS Paris 1172.

11   George Sarton, *Introduction to the History of Science, Volume 2, Part 1* (Baltimore: The Williams & Wilkins Company, 1931), 360.

12   Adolf Neubauer, *Catalogue of the Hebrew Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library and in the College Libraries of Oxford*, vol. 1 (Oxford, 1886), 721, #2112. He was also considering MS Paris 1172.

13   Moritz Steinschneider, *Catalogus librorum hebraeorum in bibliotheca Bodleiana jussu curatorum digessit et notis instruxit M. Steinschneider*, (Berlin, 1852–1860) 1238, §14. He was also basing this on MS Paris 1172.

on the identity of the translator of the *K. Kullīyāt* beyond mentioning his name. Similarly, Yitzhak Tzvi Langermann refrained from conjecture regarding the Hebrew translations of Ibn Rušd's works.[14] At the same time, Steinschneider hypothesised that the translator of the *K. Urğūzah* and the translator of the *K. Kullīyāt* were one and the same.[15]

When considering the *K. Urğūzah*, Langermann, without mentioning the *K. al-Dawāʾir*, stated that its author was the same individual responsible for translating the *K. Kullīyāt*; furthermore, he was the first person to point out that *K. Kullīyāt* was translated in 1233, labelling it as "one of the earliest dated translations of a medical work into Hebrew."[16] Maud Kozodoy aligned with Langermann's dating.[17]

Already in 1880, Bernardinus Peyron drew an association[18] between the translator of the *K. al-Dawāʾir* and the Solomon whom Steinschneider named as the author, working in an uncertain age, of the *K. Kullīyāt*.[19] In fact, in 1893, Steinschneider stated that the author of the translation of the *K. al-Dawāʾir*

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14   Y. Tzvi Langermann, "Science, Jewish," in *Medieval Iberia: An Encyclopedia*, ed. E. Michael Gerli (New York: Routledge, 2003), 745.

15   Moritz Steinschneider, *Die hebräischen Übersetzungen des Mittelalters und die Juden als Dolmetscher. Ein Beitrag zur Literaturgeschichte des Mittelalters, meist nach Handschriftlichen Quellen* (Berlin, 1893; repr. Graz: Akademische Druck- u. Verlangsanstalt, 1956), 699–700, §445. Remarkably, he said so even when he only had indirect access to a portion of the St. Petersburg, Institute of Oriental Manuscripts 75 manuscript of the *K. Urğūzah*, where the name of the translator was not mentioned. The difficulties that Steinschneider encountered when working with manuscripts that were not in Germany are described in Benjamin Richler, "Manuscripts of Avicenna's *Kanon* in Hebrew Translation: A Revised and Up-to-Date List" [Hebrew], *Korot* 8, no. 3–4 (1982): 137–38. Furthermore, Steinschneider said that "the principal Jewish editors and commentators of these [medical works, including the K. *Kullīyāt*] and the Judæo-Arabic works were nearly all Italians and Provençals, [...] [among them] Solomon b. Abraham ibn Daud" (Steinschneider, "Medicine and Natural History," in Steinscheneider, *Jewish Literature from the Eighth to the Eighteenth Century with an Introduction on Talmud and Midrash*, trans. William Spottiswoode [London, 1857], 197). However, a few years later, he called Solomon, "probably a Spaniard, of an unknown time" (Steinschneider, *Die hebräischen Übersetzungen des Mittelalters*, 672; here, he was specifically dealing with MS Paris 1172).

16   Y. Tzvi Langermann, "Some New Medical Manuscripts from St. Petersburg," *Korot* 13 (1988): 13. He was the first to analyse the only manuscript of the *K. Urğūzah*, MS St. Petersburg 75.

17   Maud Kozodoy, "Medieval Hebrew Medical Poetry: Uses and Contexts," *Aleph* 11 (2011): 233.

18   Bernadinus Peyron, "Fol. 5. Anonymi, Opus metaphysicum ex arabico sermone (fortasse a Salomone Daud) hebraice redditum," in *Codices hebraici manu exarate Regiae bibliothecae quae in taurinensi Athenaeo asservatur* (Rome, Turin, and Florence, 1880), 226, refers to the ר׳ שלמה דאור who authored the now-destroyed Turin 57 National University Library A. VI. 49 manuscript of the *K. al-Dawāʾir*.

19   Moritz Steinschneider, *Catalogus librorum hebraeorum*, 1852–1860, 1238 and 2267 (Peyron, "Fol. 5," refers to 2267 only). Steinschneider stated this when cataloguing the manuscripts

might have been the same person who translated the *K. Kullīyāt*.[20] Benjamin Richler limited himself to saying that this identification was still hypothetical.[21] Further analysis of Solomon's three introductions definitively establishes that this is not merely a matter of homonymy; the three translations were undeniably executed by the same individual.

In general, David Kaufmann, when discussing the identity of Abraham ibn Da'ud, the author of *S. ha-Emunah ha-Ramah* [The Exalted Faith], says that Ibn Da'ud was the name of a "well-known Spanish-Jewish family."[22] Although the Jewish cemetery of Toledo was destroyed in the fourteenth century and most of its tombstones were lost,[23] several pieces have been found. Based on the epitaph of a certain Moses b. Joseph b. Da'ud, who is said to have passed away on the 10th of Tammuz in the year 5000 (1 July 1240), and despite the fact that the epitaph states that he was not originally from the Iberian Peninsula, Samuel David Luzzatto concluded that "Ibn Da'ud" must have been a "שם משפחה," that is, a surname, in Toledo.[24] Leopold Zunz argued that the individual beneath this tombstone may have died a few years after 1240—making it particularly intriguing for the attempt to date the Solomon who is the subject

from the Bodleian Library between 1852 and 1860, and he was referring to the Paris 1172 manuscript of the *K. Kullīyāt*.

20   Moritz Steinschneider refers to the ר' שלמה דאור who authored MS Turin 49 in Steinschneider, *Die hebräischen Übersetzungen des Mittelalters*, 368, §210. He says that this Solomon Da'ur might have been the same that he mentions in Moritz Steinschneider, *Die hebräischen Übersetzungen des Mittelalters*, 672, §429, which was said, of course, after the publication of Peyron, "Fol. 5."

21   Benjamin Richler, "The Identification of the Anonymous Translator of *The Book of the Imaginary Circles*" [Hebrew], *Kiryat Sefer* 53 (1978): 577, repr. in *From the Collection of the Institute of Microfilmed Hebrew Manuscripts*, ed. Abraham David, 121–22 (Jerusalem: Jewish National and University Library, 1995), 122.

22   David Kaufmann, *Göttingische Gelehrte Anzeigen* (Göttingen, 1833), 47.

23   On this see, Abraham Shalom Yahuda, "Nuevo hallazgo de una inscripción sepulcral hebraica en Toledo," *Boletín de la Real Academia de Historia* 67 (1915): 149–56.

24   נגנז בקבר זה גביר משרה/ שר היקר במהלל שרה/ משה בנו יוסף בנו דאוד/ גבר ברב עצהובגבורה/ עבר לעברייס וחלקו לו/ מלכי ערב כבוד וגם משרה/ גבור בעו ובהותובנכסים/ ויקנאוהו דברי סרה/ ...בא אל ספרד/ אז התגכלו עלוי בני סורה/ ...לשממון/ תהיה והרגיו יחזו צרה/ מה בחמשת האלפים ובו/ תמוז עשרה בו ביום עברה.

     Samuel David Luzzatto, *Abne Zikkaron* (Prague, 1841), 50–51. The text is reproduced and translated into French in Moïse Schwab, "Rapport sur les inscriptions hébraïques de l'Espagne," *Nouvelles archives des missions scientifiques et littéraires: Choix de rapports et instructions. Publié sous les auspices du Ministère de l'Instruction Publique et des Beaux-Arts* 14, no. 3 (1907): 1–93 [229–421], and into Spanish in Francisco Cantera Burgos and José María Millás Vallicrosa, *Las inscripciones hebraicas de España*, vol. 2 (Madrid: C. Bermejo, 1959), 70–71.

of this article.[25] Francisco Cantera Burgos and José María Millás Vallicrosa followed him, reading the eulogy as a literal reference to "a powerful ruler who immigrated to Spain, an outstanding figure in the Arabic reigns of the Peninsula, Moses b. Joseph b. Da'ud, who passed away on 1 July 1240, if not some years later";[26] the same was argued by Isabel Mata López, who undertook a historical, philological, and conceptual study of the complete text of the eulogy.[27] Furthermore, Yossi Esudri discovered, also from Toledo in 1240, the tomb of another ר׳ משה בן יוסף בן דאות.[28] Nevertheless, Steinschneider stated that nothing confirms the existence of only one Ibn Da'ud family in Toledo at this time,[29] and Gad Freudenthal supported him,[30] concluding that no arguments support the idea that Ibn Da'ud was the name of one *and only one* family in Toledo by the time in which the *K. al-Dawā'ir*, the *K. Urǧūzah*, and the *K. Kullīyāt* were translated.

More specifically, Manuel Alonso Alonso[31] and Norman Roth[32] stated that the name of the Ibn Da'ud who worked with Dominicus Gundissalinus was "Solomon." However, our Solomon could not have been the same person who collaborated with Dominicus Gundissalinus. As he was ordained after his

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25   The reference is in Leopold Zunz, *Zur Geschichte und Literatur* (Berlin: Verlag von Veit und Comp., 1845), 419.

26   Burgos and Millás Vallicrosa, *Las inscripciones hebraicas*, 70–71.

27   Isabel Mata López, "Espacio, tiempo y conceptos ético-morales en una inscripción funeraria hispanohebrea bajomedieval," in *Dimensiones: El espacio y sus significados en la literatura hispánica*, ed. Raquel Crespo-Vila and Sheila Pastor (Madrid: Aleph and Biblioteca Nueva, 2017), 307–15. See also her brief mention of the same grave in Mata López, "Ausencias y presencias en el recuerdo epigráfico literario del cementerio judío toledano bajomedieval," in *Ausencias: Escritoras en los márgenes de la cultura*, ed. Mercedes Arriaga Flórez, Salvatore Bartolotta, and Milagro Martín Clavijo (Seville: ArCiBel, 2011), 807.

28   Yossi Esudri, "R.B. Abraham b. Da'ud and His Philosophical Work *The Exalted Faith*: Miscellanea" [Hebrew], in *Homo Homini: Essays in Jewish Philosophy Presented by His Students to Professor Warren Zev Harvey*, ed. Samuel Wygoda, Esti Eisenmann, Ari Akerman, and Aviram Ravitsky (Jerusalem: Magnes Press and Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2016), 41–82.

29   Steinschneider, *Die hebräischen Übersetzungen des Mittelalters*, 261 n. 1088.

30   Gad Freudenthal, "Abraham ibn Daud, Avendauth, Dominicus Gundissalinus and Practical Mathematics in Mid-Twelfth Century Toledo," *Aleph* 16 (2016): 66.

31   Cf. Manuel Alonso Alonso, "Notas sobre los traductores toledanos Domingo Gundisalvo y Juan Hispano," *Al-Andalus* 8 (1943): 162. However, he does not explicitly say to which Solomon ibn Da'ud he is referring and does not mention it again. On Dominicus Gundissalinus and *this* Ibn Da'ud, see Alonso, "Traducciones del árabe al latín por Juan Hispano (Ibn Da'ud)," *Al-Andalus* 17 (1952): 129–52.

32   Cf. Norman Roth, "Ibn Da'ud, Abraham," in *Medieval Iberia: An Encyclopedia*, ed. E. Michael Gerli (New York: Routledge, 2003), 410.

conversion to Christianity in 1149, Dominicus Gundissalinus's associate would not have been alive between 1205/1209 and 1233, and even if this were the case, as a Jewish convert, it seems impossible that he would have translated from Arabic into Hebrew. Steinschneider had already disregarded this hypothesis,[33] and thanks to Freudenthal's identification of the Ibn Da'ud who worked with Dominicus Gundissalinus as Abraham ibn Da'ud,[34] it can therefore be rejected. Furthermore, it is improbable that Solomon was the son of Abraham ibn Da'ud, who lived in Cordoba or Toledo between ca. 1110 and 1180.[35] The first to say that the name Ibn Da'ud points to the Iberian Peninsula and to wonder whether he might have been somehow connected to Abraham ibn Da'ud was Gross, primarily based on Luzzatto's archaeological findings.[36] Mauro Zonta followed the same line by arguing, albeit without specific reasons, that the translator of the *K. al-Dawā'ir* was the son of Abraham and that he was active in Toledo between 1180 and 1200;[37] still, he showed some hesitancy about this.[38] A parallel example within a similar lifespan context is that of Judah ibn Tibbon, who lived approximately between 1120 and 1190, and his son Samuel, who lived around 1165 to 1232. The 112-year gap between the father's birth and the son's death renders it improbable that Solomon could be Abraham's offspring: as the translator of the *K. al-Dawā'ir*, he could not have passed away before 1226, and as the translator of the *K. Urǧūzah* and the *K. Kullīyāt*, he could not have passed away before 1233. In any case, Solomon's precise role in the thirteenth-century Jewish scholarly landscape remains an open question.

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33   See Moritz Steinschneider, "Die Metaphysik des Aristoteles in jüdischen Bearbeitungen," in *Jubelschrift zum neunzigsten Geburtstag des Dr. Leopold Zunz. Herausgegeben durch das Curatorium der Zunz-Stiftung* (Hildesheim: Olms, 1974), 28, where he was relatively cautious, and Steinschneider, *Die hebräischen Übersetzungen des Mittelalters*, 672 n. 136, where he was more emphatic about it.

34   Freudenthal, "Abraham ibn Daud." On this identification, see also Krisztina Szilágyi, "A Fragment of a Book of Physics from the David Kaufmann *Genizah* Collection (Budapest) and the Identity of Ibn Daud with Avendauth," *Aleph* 16 (2016): 10–31.

35   Katja Vehlow, "The Author," in *Abraham ibn Da'ud's* Dorot 'Olam (*Generations of the Ages*)*: A Critical Edition and Translation of* Zikhron Divrey Romi, Divrey Malkhey *Yisrae'l, and the* Midrash on Zechariah, ed. Katja Vehlow (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 14. For an introduction to Jewish history in Toledo in the thirteenth century, see Nina Melechen, "The Jews of Medieval Toledo: Their Economic and Social Contacts with Christians from 1150 to 1391" (PhD diss., Fordham University, 1999), https://www.proquest.com/docview/304521023.

36   Gross, *Geschichte der Juden*, 125 and n. 3.

37   Zonta, *Medieval Hebrew Translations*, 84.

38   He added a question mark when mentioning him in his chronological table, where he wrote that Ibn Da'ud was active "1180–1200?": Zonta, *Medieval Hebrew Translations*, 22.

3 The Translation of Ibn al-Sīd al-Baṭalyawsī's *K. al-Dawāʾir al-Wahmīyah*

Ibn al-Sīd al-Baṭalyawsī's *K. al-Dawāʾir*[39] was translated into Hebrew twice. The chronologically second translation of the text, which has been comprehensively examined in terms of its author's identity, background, and philosophical lexicon, was completed by Moses Ibn Tibbon in the latter half of the thirteenth century, with the title *S. ha-agulot ha-raʿyoniyot*. Of its seventeen extant manuscripts, seven were incorporated into the critical edition of the text produced by David Kaufmann.[40]

Although Georges Vajda claimed that Solomon ibn Daʾud's translation was produced in response to Moses ibn Tibbon's version,[41] Solomon's version was undoubtedly the earlier of the two. Furthermore, there is no evidence to suggest that Moses was aware of Solomon's work, and an analysis of their respective translations indicates that they likely worked with slightly different Arabic versions of the *K. al-Dawāʾir*.

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39   For a complete bibliography, see Ayala Eliyahu, "Ibn al-Sīd al-Baṭalyawsī and His Place in Medieval Muslim and Jewish Thought," 2010, 1:235–71. To the texts mentioned there may be added Eliyahu, "From *Kitāb al-Ḥadāʾiq* to *Kitāb al-Dawāʾir*: Reconsidering Ibn al-Sīd al-Baṭalyawsī's Philosophical Treatise," *Al-Qanṭara* 1 (2015): 165–98; Eliyahu, "Muslim and Jewish Philosophy in al-Andalus: Ibn al-Sīd al-Baṭalyawsī and Moses ibn Ezra," in *Judaeo-Arabic Culture in al-Andalus: 13th Conference of the Society for Judaeo-Arabic Studies* (*Córdoba, 2007*), ed. Amir Ashur (Cordoba: Oriens Academics, Cordoba Near Eastern Research Unit and CSIC, 2007), 51–63; Rafael Ramón Guerrero, "Ibn al-Sîd de Badajoz," in *Coexistence and Cooperation in the Middle Ages. IV European Congress of Medieval Studies F.I.D.E.M.* (*Fédération Internationale des Istituts d'Études Médiévales*) *23–27 June 2009, Palermo* (*Italy*), ed. Alejandro Musco and Giulana Musotto (Palermo: Officina di Studi Medievali, 2014), 1221–32; Juan Antonio Pacheco Paniagua, "Ibn al-Sid de Badajoz (I)," *Boletín de la Real Academia de Extremadura de las Letras y las Artes* 27 (2019): 403–54; Pacheco Paniagua, "Ibn al-Sid de Badajoz (II)," *Boletín de la Real Academia de Extremadura de las Letras y las Artes* 28 (2020): 323–409. Ibn al-Sīd al-Baṭalyawsī lived across Badajoz, Toledo, Zaragoza, and finally Valencia between ca. 1052 and 1127. For a map of the political divisions in the Iberian Peninsula in al-Baṭalyawsī's lifetime, see Alejandro García-Sanjuán, "Replication and Fragmentation: The Taifa Kingdoms," in *The Routledge Handbook of Muslim Iberia*, ed. Maribel Fierro (London: Routledge, 2020), 77.

40   David Kaufmann, ed., *Die Spuren al-Baṭljûsis in der jüdischen Religions-Philosophie: Nebst einer Ausgabe der hebräischen Übersetzungen seiner Bildlichen Kreise* (Leipzig, 1880), 16.

41   This is stated in Ayala Eliyahu, "Ibn al-Sīd al-Baṭalyawsī and His Place in Medieval Muslim and Jewish Thought," 1:178, but it remains unclear, from my perspective, whether this is what he actually meant. Cf. Georges Vajda, "Une version hébraïque inconnue des 'Cercles imaginaires' de Baṭalyawsî," in *Semitic Studies in Memory of Immanuel Löw*, ed. Alexander Scheiber (Budapest: Alexander Kohut Foundation, 1947), 202; repr. in *Ibn Sīd al-Baṭalyawsī ʿAbdallāh ibn Muḥammad* (*D. 521/1127*): *Texts and Studies*, ed. Fuat Sezgin (Frankfurt am Main: Institute for the History of Arabic-Islamic Science, 1999), 240.

Three extant manuscripts of Solomon's translation exist. Before his translation, Solomon inserted an introduction that has only been preserved in one of the three manuscripts: ᴍs Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana 493 (ff. 75ᵛ, l. 21 to 76ᵛ, l. 19). This manuscript, dated to the fifteenth century and written in Provençal script,[42] was first discovered and scrutinised by Benjamin Richler.[43] In this version, al-Baṭalyawsī's text is untitled; however, in the introduction to his translation, Solomon calls it *The Book of the Orders of Existence and the Series of the Circles of Creations* [מחברת סדרי המצואים ותכן עגלת הברואים] (f. 76ʳ, l. 12). Another manuscript of Solomon's translation, ᴍs Turin 57 A. ᴠɪ. 49, which according to Peyron remained untitled and was mistakenly attributed to ר׳ שלמה דאור,[44] was destroyed in the 1904 fire at the Turin National University Library.[45] Peyron noted that the lost ᴍs Turin 49 contained an introduction in both prose and verse; based on the three sentences he transcribed, it appears to correspond with what is nowadays only extant in ᴍs Florence 493.[46] It is not retained in either of the other two manuscripts containing Solomon's translation of the *K. al-Dawāʾir*: ᴍs Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, hebr. 853, which is dated 1485 and written in Sephardic script;[47] and ᴍs Vatican City, Vatican Library, ebr. 270, which dates back to the fourteenth century and is written in Sephardic script.[48] The Vatican manuscript contains Solomon's version of the text, with Moses's rendering of it being occasionally incorporated by the scribe.

Solomon's introduction comprises both a prose and a verse section. The prose segment revolves around three main themes: a dedication, guidelines for an appropriate translation, and a recapitulation of the central subjects of the text. Meanwhile, the verse section encapsulates two key topics: a reiteration of the translated text's principal subjects and a renewed tribute. As will be elaborated, Solomon appears to have designed his introduction with a tripartite objective: first, to exhibit his linguistic proficiency, which he defines as an

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42   In ᴍs Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana 493, the text goes from f. 75ᵛ to f. 90ᵛ.

43   Richler, "Identification," 577 (122 in reprint).

44   Peyron, "Fol. 5," says in this regard: "Equidem aperte lego דאור, cui superimposita est lineola, ornatus instar, non iam signum vocis compendiosae; sed fortasse legere etiam licet דאוד."

45   Cf. Peyron, "Fol. 5."

46   Cf. Peyron.

47   In ᴍs Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, hebr. 853, the text goes from f. 22ʳ to f. 36ᵛ, where it ends on the last line of the folio, a few lines before the end of the text. This last line corresponds to Kaufmann, *Die Spuren al-Baṭlajûsis*, p. 55, l. 7; Ayala Eliyahu, "Ibn al-Sīd al-Baṭalyawsī and His Place in Medieval Muslim and Jewish Thought," 2010, p. 93, §170, line 3; ᴍs Florence 493, f. 90ᵛ, l. 7; and ᴍs Vatican 270, f. 219ʳ, l. 12.

48   In ᴍs Vatican 270, the text goes from f. 201ʳ, l. 10, to f. 219ʳ.

essential requisite for an accurate translation; second, to display his mastery of the philosophical themes intrinsic to the texts, which he also sees as unavoidable for a fitting translation; and third, to signal to his prospective patron that this text transcends mere narrative and that he should see it as a key resource for understanding fundamental metaphysical, anthropological, and ethical doctrines.

3.1 Solomon's Dedication to R. Makhir

In the prose section of his introduction, Solomon extends his dedication to R. Makhir, invoking his father-in-law and asserting that Makhir, who presumably had proficiency in both Arabic and Hebrew, should evaluate the quality of his endeavour. This dedication stands as the sole explicit historical reference in the text, providing a glimpse into the social and intellectual context in which it was undertaken. Richler was the first to notice the mention of Makhir,[49] and Moshe Idel highlighted that based on this reference, Solomon's version could be dated "in the middle of the thirteenth century, if R. Makhir, for whom the translation was dedicated, is the son of R. Šešet Naśiʾ, who flourished in the first third of the thirteenth century"[50] in Provence.[51]

Thanks to Elka Klein's work, both Makhir and Šešet are well-known figures.[52] Makhir was the son-in-law[53]—not the son—and heir of another naśiʾ,[54]

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49   Richler, "Identification," 577 (122 in reprint).

50   Moshe Idel, "Abraham Abulafia and *Unio Mystica*," in Idel, *Studies in Ecstatic Kabbala* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1988), 24.

51   The name "Provence" is used here to refer to both French (including Provence, Languedoc, and Roussillon) and Spanish Provence. For an introduction to Jewish social and intellectual history in Provence in the thirteenth century, see Ram Ben-Shalom, "*Translatio Andalusiae*: Constructing Local Jewish Identity in Southern France," *Revue de l'histoire des religions* 2 (2017): 273–96; Gad Freudenthal, "Les sciences dans les communautés juives médiévales de Provence: Leur appropriation, leur rôle," *Revue des études juives* 152 (1993): 29–136; Freudenthal, "Science in the Medieval Jewish Culture of Southern France," *History of Science* 33 (1995): 23–58; Isadore Twersky, "Aspects of the Social and Cultural History of Provençal Jewry," *Journal of World History* 11 (1968): 185–207; and Linda M. Paterson, "Jews," in Paterson, *The World of the Troubadours: Medieval Occitan Society c. 1100–c. 1300* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 175–84.

52   This summarised presentation relies on Elka Klein, *Jews, Christian Society and Royal Power in Medieval Barcelona* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2009), based on Klein, "Power and Patrimony: The Jewish Community of Barcelona, 1050–1250" (PhD diss., Harvard University, 1996), https://www.proquest.com/docview/304241438.

53   Francisco J. Hernández, "El testament de Benvenist de Saporta (1268)," *Hispania Judaica Bulletin* 5 (2007): 133.

54   For an introduction to the institution of the *neśiʾim* in southern France from the twelve to fourteenth centuries, see Shlomo N. Pick, "Jewish Aristocracy in Southern France," *Revue des études juives* 161 (2002): 97–121.

Rabbinaʾ Šešet, vernacularly known as Šešet Benveniste. Rabbinaʾ Šešet was born in Zaragoza in 1131, was active in Barcelona in the 1160s, and passed away between the years 1205 and 1209. He had no sons. He was a highly influential figure in the Provençal Jewish community[55] and was identified with the figure whose vernacular name was Perfect Alfaquim—an epithet referring to his role as the *alfaquim* to the king of Aragon.[56] The Arabism *alfaquim* (or *alfaquín*) comes from *al-ḥakīm*,[57] indicating that he was someone who had received the characteristic Andalusian training of that time, being educated in poetry, philosophy, Arabic, and Hebrew.[58] Makhir was the son of his father-in-law's first cousin, also called Šešet. He was involved in Provençal communal affairs[59] and was revered by his contemporaries. Notably, Judah al-Ḥarizi, who had previously translated medical treatises written by his father-in-law,[60] extolled him in his *Taḥkemoni*.[61] He was highly financially successful,[62] served as the

55   See David Kaufmann, "Lettres de Scheschet b. Isaac b. Joseph Benveniste de Saragosse aux princes Kalonymos et Lévi de Narbonne," *Revue des études juives* 39 (1899): 62–75; 217–25.

56   For the position of the *alfaquimatum*, see Robert I. Burns, *Muslims, Christians and Jews in the Crusader Kingdom of Valencia: Societies in Symbiosis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 159–59; Burns, "Languages: Arabic. The Jewish Alfaquim (Ḥakīm)," in Burns, *Diplomatarium of the Crusader Kingdom of Valencia. The Registered Charters of Its Conqueror, Jaume I, 1257–1276. 1: Society and Documentation in Crusader Valencia* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985), 125–32; David Romano, "Judíos escribanos y trujumanes de árabe en la Corona de Aragón (reinados de Jaime I a Jaime II)," *Sefarad* 37 (1978): 73; repr. in Romano, *De historia judía hispánica* (Barcelona: Universidad de Barcelona, 1991), 214; and Yom Tov Assis and Mark Meyerson, "The Iberian Peninsula," in *The Cambridge History of Judaism, Volume 6. The Middle Ages: The Christian World*, ed. Robert Chazan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 133–37.

57   See Gerold Hilty, "El arabismo alfaquim," in *Estudis de lingüística i filologia oferts a Antoni M. Badia i Margarit*, vol. 1, ed. Antoni M. Badia i Margarit (Barcelona: Publicacions de l'Abadia de Montserrat, 1995), 359–78.

58   Klein, "Power and Patrimony," 102.

59   When Solomon ibn Daʾud composed his translation, there were close political and cultural ties between Catalonia and Provence. See Joseph F. O'Callaghan, "Pedro II and the Albigensian Crusade," in O'Callaghan, *A History of Medieval Spain* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1975), 249–53.

60   Neubauer, *Catalogue of the Hebrew Manuscripts*, 741–42, #2142, work number 30.

61   "מהם הנשיא רבי מכיר מחפיר הנשיאים במדותיו": Judah al-Ḥarizi, *Macamae*, ed. Paul de Lagarde (Göttingen, 1883), 166, ll. 11–12.

62   For primary sources, see Elka Klein, "The *Shetarot*: Translations and Commentary," in Klein, *Hebrew Deeds of Catalan Jews/Documents hebraics de la Catalunya medieval, 1117–1316* (Barcelona: Societat Catalana d'Estudis Hebraics; Girona: Patronat municipal call de Girona, 2004), 22–41, documents 1 to 5; Joaquín Miret y Sans and Moïse Schwav, eds., "Documents sur les juifs catalans aux XIe, XIIe et XIIIe siècles (suite et fin)," *Revue des études juives* 68 (1914): 175–77, "XXII. Déclaration des témoins de la vente d'une vigne par Dolça, épouse de R. Schechet, à R. Schaltiel (en hébreu, avril–mai 1230)"; and José

royal bailiff, and has been identified with the figure whose vernacular name was Perfect Bailiff. He passed away in 1226.

In his introduction, Solomon initially distinguishes Makhir through an array of identifiers: by name, by the title *naśi'*, and by lineage—citing his father as Rabbina' Šešet, for whom the term רבנא serves not merely as the Aramaic for "our rabbi," but rather as a formal title.[63] Additionally, Solomon refers to Makhir as a "stronghold," a term laden with biblical connotations,[64] thereby subtly conveying the notion of Makhir serving as a refuge for him. This thematic nuance is further underscored by his subsequent employment of the term המועדה in line 11, which also carries the connotation of a place of refuge, as well as his paraphrastic reference to Psalms 17:7, where the motif of refuge recurs. This may suggest that Solomon's layered dedication served not only as a homage, but also as a shield, perhaps in the framework of his hypothetical criticism of other translators or in the context of the socio-economic tensions interwoven with philosophical disputes from the thirteenth century onwards.[65]

Then, Solomon rapidly transitions to delineate how he diverges from other translators with whom Makhir might be familiar. He employs a rhetorical device to accomplish this: an imagined dialogue with his potential patron, in which he cites a biblical passage alluding to an incident in which the populace contemplated whether Saul held the mantle of a prophet. An individual among them posed the question, "Whose lineage do the prophets come from?"—a discourse that Raši interpreted as surrounding the non-hereditary nature of prophecy. Just as Saul's prophetic legitimacy was scrutinised due to his lack of a prophetic lineage, a parallel can be drawn to Solomon's situation. While he may not have emerged from a tradition of established translators like that of the Ibn Tibbon family, for instance, he could assert his credibility based on his merits and accomplishments within the realm of translation. In this context, he insinuates that he has not been recognised by his contemporary

María Millàs Vallicrosa, ed., *Documents hebraics de jueus catalans. Memòries*, vol. 1, part 3 (Barcelona: Institut d'Estudis Catalans, Secció Històrica-Arqueològica, 1927), documents 4 to 8.

63   From רב אבינא, "the rabbi of our parents." See Marcus Jastrow, "רְבִינָא," in Jastrow, *A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature. Volume 2*: ת–ל (London: W.C. Luzac & Co.; New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1903), 1442.

64   For instance, Judg 6:26.

65   On this, see Marc Saperstein, "The Social and Cultural Context: Thirteenth to Fifteenth Centuries," in *History of Jewish Philosophy*, ed. Daniel Frank and Oliver Leaman (London: Routledge, 1996), 294–330; on the rabbinic tradition against teaching philosophical metaphysics in public, see Steven Harvey, ed., *Falaquera's* Epistle of the Debate: *An Introduction to Jewish Philosophy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987), x–xi.

translators through the suggestion that Makhir had hitherto been unaware of his aspiration to join their ranks. In conclusion, Solomon wraps up this dedication by asserting that this text serves as substantiation for his assertions; in other words, that this translated document—"bearing words of wisdom," as he says[66]—acts not just as a piece of translation, but as evidentiary support validating his unique capabilities in the translatory realm, thus differentiating him from other translators known to Makhir.

This dedication continues in the verse section, where Solomon initially suggests that the translation has received Makhir's commendation, which likely serves as a rhetorical flourish given the rarity of such patronage among Jewish authors in Provence during his lifetime.[67] The composition largely consists of effusive encomia that hyperbolically elevate Makhir not merely above contemporary Jewish leaders, but almost into a divine register. Invoking the term "illusions," an allusion to Jeremiah 10:15, which pertains to pagan idols, Solomon intimates that compared to Makhir, all others are vacuous. This theological audacity is compounded by his utilisation of the term רוח, an echo of Jeremiah 4:11, symbolising a divine admonition forewarning an imminent cataclysm. Subsequently, the poetic narrative reaches an apex of ambiguity: it becomes increasingly obfuscatory as to whether the subject remains Makhir or whether it has surreptitiously shifted to the divine, particularly when epithets such as גביר רכב appear, and expressions such as והוא אלהוד, whose meaning is difficult to ascertain, may indicate that at some point, the text may have transitioned from adulating Makhir to exalting God. The text culminates in a citation from the incipit of the *Sefer Yeṣirah* [The Book of Formation], further entangling the intricate web of religious, philosophical, and poetic motifs.

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66   If מדברי חכמים is understood not as "words of wisdom," but as "from the words of the sages." In that case, it may be relevant to note that Maimonides—whose works seem to have been read by Solomon ibn Daʾud—says in *Eight Chapters* that what he is going to develop throughout his *Commentary on the Mishnah* is not his own, but has been drawn "מדברי החכמים" (Ar. "מן כלאם אלחכמים") (Moses Maimonides, *The Eight Chapters of Maimonides on Ethics*: Shemonah Peraḳim. *A Psychological and Ethical Treatise*, ed. Joseph I. Gorfinkle [New York: Columbia University Press, 1912], 6). Although this is only two words, it may be significant because Maimonides then goes on to add, at the end of that same sentence, that "ושמע האמת ממי שאמרו" (Ar. "אלה קאלה ממן אלחק ואסמע"). This was translated by Samuel ibn Tibbon in 1202, as stated in the only dated manuscript where a date is mentioned, MS Biblioteca Palatina in Parma, R. 438. On this, see Gorfinkle's analysis in Moses Maimonides, *The Eight Chapters of Maimonides on Ethics*, 10. The amplification of this textual parallelism assumes a particular relevance when one considers that Solomon's task involves translating a Muslim scholarly work.

67   Mauro Zonta, *La filosofia antica nel Medioevo ebraico: Le traduzione ebraiche medievali dei teti filosofici antichi* (Breschia: Paideia, 1996), 71–72.

The introduction's chronological clues hint at the period when Solomon undertook his translation, falling between the death dates of Šešet (1205/1209) and Makhir (1226). Conflicts and disputes arose during this time, with the social order being determined by the disintegration of the *neśi'im* class.[68] Makhir was involved in these disputes, as documented by a letter that he sent to the community of Lunel where he accuses a certain שמואל בר בנבנשת, who is said to have a group of followers [קהל], of various charges, among them disrespecting the communal authorities, sustaining heretical beliefs, and attempting to modify the synagogue traditions without consensus. Makhir says in this letter that שמואל בר בנבנשת pursued גבירתנו המלכה—the queen of Aragon, Maria of Montpellier (d. 1213)—arguing that he was being unfairly judged by the Provençal authorities.[69]

The change in the socio-political order also implied a transformation in intellectual sensibilities. As Bernard Septimus explained:

> The shift in power that took place in the Catalonian Jewish community during the first half of the thirteenth century corresponds to a shift in spiritual authority and cultural creativity. The newly dominant political group represented a newly ascendant religio-cultural trend. [...] The *neśi'im* represent continuity with the political and cultural style of Muslim Spain, but no longer his glory.[70]

Although there were strong links between the *neśi'im* and the leading Provençal families,[71] this conflict might have expressed the fracture between those whose lineage originated in the area of the Iberian Peninsula under Islamic control and those coming from Catalonia,[72] and perhaps even an inter-generational rupture.[73]

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68 The letter is found in Adolf Neubauer, "Ergänzungen und Verbesserungen zu Abba Mari's מנחת קנאות," *Israelitische Letterbode* 4 (1978): 162–64.

69 Neubauer, "Ergänzungen und Verbesserungen," 163. For an analysis of the letter, see Bernard Septimus, "Piety and Power in Thirteenth-Century Catalonia," in *Studies in Medieval Jewish History and Literature, Volume 1*, ed. Isadore Twersky (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979), 197–230. On this, see also Eric Lawee, "The Reception of Rashi's Commentary on the Torah in Spain: The Case of Adam's Mating with the Animals," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 97 (2007): 36.

70 Septimus, "Piety and Power," 213.

71 Septimus, 215.

72 Yitzhak Baer, "Social and Spiritual Conflicts within the Communities," in *A History of the Jews in Christian Spain. Volume 1: From the Age of Reconquest to the Fourteenth Century*, trans. Louis Schoffman (Philadelphia, 1878), 90–96.

73 As explained by James T. Robinson, "whereas Judah Ibn Tibbon saw himself as an Andalusian, proud of his heritage and committed to passing it on to his son and fellow

3.2   *Solomon's Translation Guidelines*

Even before Solomon's elaborate dedication to Makhir in the introduction, the text is marked by his translation guidelines. He begins by asserting that linguistic proficiency in both Arabic and Hebrew is a prerequisite for a competent translator, contending that mastery over the lexical and semantic nuances of both the source and target languages is essential. He then outlines his balanced approach to translation: while the translator must possess a deep understanding of the text's inherent concepts, the translation should also adhere as closely as possible to the original formulation. That is, if the translator opts for a literal approach, yet succeeds in adequately conveying the intended meaning, such an endeavour is laudable; however, should it prove unfeasible to capture the essence of the original text within the framework of the target language, the translator is advised to prioritise the semantic content over the underlying form.

Then, Solomon says that a proficient translator must exercise scrupulous attention to potential errors in vocabulary, avoiding ambiguities and homonyms that may manifest in the interlingual context of Arabic and Hebrew. In summary, his conclusion underscores the existence of two distinct types of translators. On the one hand, there is the translator who adheres to his provided guidelines and serves as a model to be followed; on the other, there is the one who should not be read because he makes the text incomprehensible.

In these same lines, Solomon alludes to certain אנשי מדות. Upon initial examination, the valence of this expression remains indeterminate; it is ambiguous whether Solomon employs it in a commendatory or ironic register, potentially vis-à-vis figures such as Samuel ibn Tibbon. This ambivalence is further buttressed by his deployment of a non-standard lexicon; had he sought to applaud someone unambiguously, he would have rendered such praise explicit, as he indeed does concerning his intended patron. Additionally, the subsequent invocation of "sin," even when circumscribed to syntactical transgressions, carries incontrovertibly negative connotations. Furthermore, this interpretative stance is corroborated by his citation of the "stone of the strayers" [אבן טועים] as referenced in *Ta'anit* 3:8, a tractate of the Mishnah in which this stone serves as a symbolic epicentre for collective repentance during communal fasts soliciting rain. Therefore, through his reference to the אנשי מדות, he seems to be alluding to the translators whose epistemic authority—their

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residents of southern France, Samuel saw himself as the true disciple of Maimonides" (Robinson, "The Ibn Tibbon Family: A Dynasty of Translators in Medieval 'Provence,'" in *Be'erot Yitzhaq: Studies in Memory of Isadore Twersky*, ed. Jay M. Harris [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005], 213).

credibility regarding the proper interpretation and translation of texts, and not merely their rhetorical style—he seeks to contest, perhaps the same "other" translators mentioned earlier in the introduction.

The text is replete with confrontational allusions, yet it remains challenging to ascertain whether these references are specific and concrete in nature. Solomon's translation epistemology—his underlying approach to the principles and methods of translation—appears to be between those of Samuel ibn Tibbon[74] and Maimonides, very similar in this intermediary stance to the translatory style of Judah al-Ḥarizi.[75] In contrast to Samuel ibn Tibbon's approach and also to that of most translators of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, who aimed for literal word-by-word translations while adhering to repetitive grammatical patterns and implicitly considered their versions to be derivatives of the "originals," Solomon perceives his text as a standalone entity, imbuing it with rhetorical elegance and inviting readers not only to grasp its substance, but also to relish its form. Nevertheless, diverging from Maimonides's precept—elucidated in his epistolary correspondence with Samuel ibn Tibbon[76]—of a more liberal translation methodology prioritising the transfer of meaning over lexical fidelity, Solomon advocates for a rigorous adherence to the original text.

In alignment with the dominant principle that guided Judah al-Ḥarizi's translation of Maimonides's *Guide*, specifically the eschewal of Arabisms,[77] Solomon persistently employed Hebrew terminology—occasionally of an unconventional nature—to effectuate his translation, which was invariably juxtaposed with the original Arabic terms transliterated in Hebrew script. Moreover, here he transcends the limited role of a "translator," positioning himself not merely as a linguistic conduit, but as a philosopher in his own right.

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74   For Moses ibn Tibbon, see Colette Sirat, "La pensée philosophique de Moïse ibn Tibbon," *Revue des études juives* 138 (1979): 505–15. For Samuel ibn Tibbon's understanding of the translation activity, see Howard Kreisel, "Moses ibn Tibbon: Translator and Philosophical Exegete," in Kreisel, *Judaism as Philosophy: Studies in Maimonides and the Medieval Jewish Philosophers of Provence* (Boston, MA: Academic Studies Press, 2015), 73–115.

75   For an analysis of Judah al-Ḥarizi's translation methodology, and why his translation of Maimonides's *Guide* may have partially departed from it, see Raymond P. Scheindlin, "Al-Ḥarizī's Translation of the *Guide of the Perplexed* in Its Cultural Moment," in *Maimonides' Guide of the Perplexed in Translation: A History from the Thirteenth Century to the Twentieth*, ed. Josef Stern, James T. Robinson, and Yonatan Shemes (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2019), 55–79.

76   For a summary of the editions of the letter, see Doron Forte, "Back to the Sources: Alternative Versions of Maimonides' Letter to Samuel ibn Tibbon and Their Neglected Significance," *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 23 (2016): 47–90.

77   Scheindlin, "Al-Ḥarizī's Translation," 68.

This synthesis of roles stands as a unique phenomenon within the intellectual contours of his era and serves as an instructive lens through which to comprehend his intellectual position, particularly within the contested terrain of the Ibn Tibbon-al-Ḥarizi controversy. Their dialectical exchange did not only encompass the utilitarian aspects of translation—such as the relative merits of Arabic versus Hebrew or the role of philosophical training—but fundamentally articulated a collision of two distinct socio-cultural frameworks: the Provençal intellectual milieu, in which Samuel ibn Tibbon was situated, and the Andalusian Judæo-Arabic tradition, from which Judah al-Ḥarizi emerged.[78]

3.3   *Solomon's Takeaways*

In the final segment of the prose section, Solomon offers a succinct summary of the principal themes of the *K. al-Dawāʾir*, commencing with an overview of its overarching content and then moving to its specific theses. Clearly, he did not intend this as merely an abstract summary. Here, Solomon is doing two things: demonstrating his deep understanding of the text's topics and unequivocally signalling to his patron that he has translated *this* specific text with the intention of offering him a comprehensive course in metaphysical, anthropological, and ethical subjects.

These subjects encompass the entirety of the text and include the notion of God as an entity who cognises Himself alone, yet through this very act, becomes cognisant of all that exists; the hierarchical orders of existence, paying particular attention to the Agent Intellect and the status of corporeal beings; the human condition as an intermediary between the sensible and the intelligible realms and the path by which humanity might seek God; the concept of secondary existents that are numerically one—referring here to the celestial spheres; and finally, the transcendence of the human soul beyond its corporeal vessel, indicating that the body is not essential to its nature. Lastly, he outlines the structural arrangement of the book, reaffirming his praise for it once more, and concludes the prose section of his introduction.

At the end of f. 76^r, Solomon indicates his intention to encapsulate its seven chapters within a poetic metre, and this is what he does in the first half of the verse section, paraphrasing the titles and topics of the seven chapters of the *K. al-Dawāʾir*, albeit in a modified sequence and with certain augmentations. These modifications seem to function as a mechanism through which Solomon conspicuously demonstrates his philosophical expertise to his

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78   For the distance and relations between Jewish "translators" and "philosophers" in Provence in Solomon's time, see Zonta, *La filosofia antica*, 70–71. For the two cultures, see Scheindlin, "Al-Ḥarizī's Translation," 75–79.

prospective patron. The poem once again exhorts Makhir to scrutinise this treatise, since it investigates the concept that the origination and cessation of all entities exhibits a cyclical pattern, considering how—insofar as individual beings can instantiate universal attributes—this circular paradigm is inherent in human ontology. Additional matters addressed include the epistemic constraints of the human soul post-mortem, the ineffability of divine qualities, and the all-comprehensive self-knowledge of God.

4 The Translation of Ibn Rušd's *K. Kullīyāt fī al-ṭibb* and Ibn Sīnā's *K. Urǧūzah fī al-ṭibb*

There are three manuscripts of this translation of the *K. Kullīyāt*:[79] MS Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, hebr. 1172, dated 1470 per its colophon, MS St. Petersburg, Institute of Oriental Manuscripts 81, dated 1421[80]—both of which employ a Sephardic script[81] and record the name שלמה בר אברהם רי״ת אבן דאוד[82]—and MS Oxford, Bodleian Library, Opp. 176 (Neubauer 2112), dated 1397–1410, which employs a Provençal script and is said to have been authored by שלמה בר אברהם אבן דאור; here, the modern title page says that the manuscript also contained a Hebrew translation of the *K. Urǧūzah*, which is not in the manuscript in its current form.[83] There is also an anonymous translation of the *K. Kullīyāt*,[84] whose author explicitly admits to having consulted Solomon's version.[85]

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79 The text is edited and translated in Averroes, *Kitāb al-Kullīyyāt fī l-ṭibb*, trans. José María Fórneas Besteiro and Carlos Álvares de Morales, 2 vols. (Madrid: CSIC, 1987). For an introduction to the work, see Süssman Muntner, "Ibn Rush and His Medical Works, Particularly the הכליאת" [Hebrew], *Kiryat Sefer* 32 (1946): 62–72 (for a brief reference to Solomon's translation, see 64) and Camilo Alvarez de Morales, "El *Kitāb al-Kulliyāt* de Ibn Rušd: Problemática de su edición," *Quaderni di studi arabi* 5–6 (1987): 12–19.

80 In MS St. Petersburg 81, this is the only text of the codex.

81 In MS Paris 1172, this is the only text of the codex.

82 In MS St. Petersburg 81, the name appears in the colophon, f. 4ʳ, right column, ll. 7–8. In MS Paris 1172, it appears on f. 2ʳ, l. 26. Furthermore, here, on the front cover and the pages that precede the text, the name "Solomon" appears several times, along with the note "Aben Rasched seu Averrois Opera Medica *Colliget* vulgo dicta hebraice reddita a R. Salomone f[iglio de] Abraham f. Da'ud."

83 Neubauer, *Catalogue of the Hebrew Manuscripts*, 721, #2112.

84 Steinschneider, *Die hebräischen Übersetzungen des Mittelalters*, 671–75, #429.

85 MS Strasbourg, National University Library of Strasbourg, 3927 is dated to the thirteenth century in Zonta, "Medieval Hebrew Translations," 27, #91, to the fifteenth century in Samuel Landauer, *Katalog der hebräischen, arabischen, persischen und türkischen*

In the introduction to his translation, Solomon outlines the seven chapters of the book, which pertain to anatomy, health, diseases, symptoms, food and medicines, self-care, and the treatment of diseases. He then embarks on an extensive rhetorical exposition, elucidating his rationale for the translation. He begins by lauding God, noting the epistemological limits of human comprehension due to our material and form-based constitution. He posits that God endowed humanity with dominion over creation and free will, enabling ethical discernment and caring for one's soul. He asserts, citing Proverbs 21:23, that this is achieved in two ways: through regulation of "one's tongue," implying mindful speech, and of "one's mouth," a probable metonym for bodily care. He further argues that knowledge of medicine is indispensable for religious observance, citing the correlation between physical health and spiritual clarity. In his view, expertise in medicine permits discernment in religious matters, such as when to break Sabbath observances for medical emergencies.

Solomon notes a historical deficiency in Jewish medical literature, which he attributes to the availability of direct guidance when prophets were present among the People of Israel; due to this direct access to divine wisdom, there was no need to produce medical books. However, with the absence of such figures, he contends that Jews now find themselves in a position where they must independently cultivate medical knowledge. To alleviate the deficiency he describes, he has resolved to translate two significant works: the *K. Kullīyāt*[86] by Ibn Rušd[87] and the *K. Urğūzah* by Ibn Sīnā.[88]

This rationale seems to conflict with existing knowledge about the burgeoning corpus of medical scholarship in the Iberian and Provençal Jewish communities in Solomon's lifetime, including translations by Samuel ibn Tibbon and original compositions by Maimonides.[89] At the same time, if, as it appears, Solomon's introduction to the *K. al-Dawāʿir* does allude to

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Handschriften der Kaiserlichen Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek zu Strassburg (Strassburg, 1881), 1, but to the fourteenth to fifteenth century on Ktiv website.

86   The *K. Kullīyāt* is mentioned in MS St. Petersburg 81, f. 4ᵛ, right column, ll. 11–12, and in MS Paris 1172, f. 2ᵛ, l. 17.

87   Ibn Rušd is mentioned in MS St. Petersburg 81, f. 4ᵛ, right column, ll. 11–12, and in MS Paris 1172, f. 2ᵛ, l. 17.

88   The *K. Urğūzah*, and Ibn Sīnā as its author, are mentioned in MS St. Petersburg 81, f. 4ᵛ, right column, l. 17, and in MS Paris 1172, f. 2ᵛ, l. 18.

89   See Carmen Caballero-Navas, "Medicine among Medieval Jews: The Science, the Art, and the Practice," in *Science in Medieval Jewish Cultures. Part II: Individual Sciences as Studied and Practiced by Medieval Jews*, ed. Gad Freudenthal (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 320–42. For an overview of Maimonides's medical works, see Gerrit Bos, "Maimonides' Medical Works and Their Contribution to His Medical Biography," *Maimonidean Studies* 5 (2008): 243–66.

prominent figures in the contemporary landscape of translation such as Samuel ibn Tibbon and Maimonides, he must have been cognisant of these medical works. Many of the medical works of Maimonides, who "did not begin to write on medicine until he was well advanced in years,"[90] were highly popular among Jews and non-Jews alike, both in their Judæo-Arabic originals and in Hebrew translations.[91] Furthermore, it is noteworthy that many of Solomon's statements in his introduction to the *K. Kullīyāt*—especially those concerning guarding one's speech and the centrality of taking care of one's body, and therefore of the science of medicine, to religious life—closely echo Maimonides's pronouncements in the fifth chapter of his *Šmonah Peraqim*,[92] which was completed between 1158 and 1165,[93] and in the fourth section of *Mišneh Torah, Sefer ha-Madaʿ, Hilkhot Deʿot*, which was completed prior to 1180.[94] By claiming to be the first to translate medical works, Solomon could be implicitly discrediting those extant translations and compositions as unworthy. Still, such an outright dismissal of Maimonides—even as a strategic exaggeration for self-promotion or for establishing authority in a competitive intellectual landscape—seems difficult to comprehend. In this regard, it might be worthy of mention that Makhir's father-in-law, Šešet, was known as a pertinacious

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90 Cf. Gerrit Bos, "Introduction," in Moses Maimonides, *On Rules Regarding the Practical Part of the Medical Art*, ed. Gerrit Bos and Y. Tzvi Langermann (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 2014), xix. On the dissemination of Maimonides's medical works, see Lola Ferre, "Dissemination of Maimonides' Medical Writings in the Middle Ages," in *Traditions of Maimonideanism*, ed. Carlos Fraenkel (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 17–31.

91 Cf. Gerrit Bos, "Translator's Introduction," in Moses Maimonides, *Medical Aphorisms. Treatises 1–5*, ed. Gerrit Bos (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 2004), xxv; Bos, "Translator's Introduction," in Moses Maimonides, *On Poisons and the Protection against Lethal Drugs*, ed. Gerrit Bos (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 2009), xix; Bos, "Introduction," in Moses Maimonides, *On Coitus*, ed. Gerrit Bos (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 6; Bos, "Introduction," in Moses Maimonides, *On the Elucidation of Some Symptoms and the Response to Them* (*Formerly Known as On the Causes of Symptoms*), ed. Gerrit Bos (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 8; Bos, "Introduction," in Moses Maimonides, *On the Regime of Health*, ed. Gerrit Bos (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 3; Bos, "Introduction," in Moses Maimonides, *Commentary on Hippocrates' Aphorisms*, ed. Gerrit Bos (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 9. However, not every work seems to have enjoyed such a degree of popularity: cf. Bos, "Introduction," in Maimonides, *On Rules Regarding the Practical Part of the Medical Art*, xvii; Bos, "Introduction," in Moses Maimonides, *Medical Aphorisms. Hebrew Translation by Zeraḥyah ben Isaac ben Sheʾaltiel Ḥen*, ed. Gerrit Bos (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 5, Bos, "Introduction," in Moses Maimonides, *Medical Aphorisms. Hebrew Translation by Nathan Ha-Meʾati*, ed. Gerrit Bos (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 3.

92 Maimonides, *Eight Chapters*, 69–74.

93 Gorfinkle's introduction in Maimonides, *Eight Chapters*, 10.

94 Cf. Solomon Gandz, "Date of the Composition of Maimonides' Code," *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 17 (1947/48): 1–7.

Maimonidean,[95] which suggests that Solomon was not isolated from the currents of Maimonidean thought, underlining the incongruity between his public claims and the intellectual context of his time.

There is a single existing manuscript of Solomon's translation of the *K. Urǧūzah*,[96] MS St. Petersburg, Institute of Oriental Manuscripts 75, which is dated to the fourteenth or fifteenth centuries and penned in Byzantine script.[97] In the first lines of the introduction to his translation, he furnishes a precise date for the culmination of his endeavour: the middle of the month of Kislev of 1233. Consequently, given that Solomon indicates his intention to translate both works in the *K. Kullīyāt*, it can be inferred that the completion of that work preceded that of the *K. Urǧūzah* within a relatively short temporal interval—which may also explain why the *K. Kullīyāt*'s introduction[98] is more elaborate.[99] Ibn Sīnā's *K. Urǧūzah* was translated into Hebrew at least four times, and Solomon's rendition seems to have been the first one. In 1260, seemingly without drawing upon Solomon's translation, Moses ibn Tibbon produced a translation of Ibn Rušd's commentary on the *K. Urǧūzah* (in prose), which included the text of the *K. Urǧūzah* itself.[100]

In his version, Solomon identifies the author and acknowledges himself as the translator. He also praises his father, calling him a "renowned rabbi and distinguished scholar," and states he was a physician.[101] In his introduction,

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95   Klein, "Power and Patrimony," 102.

96   The text is translated in Avicenna, *Avicenna's Poem on Medicine*, trans. Haven C. Krueger (Springfield, IL: Thomas, 1963), 13–15, and edited and translated in Avicenna, *Poema de la medicina. ʿUrǧuza fī ʾṭ-ṭibb*, trans. Najaty S. Jabary and Pilar Salamanca (Salamanca: Junta de Castilla y León, Consejería de Educación y Cultura, 1999), 33–35.

97   In MS St. Petersburg 75, the text occupies the entire codex.

98   However, this aspect may also be attributed to the manuscript tradition rather than solely reflecting the author's original intention. My thanks go to an anonymous reviewer for highlighting this point.

99   It may appear incongruent that Solomon, who seems to be promoting himself in the marketplace of translators, fails to mention his previous translation of the *K. al-Dawāʾir* in either the *K. Kullīyāt* or the *K. Urǧūzah*. However, this omission could be attributed to a shift in academic focus (from philosophy to medicine), a willingness to disassociate himself from his dedication of the *K. al-Dawāʾir* to Makhir, who had passed away in 1226, in a changing socio-political context; or potentially a simple desire to distance himself from a translation executed during his younger years—or, more directly, to the fact that he did not see the necessity of quoting previous translations.

100   In 1261, Solomon ibn Ayyūb translated it into verse; in the fourteenth century, Ḥayyim Israel translated it again, also into verse. Cf. Kozodoy, "Medieval Hebrew Medical Poetry," 223–24; Zonta, "Medieval Hebrew Translations," p. 32, #148; Steinschneider, *Die hebräischen Übersetzungen des Mittelalters*, p. 699, #445.

101   Solomon's portrayal of his father as a distinguished physician is in stark contrast to that of Makhir in the introduction to the *K. al-Dawāʾir*, where he is described as lacking a

he subtly describes what a proper translation should be. By apparently drawing upon a paraphrase of Maimonides when addressing the scenario of reciting blessings over wine that possesses the aroma of wine but the taste of vinegar, as described in *Mišneh Torah*, *Sefer Zemanim*, *Šabat* 29, he portrays the dynamic between the source text and its translation, drawing a parallel to that of a beverage and its container, saying that just as a well-crafted vessel retains the original qualities of the liquid it holds, a skilful translation preserves the essence of the original text without dilution. However, transitioning to a distinct metaphorical stance, he also characterises his translation as an outcome derived from a purification process, wherein he meticulously eliminated all superfluous elements to render it suitable for scholars. Notably, he attributes the role of refining the text to himself, emphasising his—the translator's—active engagement in honing its content.

In the following lines, Solomon highlights this idea, positing that his role extends beyond that of a mere translator; he has, in fact, comprehended the essence of the text, culminating in a rendition that diverges from and possibly even surpasses the original in quality, and therefore providing a version that in its content—or "strength"—and form—or "clarity"—serves the purpose of aiding those who engage with it to learn medicine and its practical applications. As in the *K. al-Dawāʿir*, for Solomon, there is no better translator than a good interpreter.

Furthermore, another point adds extra complexity. In the first folio of his introduction to the *K. Urǧūzah*, Solomon indicates that he is not only offering a translation, but also appending a commentary to it. Nevertheless, an examination of this commentary reveals that this is not an original work, but rather an appropriation of Ibn Rušd's commentary on the same text,[102] whence it can be concluded that the original Arabic version with which Solomon was working for the translation likely already contained Ibn Rušd's commentary.

5 Conclusion

All in all, each of Solomon's three translations reveals not merely an act of linguistic transference, but a nuanced philosophy of translation—an implicit

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scholarly lineage. Nevertheless, this incongruity need not be perceived as anything more than a rhetorical flourish.

102 While it will be briefly addressed here, a comprehensive analysis of this appropriation and its scholarly implications for understanding the intellectual milieu and translation and commentarial practices in the period is beyond the scope of this current study.

claim to authority in rendering an accurate version. Furthermore, although it would be difficult to conclude anything definitive about Solomon based on the current information we have about him, this intricate web of actions—ranging from ground-breaking theories on translation to an ostensibly deliberate ignorance of existing medical works and unacknowledged appropriation—reveals a multifaceted personality engaged in complex intellectual manoeuvres to strategically eclipse rival contributions.

General parallels can be drawn between the introductory sections of the translations of the *K. al-Dawāʾir* and the *K. Urǧūzah*,[103] since both introductions feature a prose segment wherein the author showcases their expertise, either as a translator or as a physician, dedicates their work to a patron, and subsequently presents a verse segment praising God and providing a synopsis of the text's core themes. Yet it is perhaps the stylistic echoes that prove most revealing. These are marked by recurring unconventional Hebrew terms and a discernable aversion to Arabised Hebrew—a linguistic strategy that leads Solomon to coin new Hebrew terms while also preserving the original Arabic lexicon.

Future research should concentrate on Solomon's approach to translation, particularly in cases where he diverges from the then-increasingly standardised philosophical terminology, scrutinising whether these deviations are congruent with the methodologies he articulated in the prefatory remarks to his translations. Moreover, we should delve deeper into the religious, philosophical, and rhetorical underpinnings of Solomon's works, examining them through the prism of the translation methodologies[104] employed by Maimonides, Samuel ibn Tibbon, Judah al-Ḥarizi, and the like, in order to discern the authors with whom Solomon was engaging. This ongoing inquiry promises not only to illuminate the obscured figure behind these translations, but also to shed light

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103   For the Arabic text of Ibn Sīnā's prologue, see Avicenna, *Poème de la médecine*, trans. Henri Jahier and Abdelkader Noureddine (Paris: Société d'Édition "Les Belles Lettres," 1956), 5–6, and for the translation, see Avicenna, *Poema de la medicina*, 33–35.

104   On the Ibn Tibbon family, see Robinson, "The Ibn Tibbon Family." For an introduction to the different ways of understanding the methods and goals of translations into Hebrew, see Abraham Halkin, "The Medieval Jewish Attitude toward Hebrew," in *Biblical and Other Studies*, ed. Alexander Altmann (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1963), 233–48; Jean-Pierre Rothschild, "Motivations et méthodes des traductions en hébreu du milieu du XIIᵉ à la fin du XVᵉ siècle," in *Traduction et traducteurs au Moyen Âge. Actes du colloque international du CNRS organisé à Paris, Institut de Recherche et d'Histoire des Textes les 26–28 mai 1986*, ed. Geneviève Contamine (Aubervilliers: Institut de Recherche et d'Histoire des Textes, 1989), 279–302; and Warren Zev Harvey, "Three Medieval Jewish Philosophers on the Hebrew Language," in *The Origin and Nature of Language and Logic*, ed. Nadja Germann and Steven Harvey (Turnhout: Brepols, 2020), 29–43.

on a hitherto lesser-explored juncture in the evolution of pre-modern Hebrew scientific and philosophical terminology. The implications of learning more about Solomon as a person cascade beyond the boundaries of Jewish intellectual history, reshaping existing narratives of medieval scholarly exchanges and the interplay of translation methods.[105]

Appendix

This Appendix offers the first-ever translations of Solomon's introductions to his translations of Ibn al-Sīd al-Baṭalyawsī's *Kitāb al-Dawāʾir al-Wahmīyah*, Ibn Rušd's *K. Kullīyāt fī al-ṭibb*, and Ibn Sīnā's *K. Urǧūzah fī al-ṭibb*. Two important points should be noted. First, the Hebrew text presented throughout this appendix is a transcription, the chief aim of which is to convey the text's cardinal thematic contours, rather than a critical edition. Specifically, for the *K. Kullīyāt*, the text is primarily based on MS St. Petersburg 81, with some amendments from MS Paris 1172 when the former was illegible; MS Oxford 176 has not been considered due to its lack of availability. Second, rendering a faithful translation of Solomon's introductions, especially the preface to his translation of the *Kitāb al-Dawāʾir*, is an arduous task. This complexity arises not only from the labyrinthine syntactic constructs, but also from the text's tapestry of biblical, talmudic, and philosophical allusions—references that would have been readily discernible to his immediate audience. Such an endeavour engenders an epistemological tension in light of Solomon's own philosophical stances on the act of translation. As a result, while efforts have been made to preserve both the grammatical and syntactic frameworks, as well as the deep semantic layers embedded within the original text, the poetic metre has been compromised.

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105   For an introduction to the topic that includes not only a historical overview, but also a brief discussion of often-overlooked philosophical problems underlying it, see Reimund Leicht and Giuseppe Veltri, "Introduction: The Study of Pre-Modern Philosophical and Scientific Hebrew Terminology—Past, Present, and Future Perspectives," in *Studies in the Formation of Medieval Hebrew Philosophical Terminology*, ed. Reimund Leicht and Giuseppe Veltri (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 1–35.

Solomon's Introduction to His Translation of the Kitāb al-Dawā'ir al-Wahmīyah (*Ms Florence 493*)

From the esteemed sage Solomon ibn Da'ud, may his prestige be exalted. The author said that a translator must know both the source and target languages, be well versed in them and their vocabularies,	[75ᵛ] [Gloss] [21] ד״תᵃ מעתיק. לחכם הגדול ר׳ שלמה ן׳ דאוד ירום הודו. אמר המחברᵇ תנאי המעתיק לדעת את שתי [22] הלשונות אשר יעתיק מהם ואליהן ולהיות בקי בהן ובשמותיהן.
preserve the flow of ideas [in the text], and direct it by having a deep understanding of it and constructing it properly.ᶜ	ולשמור [23] את דרך העניינים ולעשות בו עם להעמיד הדבר על בריו וענין על מכונו.
If he opts for a literal word-for-word translation and the sense is accurately reflected, he deserves commendation.	[24] ואם יבא להעתיק מלה כנגד מלה אם הענין עולה במסלה תחשב לו לתהלה.
However, if a word causes problems, or the language is insufficient to express things in their proper order, he should change the text's formulation and [translate] sense-for-sense.	ואם [25] המלה תצר והלשון יקצר דבר על משמרת וענין על מצבו יסבב [76ʳ] [1] את פני הדברᵈ משמר משמר לעומת משמר.ᵉ

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a ד״ת here stands for a type of correction that can be seen in other places in the manuscript. There are also corrections with only a ד and some with no acronym. At the moment, it is unclear why are they different and what their function is. Moritz Steinschneider, *Die hebräischen Handschriften der K. Hof- und Staatsbibliothek in München* (Munich, 1895), 192; Steinschneider, *Die hebräischen Übersetzungen des Mittelalters*, 608; and Steinschneider, "Ueber die Mondstationen (Naxatra), und das Buch Arcandam," *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 18 (1864): 173 say that ד״ת (and א״ש ד״ת) could stand for דברי תלמיד or דוין תלמיד, the name of a copyist translating works of astronomy from Latin in the fourteenth century. Solomon Gandz, "The Astrolabe in Jewish Literature," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 4 (1927): 472 n. 10 supports this hypothesis. However, this is probably not the same person. Solomon Marcus Schiller-Szinessy, *Catalogue of the Hebrew Manuscripts Preserved in the University Library, Cambridge. Volume 1, Section II: Commentaries on the Bible* (London, 1876), 197 and 225 n. 1, reads ד״ת as דעתא תניתא or דיוק תניתא. In the Talmud, this abbreviation usually stands for דברי תורה. In this case, it is quite clear that המעתיק is a correction of המחבר.

b This correction is taken from the lost Turin manuscript: see Peyron, "Fol. 5."

c Lit. "to establish words over their evidence and the matter [over] its foundation." See Maimonides's *Mišneh Torah, Sefer ha-Mada', Tešuvah* 5:5, and *Yesode ha-Torah* 7:6.

d Lit. "the appearance of the thing."

e Neh 12:24 and 1 Chr 26:16.

MS Florence 493 (*cont.*)

He will avoid errors by utilising the words that the "great men" agreed upon. He will also [avoid] the error of utilising vocabulary [containing] ambiguities and homonyms, a bridle upon people's jaws that misleads them into ascending to the "stone of errors," which results in the complete reversal of a proper presentation of a thing.	[ר76] וישמור דרכיו מחטוא בשמות אשר הסכימו [2] עליהן אנשי מדות.[f] וגם מחטוא בשמות המסופקות והמשותפות אשר הן רסן [3] מתעה על לחיי עמים[g] לעלות אל אבן טועים מהפוך על פניו. דבר דבר על אפניו.[h]
And a person [the good translator] who discerns all this is well suited to translating and to holding ink.	[4] והאיש הלזה אשר יברר את כל זה ראוי להעתיק ודיו להחזיק.
And a person who does not know all this—and this has happened to me!—besmirches the author. He will harm his intention. The matter will be impenetrable to his eyes, and he will seal its meanings when transmitting them. For this reason, I was afraid, and I stopped translating.	ומי לא ידע בכל [5] אלה ותקראנה אותי כאלה[i] אל המחבר יתן תפלה.[j] ובעינינו ישים תהלה[k] ומעינו [6] העינים יסתום. ובמסרם יחתום.[l] ועל כן זחלתי.[m] ומהעתיק מלים חדלתי.
Once upon a time, the words of the translators and the ancient words were presented to the great *naśiʾ*, the stronghold,[n] our esteemed lord, R. Makhir (God rest his soul and preserve him), son of the great and respectable *naśiʾ* Rabbinaʾ Šešet זצ״ל.	[7] ויהי היום ויבאו דברי המעתיקים והדברים עתיקים[o] לפני הנשיא הגדול, המעוז [8] המגדול, אדוננו ר׳ מכיר נר״ו[p] בן כבוד הנשיא הגדול רבנא ששת זצ״ל.

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f Num 13:32.

g Isa 30:28.

h Prov 25:8.

i Lev 10:19.

j Job 1:22.

k Job 4:18.

l Job 33:16.

m Job 32:6. It may be significant that here, Job says that no one is wiser only for being older.

n See Dan 11:31 and Judg 6:26.

o 1 Chron 4:22.

p נר״ו stands for נצרהו רחמנא ונטרהו.

MS Florence 493 (*cont.*)

We talked about them and their translation method. He asked me, "Are you also like one of them?" I said, "And who is their father? I possess a mind akin to theirs, and I am not inferior to them." He said, "Until today, I did not know that you had come this far."	[8] ונדבר [9] עליהם ועל דרך העתקותיהם. ויאמר אלי הגם אתה כאחד מהם. ואומר ומי [10] אביהם.�q גם לי לבב כמוהם לא נופל אנכי מהם.ʳ ויאמר: לא ידעתי בלתי היוםˢ כי באת עד [11] הלום.
I said: "I am translating a document bearing words of wisdom, which is intended to testify [to my skills]."	ואומר הנני מעתיק תעודה מדברי חכמים המועדהᵗ בעבור תהיה [12] לי לעדה.ᵘ
I will translate the *Book of the Orders of Existence and the Series of the Circles of Creations*, which discusses the rank of the nine secondary [existents] that are in charge of the nine spheres and the rank of the Agent Intellect—we call these	ואעתיקהᵛ מחברת סדרי המצואים ותכן עגלת הברואים המדברת [13] על מעלות תשעת השניים אשר על תשעת הגלגלים מנוייםʷ ועל מעלת הדעת [14] הפועל הנקרא אישים ועל הגשם והצורה וההיולה וד׳ היסודות והמתכות והצמחים.

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q 1 Sam 10:11–12.

r Job 12:3.

s Gen 21:26.

t Josh 20:9. It may be vocalised as מוֹעֵדָה, a "specific time" (e.g., Exod 13:10) or "appointed season" (e.g., Jer 8:7), but since *te'udah* rhymes with *mu'adah*, I assume that the first is correct.

u Gen 21:30.

v Reading אעתיק where the manuscript has אעתיקה.

w I have left the term מנויים untranslated. מנויים is employed in Samuel ibn Tibbon's translation of *Guide* 1.73 (מנויים [...] נמצאים בפועל): Moses Maimonides, *The Guide for the Perplexed* [Hebrew], ed. Judah (Even-Šmuel) Kaufman ([Jerusalem, 1987], 484), and 1.74 (מציאות מנויים, Moses Maimonides, *The Guide for the Perplexed*, 502). The Arabic equivalent is متعددات (Maimonides, *Le Guide des égarés par Moïse ben Maimoun dit Maïmonide publié pour la première fois dans l'original arabe et acocompagné d'une traduction française et de notes critiques littéraires et explicatives*, ed. Solomon Munk, vol. 1 [Paris, 1856], 1.73, eleventh proposition, p. קיו in the Arabic text, and 1.74, seventh proof, p. קכא in the Arabic text). Munk (Maimonides, *Le Guide des égarés*, 414 and 432) renders it as "choses nombreuses" and "choses ([...]) en nombre." Friedländer (Maimonides, *The Guide for the Perplexed by Moses Maimonides Translated from the Original Arabic Text*, ed. Michael Friedländer, 2nd ed., vol. 1 [London: Routledge; New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1910], 131 and 137) translates it as "things" in the first case and "number of things" in the second. Pines (Maimonides, *The Guide of the Perplexed*, trans. Shlomo Pines [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963], 1:212 and 220) translates it as "numerable things," adding in the first case a note saying "Or: numbered." There is no critical edition of the Hebrew version (Moshe Goshen-Gottstein, "Maimonides' *Guide of the Perplexed*: Towards a Critical Edition." In *Studies in Jewish Religious and Intellectual History*, edited by Siegfried Stein and Raphael Loewe, 133–42. Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 1979). For an analysis of the manuscripts, see Carlos Fraenkel, *From Maimonides to Samuel ibn Tibbon: The Transformation of the* Dalalat al-ḥa'irin *into the* Moreh ha-Nevukhim [Hebrew] ([Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2007]).

MS Florence 493 (*cont.*)

"individuals." [This book also explores
the topics] of body, form, and matter,
and the four elements, the minerals, and
the plants.

[The text discusses] the righteous path through which human beings can fathom the singularity of the Creator. Furthermore, [it discusses] how human beings are intermediaries between the sensibles and the intelligibles and [explains that] a person's posthumous state does not surpass the level of wisdom attained during his lifetime. [And this book expounds upon] the conceptualisation of the Universal Intellect and [explains that] nothing exists without God and His actions and [explains how] it can be said of Him that He intelligises nothing but His self, which encompasses the intelligising of all existents.	[15] ואי זה הוא דרך הטוב אשר בה יוכל האדם לדעת ייחוד הבורא ואיך האדם אמצעי [16] בין המורגשות והמודעות ואיך לא תעבור מעלתו אחרי מותין אל המעלה אשר [17] הגיע אליה בהיותו חי בחכמתו. ואיך יוכל להצטייר הדעת הכללי ואיך אין במצוא בלתי [18] השם ומעשיו. ועל כן יאמרו עליו שאינו יודע אלא נפשו שבכללה ידע כל המצואים.
And [this book also explains] how the circles are enumerated, and how [this enumeration] signifies the way of unity, and how they [the circles] are the secondary existents that are one numerically.	[19] ואיך הוא המנין עגלות ואיך יורה על דרך הייחוד ואיך הם האחדים במספר השניים.
And [in this book, the reader will come to understand] what this soul is in life after it is separated from the body and [that] life is an accident in a body; and that death, which is folly, is an accident in the human soul.	[20] ומה אותה הנפש בחיים אחרי הפרדה מהגוף וכי החיים הם בגוף מקרה[x] ואיך הוא [21] המות אשר הוא האולת[y] בנפש האדם מקרה.

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x   1 Sam 6:9 and 20:26.

y   אולת here may be taken as a synonym of סכלות, in the sense of جهل, when the text says: وعرض للنفس الموت الذي يراد به الجهل من قبل الجسم (Eliyahu, "Ibn al-Sīd al-Baṭalyawsī and His Place in Medieval Muslim and Jewish Thought," 2:91). See also Prov 12:23 and 12:28.

MS Florence 493 (*cont.*)

These matters, along with numerous others, are expounded in the pages of this book, present within it. You [Makhir] brought it to me [Solomon]. The book is structured in seven distinct sections, [each serving as a gateway through which] wisdom and knowledge flow [abundantly]. I translated it from the language of the Arabs into the language of the Hebrews. I have put [a summary of] its seven chapters into a poetic metre. Hence, I say by way of a poem:

את הדברים האלה ורבים מלבד אלה כתבים [22] במחברת הזאת ובה נמצאות ואלי הבאות. ולשבעה שערים היא נחלקת וחכמה [23] ודעת מוצקה. ואני מלשון הערביים אל לשון העבריים אותה העתקתי ואת [24] שבעה שעריה במאזני השיר שקלתי. על כן אמרתי בשירי.

[f. 76ᵛ] [1] ראו מנחה ומחברת ערוכה   במתנת מצוא מצוא כל המצואים.

Behold, a gift. This is a well-organised book, offering
[a description] of the existence of all existents.

[2] איך בדמות עגלה אל בראם   ואיך חוזרים חלילה בה ובאים

[Observe] how God created them [all existents] in the image of a circle
and how they unceasingly come and go in it.

[3] ונמצאת היא בצורת האנוש על   אשר ראוי ואפשר בו נשואים.

[This circle] exists in the human form in the manner appropriate and possible
for it [the circle] to be predicated of it [the human form].

[4] להתבונן הכי נשאון בדעת   פרטי הכללים בברואים.[z]

Enquire whether the individual intellect can hold the universal creatures.[z]

[5] ועצמו אחרי מות בא למקום   כחכמה בא בחייו הנביאים.

His self, after death, will come to the place that is proportionate
to the wisdom he attained in his prophetic life.[aa]

[6] וסוד מנין[ab] עגלות היא עגולות   ומחשב האנוש לו בית כלאים.

[This book also deals with] the secret concerning what makes the circles circular,
which human thought imprisons.

[7] לספר אין תארים על אדון כל   לבד אם הם באות כחם קרואים.

No attributes can be ascribed to God
unless they are employed to the extent possible for them.[ac]

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z   That is, how the universal creatures are the forms in the universal intellect.

aa   My translation does not seem to make sense. הנביאים could be a corruption of הנכאים, referring to the "lower" or "meagre" life, meaning the "first" life of the soul.

ab   מנין can also be read as "number," i.e., "the secret of the number of circles."

ac   Meaning: we cannot attach any attributes to God unless they are used according to what they mean to us.

MS Florence 493 (*cont.*)

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[8] וגם נשאל דבר האומרים אל אל   לצד נפשו בלי ידע הנאים.[ad]

And it asks [about] those who say about God that He knows
no existent but Himself.

[9] ונפש אחרי מותה כחיים   צרורה היא. ויש מופתים ברואים.

The soul, after death, is linked to the chain of life.
There are veritable proofs for this.

[10] ושבעת שערי חכמה ספורים   בספר זה וכלם בו נשואים.

Seven chapters of wisdom are counted in this book, entwined within its pages.

[11] והעתק אל לשון קדש בעצות   גבור הפליא מאד לעשות פלאים[ae]

It was translated into the holy tongue by the counsel of
a most mighty person who performs wonders

[12] ורב מכיר שמו נקרא ומכר   צידו אל פאר כל הנשיאים

and whose name is R. Makhir. He could lend grandeur to all the [other] *neśi'im*,

[13] אשר טובם למול חסדו בדי   ותעתעים[af] ורוח צח שפאים [שפיים].[ag]

whose benevolence compared to his grace is fiction and illusion,
[like] a hot desert wind.

[14] ומהלל יעלז בשמו ויעלי[ai]   והוא אלהוד[ah] ענק חן וחלאים

The one who praises him will rejoice in his name.
And he is [?], a beautiful necklace and jewels.

[15] גביר רכב עלי עבים ודרך.   והטריח בה חסדי נשיאים.

He is the magnate who traverses the clouds.
His glory, bestowed upon them, adorns the *neśi'im*.[aj]

[16] והמציר על פני תבל חסדיו   עדי דשאו בגלבע דשאים.

He pours out His grace on the face of the earth,
even so far as to make grass grow on Mount Gilboa.[ak]

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ad   The meaning of the word הנאים in this context is unknown, and it is assumed to be a corruption of המצואים.

ae   Ps 17:7.

af   Jer 10:15.

ag   Jer 4:11.

ah   The meaning of אלהוד is especially obscure, and it has therefore been left untranslated.

ai   Probably a corruption of ויגל.

aj   Job 37:11 mentions the verb להטריח and also the clouds, which here appear in the previous verse.

ak   The meaning of this expression is obscure; however, it may be an allusion to 2 Sam 1:21, where David curses Mount Gilboa, decreeing that nothing shall grow upon it.

MS Florence 493 (*cont.*)

ואין מסגיר כמו מדבר פראים.	[17] שעריו הם פתוחים ליל ויומם.

His gates remain open day and night.

He does not close them,[al] [leaving people outside] like wild donkeys in the desert.[am]

אשר באים לקבל לא מביאים	[18] להניף על נדיבו עם נדיבות

He bestows generosity upon the generous, who come to him empty-handed.

ספר ספר וספור[an] בו נכאים.	[19] ומי יוכל לספר מקצת פעליו.

Who could recount even a fraction of his deeds?

Writing, numbers, and speech fall short.

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al   Lit. "there is not enclosement like …"

am   Job 24:5.

an   See the first lines of the *Sefer Yeṣirah* (Jerusalem: Yešivat Qol Yehudah, 1990), 29; I have vocalised these three words as they are usually understood, although their meaning is uncertain. See Shabbatai Donnolo, *Shabbatai Donnolo's* Sefer Ḥakhmoni: *Introduction, Critical Text, and Annotated English Translation*, ed. and trans. Piergabriele Mancuso (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 285 n. 28.

Solomon's Introduction to His Translation of the K. Kullīyāt fī al-ṭibb (*MS St. Petersburg 81*)

This is the book *Kullīyāt* by Ibn Rušd. It comprises seven chapters [on] anatomy; health; diseases; symptoms; food and medicines; taking care of [one's] health; and curing diseases. Solomon, the son of Abraham ibn Da'ud (may the Spirit of the Lord cause him to rest), said: Blessed be the Lord, who has no creator. He actualises everything without having been actualised [by another] and is the uncaused cause of everything. Who can endure when He appears?[a] He is the first with no beginning, and nor does He have an end or limit. He is exalted above

[f. 4ʳ, right column] [1] זה ספר כלّיאת לאבן רשד. [2] והוא ז׳ ספרים. [3] ספר נתוח האברים ספר הבריאות[4] ספר בתחלואים ספר האותות והסמני׳ [5] ספר המזונות[d] והתרופות ספר שמירת [6] הבריאות ספר רפואת התחלואים. [7] אמר שלמה [8] ב״ר אברהם רי״ת אבן דאוד ברוך הש׳ [9] אשר נמצא בלי ממציא מוציא הכל [10] למפעל ואין לו מוציא סבת הכל [11] ואין סבה למציאותו ומי העומד [12] בהראותו הראשון בלי התחלה ואין [13] לו קץ ותכלה. ומרומם על כל ברכה [14] ותהלה. ואיננו גוף ולא כח בגוף [15] ומנהיג את הגלגל בכח שאינו [16] מפסיק ולא נוח ותחת הזמן אינו [17] נכלל. וכל חשבון בו

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a   Mal 3:2.

b   Lit. "him."

c   Lit. "him."

d   The MS is illegible here, but the word can be recovered from the title of this chapter on f. 112ʳ.

MS St. Petersburg 81 (*cont.*)

all blessings and praises. He is neither a body nor a power inside a body. He governs the celestial sphere with strength, unceasing and unresting. He is not bound by time and is unmeasurable. This is a fundamental principle. He is One, but not like the entities that are [numerically] one, nor [is He] like the one that is the first of the separate existents that are assigned [respectively to each celestial sphere]. Everyone [besides Him] is only referred to as such [as "one"] homonymously, for He alone is the Creator, and everything else is [His] creation. He is incomparable to the exalted and lofty invisible creatures, although we tend to assume that every creature is composed of matter and form. God, the Most High, the fearsome, formed humanity [from] the dust of the earth, breathed life into his nostrils. He made humanity[b] rule over the work of His hands [and put] everything under his dominion, granting humanity[c] life and goodness [and the capacity] to discern, to reject evil and to choose good. He commanded him to safeguard his soul

and to be accountable for his actions.[e] However, he is safeguarded by two good and trustworthy things: taking care of his tongue and his mouth, since the sage's tongue heals, as it is written: "He who guards his mouth and tongue, guards himself against trouble" [Prov 21:23]. The mouth is safeguarded by medicine and food, which protect a person from malady.

אומלל. זה הכלל. [18] והוא אחד ולא כשאר האחדים ולא כאחד שהוא ראש המנויים [20] והנפרדים. וכל אחד בלתי בשתוף [21] השם נקרא כי הוא לבדו בורא וכל זולתו [22] נברא. וערך אין לו בנבראים הרמים [23] והנשאים הרואים ואינם נראים אף כי [24] נערכנו לכל נברא מחומר ומצורה. [25] ואלהים עליון נורא ויצר את האדם [26]עפר מן האדמה ויפח באפיו נשמה. [27] ימשילהו במעשה ידיו כל שת תחת [28] רגליו ויתן לפניו את החיים ואת [29] הטוב לדעתו מאוס ברע ובחור [30] בטוב ויציו עליו לשמור נפשו.

[**f. 4ʳ, left column**] [1] ולהיות דמו בראשו. אך היא נשמרת [2] בשני עניינים טובים ונאמנים והיא [3] שמירת הלשון והפה ולשון חכמים [4] מרפה ככתו׳ שומר פיו ולשונו ושומר [5] מצרות נפשו והפה נשמר על ידי [6] התרופה ומזון ובכן לא ימצא האדם [7] רזון.

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e   Lit. "his blood is on his head" (Josh 2:19).

MS St. Petersburg 81 (*cont.*)

The wisdom of medicine holds a place among the *miṣvot*. This is evident from the fact that according to those versed in law and precedent and the Torah scholars, it [medicine, and by extension its practitioners] can prescribe the desecration of the Sabbath; [furthermore,] if someone is afflicted with the illnesses of *bulmos* or blindness, it prescribes feeding him [even] prohibited substances, to aid in the recovery of his sight.

[8] הרפואות וזה על כן היתה במצות חכמת [9] לך האות כי השבת על פיה מחללין יודעי דת ודין׳ יושבי [10] על מדין׳ ומי שאחזו בולמוס וסנוירים. [11] מאכילין אותו על פיה דברים אסורים [12] עד תפקחנה עיני עורים.ʰ

Engaging in medicine also has a place in acts of grace and the knowledge of God, for when the body is sick, the soul is also ill, hindering its ability to perceive the divine wisdom enshrined within the Torah. Thus, the soul's clarity in comprehending God's teachings is contingent upon restoring bodily health. And the covering that is spread [over all nations, death, will be destroyed forever].ⁱ This [medicine] is a blessing.

[13] בחסדים ביאה ובדעת אלוהים גם יש לה [14] כי כשהגוף חולה הנפש גם היא תבואה [15] תחלה ולא תוכל לראות בחכמה תורת [16] יי׳ תמימה עד יעלה הגוף ארוכה [17] והמסכה הנסוכה וזאת הברכה.

It [the soul] will heal [and attain well-being] and will be as before, searching for wisdom, entering the sanctuary, gazing upon the beauty of the Lord, frequenting His templeʲ and joining Him.ᵏ And the Lord will restore the person's righteousness and faith,ˡ for humanity is proportionate to strength.ᵐ

[18] תרפה [תרפא וטוב לה] ותשוב אז לקדמותה לדרוש [19] ולתור בחכמה לבא אל הקדש פנימה [20] לחזות בנועם יי ולבקר בהיכלו [21] והוא ילונו בעמלו ויי ישיב לאיש צדקתו [22] ואת אמונתו כי כאיש גבורתו.

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f   Esth 1:13.

g   *b. ʿErub.* 54b, on Judg 5:10.

h   *b. Mishnah Yomaʾ* 8.

i   Isa 25:7.

j   Ps 27:4.

k   Eccl 8:15.

l   1 Sam 26:23.

m   Judg 8:21.

MS St. Petersburg 81 (*cont.*)

It follows that the art of medicine is a paramount *miṣvah* in this world. And in the realm of the hereafter, the rewards reaped from it are exceedingly abundant.

נמצא [23] שחכמת הרפואות מצוה רבה בעולם הזה ובעולם [24] הבא תבואתה מרובה.

And because God said that He is the physician of Israel, among our people, there is a dearth of books dedicated to the science of medicine.

ומפני שאמר [25] האל שהוא רופא לישראל לא נמצא [26] בעמי ספרים חכמת הרפואות [27] מספרים.

As long as God was with us, He continued to act as a healer and redeemer by the prophets' predictions. People would inquire: Will I recover from this illness through the *urim* or the *tumim*?
[As Saul said to God:] God of Israel, make it truthful. But today, as the age of prophecy has waned, and the *urim* and *tumim* are no longer accessible, we are compelled to engage ourselves with medicine. We have to consider when it is proper to do this or that and to learn the why and wherefore of it all and which will work better, the one or the other.
I also tried to shake out the bosom of my garment and said, "I will write a treatise about medicine, and it shall serve as a symbol." So, I applied myself to understanding this.

כי כל עוד עמנו אל והיה לנו [28] רופא וגואל ביד כל נביא וחוזה, היוⁿ [29] שואלים האחיה מחלי זהᵒ או באורים [30] ובתומים. אלהי ישראל הבה תמיםᵖ אבל [31] היום כשנסתלקה נבואה ואין אורים **[f. 4v, right column]** [1] ותומים להוראה אנו חייבין להתעסק [2] ברפואות. ולעיין בהם כאשר יאות [3] לדעת מה זה ועל מה זהᑫ אי זה [4] יכשר הזה או זה.ʳ על כן השתדלתי [5] גם חצני נערתי ואמרהˢ אחבר [6] ברפואות. והיה לעד ולאות.ᵗ ואחשבה [7] לדעת זאת.ᵘ

n   2 Kgs 17:13, where it says כָּל־חֹזֶה, no חוזה היו.

o   2 Kgs 8:9.

p   1 Sam 14:41.

q   Esth 4:5.

r   Eccl 11:6.

s   Neh 5:13.

t   In Isa 19:20, it says וְהָיָה לְאוֹת וּלְעֵד.

u   Ps 73:16.

MS St. Petersburg 81 (*cont.*)

But in medicine, nothing exists that has not already been said. My heart decided to translate medical works abundant in valuable knowledge. From among them, I will translate two correct and complete books.	והנה לא נשאר ברפואות [8] דבר אשר לא נכתב כבר וימלך לבי [9] עלי להעתיק מספרי רפואות ספרים [10] כל טוב מלאת^v ואעתיקה מהם שני [11] ספרים ישרים ותמימים.
The first book is the *Miklāl*, a spoil obtained by my eyes, also known as *Kullīyāt*, a stronghold for times of trouble. The finest gold of Ophir cannot be weighed against it, nor precious onyx or sapphire. Its author is Ibn Rušd, a man of wisdom, wondrous in purpose in medicine and mighty in deed.	האחד ספר [12] המכלל אז הייתי בעיני כמוצא שלל^w [13] אשר שמו כליאת נקרא משגב לעתות [14] בצרה.^x לא יסלה בכתם אופיר בשם [15] יקר וספיר.^y חברו אבן רשד שר התושיה [16] גדול עצת הרפואות רב העליליה.^z
The second is the *Urǧūzah* [by] Ibn Sina, [with] a commentary on the glorious things [that are in the book]. Its price cannot be weighed out in silver. With the guidance of the Rock, may He be blessed, we shall proceed and achieve success.	[17] והשני ארגוזה אבן סינא ופירוש [18] נכבדות מדובר בה.^{aa} לא ישקל כסף [19] מחירה.^{ab} בשם הצור יתברך נעשה [20] ונצליח.

v   Deut 6:11, where it says כָּל־טוּבֿ אֲשֶׁר לֹא־מִלֵּאתָ.
w   Ps 119:162.
x   Ps 9:10.
y   Job 28:16, where it says לֹא־תְסֻלֶּה.
z   Jer 32:19.
aa   Ps 87:3, where it says נִכְבָּדוֹת מְדֻבָּר.
ab   Job 28:15.

Solomon's Introduction to His Translation and Commentary of the K. Urǧūzah fī al-ṭibb (*MS St. Petersburg 75*)

The esteemed, eminent, remarkable, and wonderful philosopher, the accomplished author of this book on the science of medicine and its practical	[**f. 1**^r] [1] ? החכם^a [2] הגדול הפילוסוף המו פלא והמומחה אשר חבר זה הספר [3] בחכמת הרפואות ובמעשיהן ושמו אבן סינא הרופא המומחה. [4] וכלו רמוז וחרוז והעתיקו

a   The title is cut before the word החכם.

MS St. Petersburg 75 (*cont.*)

applications, is called Ibn Sīnā, the proficient physician. This book is replete with evocative language and rhyme, and it was translated by the renowned rabbi and distinguished scholar, Solomon the physician, son of David, the revered physician זצוק״ל, in the vernacular of poetic metre and [accompanied by] a commentary.

[5] הרופא ב״ר שלמה רב המעולה הגדול הרב דויד הרופא זצוק״ל לשון החרוזים אל פירושם.

Behold, [even if] the wine [is] poured into a container, its scent and taste remain unaltered—it does not diminish.

[6] יין ?שו [ראו?] הורק לכלי מכלי טעמו וריחו בו ולא נמר ופג.

Wisdom is the utmost refined silver.[b] It does not contain any alloy, because unlike [worldly] silver, it has no dross.[c] The translation, authored by R. Solomon, was crafted during the mid-month of Kislev in the year 4993 [= 1233 CE].

[7] כסף מזוקק בעליל חכמה. והוא מאין בדיל כי לא ככסף סיג וסג. [8] הוצק בפי הרב שלמה בחצי כסליו בארבעת אלפים תתק״צ״ג.

Since this book entirely consists of symbolic language and rhymes, I, Solomon, who translated it, [also] commented on it. I am engaging in the translation process with the utmost intellectual scrutiny, subjecting it to the crucible of my discerning mind and refining it through a profound understanding of its content, thus imbuing it with strength and clarity. And it has not been poured from vessel to vessel—it has never gone into exile. Therefore, its fine flavour has remained, and its bouquet is unspoiled. By enlarging it for the sake of the reader, I did not damage its essence.[d] I place my

[9] בעבור היות הספר הזה כלו רמזים וחרוזים פירשתיו אני שלמה [10] המעתיקו ובכור הדעת דעתי יצקו ובמצרף התבונה כחי זקקו. [11] וממכלי אל כלי ובגולה לא הלך על כן עמד טעמו בו וריחו לא נמר[e] ריחו. [12] ולא פג לבו בהרחיבי נתיבי למען ירוץ קורא בו. ונשענתי בצורי [13] ובטובו לעזרני ולשגבני במשגבו [14] והמעיין בו בעזרת שדי כראוי יתחכם ממנו [15] כי בו כלל רפואת כל החלאים.

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b Paraphrasing Ps 12:7.
c Paraphrasing Isa 1:22, where both silver and wine are mentioned.
d Hab 2:2.
e Jer 48:11.

MS St. Petersburg 75 (*cont.*)

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trust in my Rock, relying on His benevo-
lence and guidance; may He be exalted,
as my unwavering support. Whoever
consults it [this book] properly, with
God's help, will become knowledgeable,
because it contains the general princi-
ples of healing all maladies.

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The Secular Holy Tongue

The Orthodox Press, Jewish Education, and Modern Hebrew Language

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Abstract

The status of Hebrew as *lešon ha-qodeš*, the "holy tongue," is unquestionable. Still, orthodox leaders, writers, and rabbis did not determine a clear ideology regarding the modernisation of the language, especially in its early stages. Nonetheless, the fact that national and Zionist activists in Russia, Germany, and Jerusalem focused on the linguistic aspect put the Orthodox leadership in a curious position. At the beginning of the twentieth century, they were concerned by modern Hebrew education initiatives, which threatened the traditional value system. In the struggle against secular knowledge and national teaching, they found themselves opposing Hebrew. The Orthodox press argued against the Hebraists and the excessive importance they granted to the language above other traditional values.

Keywords

Hebrew – Orthodoxy – Zionism – Jewish education – Jewish press

1 Introduction[1]

The perception of Hebrew as the holy tongue, *lešon ha-qodeš*, seems at first thought to be axiomatic. After all, for generations, Hebrew was the language of Jewish canonical literature, study, and prayer. In this context, the development of modern Hebrew, a written and spoken language suitable for every domain of life, presented a challenge. During the second half of the nineteenth century

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and into the twentieth century, Hebrew expanded beyond the sphere of the synagogue into the street, and also into modern literature and national politics. The language was dramatically transformed, and public discussions about its nature and importance took place on a regular basis.[2]

Religious leaders had to form a new perception of Hebrew, in a world in which linguistic ideologies were competing fiercely with each other. One approach that could be logically adopted by the religiously conservative element with regard to the so-called language revival was to see it as a secularisation of the holy tongue, if not its desecration. It would have been easy for this group to argue that the Hebraists were defiling the language by using it for worldly purposes. Nevertheless, there is little evidence that this presumed secularisation was the main reason why the historical Orthodox leadership objected to modern Hebrew. In fact, in most instances, Orthodox speakers preferred to ignore the phenomenon and to only join the public discussion in very specific cases. There, surprisingly, they found themselves arguing against the holy tongue itself.

This article will examine the one issue that caused Orthodox thinkers to participate in the discourse about the language: modern Hebrew education, more specifically, the various attempts to integrate Hebrew as a primary component of Jewish schooling. It will examine the early twentieth-century press polemics about this issue in a discourse spreading over Czarist Russia, Germany, and Palestine as a source for understanding the Orthodox writers' perception of the use of modern Hebrew.

This paper will take the stand that the linguistic behaviour of a given society is neither the product of the intellectual understanding of a closed elite group nor shaped by a limited number of literary works; instead, it derives from a complex relationship between political circumstances, socio-economic conditions, and cultural norms. For Jews in Eastern and Central Europe, where Hebrew modernisation originated, the decision to prefer one language over another—to teach a child in Hebrew rather than in Yiddish, for example—should be considered from all these perspectives. "Hebrew modernisation" in this context does not mean the expansion of the language's vocabulary or

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2   There has been extensive research on the modernisation of Hebrew; for a primary and methodologically diverse list of works, see Robert Alter, *Hebrew and Modernity* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1994); Nathan Efrati, *The Evolution of Spoken Hebrew in Pre-State Israel, 1881–1922* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Hebrew Langauge Academy, 2004); Lewis Gilnert, *The Story of Hebrew* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2017); Benjamin Harshav, *Language in Time of Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); Yael Reshef, "The Re-Emergence of Hebrew as a National Language," in *The Semitic Languages: An International Handbook*, ed. Stefan Weninger (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012), 546–54.

the creation of modernist literature; rather, it is a perception that sees the choice of a language as part of one's ideology—either politically, socially, or culturally—and strives to change it according to the demand of contemporary formats such as mass media and up-to-date pedagogy. At the same time, the traditional view of Hebrew preferred to limit the language to its historical domains—mainly prayer and study—and did not wish to alter its theoretical and practical role.

The diglossic nature of Jewish society is, in fact, key to understanding the changing place of Hebrew. Sociolinguistic research has shown that in diglossic societies, the choice to use a specific language for a designated purpose is informed by social norms, powered by linguistic ideologies. Hence, exploring the linguistic discourse is vital to understanding alterations in these norms that result in a new linguistic reality.[3] Language debates and polemics are an especially fruitful source to study, as these phenomena produce ideologies that lead to such developments.[4] This is particularly important for a practical and universal custom such as the education of young children. Private people could ask a rabbi for his opinion on the matter and act accordingly—and many unquestionably did so. At the same time, many other Jews could not—or did not wish to—consult a rabbinic figure when debating how to educate their sons or daughters. In an age of growing democratisation among the Jewish public, the traditional leadership had limited influence in such questions; they were not debated between the walls of the *beyt midraš*, but rather in the public space. Thus, it is essential to examine the Orthodox perspective in the context of the larger Jewish discourse, beyond the scope of sermons and halakhic responsa; the issue needs to be studied from the perspective of contemporaneous reactions to current events.

In the following pages, I will examine the position of Jewish Orthodoxy in the linguistic discourse about Hebrew at its most heated time. First, I will briefly address the lack of a coherent Orthodox linguistic ideology in the face of Hebrew modernisation. Second, I will explore the Orthodox response to the reform in Hebrew instruction in the *ḥeder* in the early twentieth century. And

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3   Rosita Rindler Schjerve, ed., *Diglossia and Power: Language Policies and Practice in the 19th Century Habsburg Empire* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2003), 60–61. On the term "diglossia," see Don Snow, "Revisiting Ferguson's Defining Cases of Diglossia," *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* 34, no. 1 (2013): 61–76, https://doi.org/10.1080/01434632.2012.699531. On Jewish diglossia and Hebrew language modernisation, see Israel Bartal, "From Traditional Bilingualism to National Monolingualism," in *Hebrew in Ashkenaz*, ed. Lewis Gilnert (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 141–50.

4   Jan Bloomaert, "The Debate Is Open," in *Language Ideological Debates*, ed. Jan Bloomaert (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2010), 1–38.

third, I will explore their stand in the dramatic polemic regarding the Haifa Technion, the "battle of languages," in 1913 and 1914.

This paper focuses on the discourse in the press, which did not represent the whole of Jewish Orthodox society and used a style of argumentation that differed from that of a sermon or a halakhic responsum. However, it also addresses various sub-groups in the traditionalist camp, including Eastern European rabbis, religious Zionists, German Orthodoxy, and the old *Yišuv*, and studies texts and publications in Hebrew and German that have not been previously examined. This diversity of areas, languages, and political identifications among the various newspapers allows for a better understanding of the different perspectives on the issue. Hence, this article will provide a broad picture of the Orthodox view of modern Hebrew at a critical point in its development and can serve as a basis for future research.

2   The Missing Orthodox Linguistic Ideology

The main domain in which the Jewish linguistic discourse took place was the Jewish press, in both Hebrew and other languages; the press was the platform for many linguistic, literary, educational, and political debates concerning the use of Hebrew, its value, its role in Jewish life, and its potential as a spoken language. Beginning with *Ha-Magid* in 1856 and followed by *Ha-Meliṣ* (1860), *Ha-Karmel* (1860), and many others, the Hebrew press gradually evolved into a platform for Jewish public discourse across Europe, Palestine, and the Americas. These newspapers initially had a small readership. However, as modernisation grew more potent within Jewish society, its press expanded numerically, lingually, and ideologically.[5] Although newspapers constituted a new and non-traditional format, Orthodox publicists and rabbis nevertheless took part in the press discourse from its early stages. Some scholars consider press debates such as the polemic against the maskilim Gordon and Lielinblum

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5   On the Jewish press as a genre, see Israel Bartal, "The Jewish Press as a Conduit for Modernization" [Hebrew], *Cathedra: For the History of Eretz Israel and Its Yishuv* 71 (1994): 156–64; Derek Penslar, "Introduction: The Press and the Jewish Public Sphere," *Jewish History* 14 (2000): 3–8. For the Jewish press's role in shaping the Jewish public in Eastern Europe, see Sarah Abrevaya Stein, *Making Jews Modern: The Yiddish and Ladino Press in the Russian and Ottoman Empires* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2004); Scott Ury, *Barricades and Banners: The Revolution of 1905 and the Transformation of Warsaw Jewry* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012), 141–71.

(known as *ha-tiqqunim ba-dat*) or the controversy about the Corfu *etrogim* to have been vital to the evolution of Orthodoxy in Eastern Europe.[6]

In her monograph about the Orthodox weekly *Ha-Levanon* (which first appeared in Jerusalem in 1863 and was later published in Paris and Mainz), Roni Be'er-Marx has demonstrated the ways in which the interactive forum and transnational network that this newspaper offered traditional society made it essential to the crystallisation of the Orthodox camp's politics even before it began to engage in political activity.[7] Her book also provides a rare discussion of Orthodox linguistic ideology, which was reflected in the language of the paper. The existence of *Ha-Levanon* showed that Orthodox writers (and readers) did not oppose using Hebrew for reporting news, discussing current events, and coining Hebrew alternatives to foreign terms. For its editor, Yehiel Brill, Hebrew was the ultimate medium for discussing Jewish affairs, a role that he naturally extended to the modern format of a Hebrew newspaper. Nonetheless, Be'er-Marx clarifies that the linguistic choice remained secondary to the ideas that Brill wished to convey:

> Hebrew was chosen as the language in which [the newspaper] would be written not only because it was the traditional language of creation or communication, but because of its separatist nature and the religious role it filled. [...] However, Hebrew itself was not the message, unless it was saturated with the contents of Judaism.[8]

Indeed, *Ha-Levanon* never intervened in the many cultural and literary debates pertaining to Hebrew that occurred during the time of its publication, despite taking a stand on other issues raised by maskilic newspapers. In 1875, when its bitter rival, the maskil Peretz Smoloenskin, referred to the national importance of Hebrew as the Jewish language, the newspaper focused on refuting the idea that Jews could be a nation rather than a religious group; in a series of a

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6   Yosef Salmon, "The Emergence of Eastern European Orthodox Judaism" [Hebrew], in *Orthodox Judaism: New Perspectives*, ed. Yosef Salmon, Aviezer Ravitzky, and Adam S. Ferziger (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2006), 367–80. Mordechai Zalkin's chapter in this anthology disagrees with this view: see Zalkin, "'Orthodoxy in the Town'? The Question of Orthodoxy's Existence in Nineteenth Century Lithuania" [Hebrew], in Salmon, Ravitzky, and Ferziger, *Orthodox Judaism*, 427–46. Consider also, on the importance of the early Orthodox scholarly journal *Tevunah* (published 1861–1862), Immanuel Etkes, *Rabbi Israel Salanter and the Mussar Movement: Seeking the Torah of Truth*, trans. Jonathan Chipman (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1993), 267–68.

7   Roni Be'er-Marx, *Fortresses of Paper: The Newspaper Ha-Levanon and Jewish Orthodoxy* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar Center, 2017), 145–49.

8   Be'er-Marx, *Fortresses of Paper*, 240–41.

dozen articles, there were only negligible references to Hebrew.[9] Several years later, when Eliezer Ben-Yehuda began championing the daily secular usage of Hebrew, he was condemned and even boycotted by the Orthodox leadership in Jerusalem. However, his opponents were not particularly troubled by his linguistic beliefs, but rather by other reformist actions that he had taken, and they did not bother arguing with him.[10] The only case during which Orthodox newspapers took a stand in the linguistic discourse was when education was on the table.

This situation suggests that Jewish Orthodoxy of that time was mostly uninterested in presenting a specific linguistic ideology concerning Hebrew, if indeed it had such an ideology at all. No Orthodox leaders or spokesmen seemed to take a clear stance criticising Hebrew's modernisation as a transgression against the holy tongue; they did not argue that instead of being modernised and put to familiar use, it should be adored and respected as part of the ancient religion. The idea that the *lešon ha-qodeš* was being defiled by the activities of the Hebraists was never brought up in these debates. In fact, the very notion of Hebrew as the sacred language was hardly mentioned.

The research literature offers two possible explanations for this phenomenon, both of which are relevant to our case. The first relates to the very notion of the holy tongue. At first thought, it would seem that the absence of an emphasis on this aspect derived from the axiomatic nature of the sanctity of Hebrew. Nevertheless, as Ariel Evan Mayse recently showed, both Hasidic and *mitnagdim* thinkers abandoned this axiom during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. They argued that under some circumstances, every language could become the holy tongue; they also contended that Hebrew might not actually be the sacred *lešon ha-qodeš* if it was not being used correctly.[11] This development corresponds with David Sorotzkin's argument about the

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9   Mosheh Zalman Ahronsohn, "Gedolim ḥikrey lev," *Ha-Levanon*, 18 April 1879; 4 July 1879.

10   Ben-Yehuda's clashes with the old *Yišuv* are described in his biography: Yoseph Lang, *Speak Hebrew! The Life of Eliezer Ben Yehuda* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi Institute, 2008), 103–8, 142–47, and more. For a reappreciation of Ben-Yehuda's contribution to the revival of Hebrew, see George Mandel, "She'elah Nikhbadah and the Revival of Hebrew," in *Eliezer Ben-Yehuda: A Symposium in Oxford*, ed. Eisig Silberschlag (Oxford: Oxford Centre for Postgraduate Hebrew Studies, 1981), 25–39; Ron Kuzar, *Hebrew and Zionism: A Discourse Analytic Cultural Study* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2001).

11   Ariel Evan Mayse, "Expanding the Boundaries of the Holy: Hasidic Devotion, Sacred Speech, and Early Modern Jewish Thought," *Jewish Social Studies* 25, no. 1 (2019): 45–101, https://doi.org/10.2979/jewisocistud.25.1.03.

origins of Orthodoxy being found in an intra-religious shift in the meaning of various Jewish concepts.[12]

This direction in the perception of the language allowed early twentieth-century Orthodox writers to dismiss its spiritual aspect and ignore the phenomenon of Hebrew modernisation entirely. In their view, Hebrew would always retain its ritual importance inside the walls of the synagogue, independently of what was happening outside, in the public spaces, in which it was in any case of minimal importance. Thus, when modern Hebrew penetrated the semi-religious space of the ḥeder, the Orthodox leadership seemed unable to offer a theological argument that stressed the exalted religious status of Hebrew and outlined the border between the sacred and the secular.

The second explanation draws from the nature of Orthodoxy as a social movement. In his research on Agudath Israel in Poland, Gershon Bacon pointed out that Orthodox spokesmen refrained from penning a comprehensive theory regarding current events and that they favoured responding to burning issues as they arose.[13] That tendency led scholars to try to determine Orthodox beliefs by discovering events that triggered a reaction from their side. Since, with respect to Hebrew, Orthodox voices were only heard when education was concerned, this was the most productive opportunity to try to define their view of the language.

The debates about Hebrew education in Europe and Palestine led to the emergence of a linguistic ideology, an ideology that not only explains the Orthodox perspective on the language question, but also helps to refine the Orthodox understanding of the meaning of holiness and secularity vis-à-vis Hebrew. Orthodox writers went so far as to argue that using Hebrew could not compensate for inappropriate content, and they did not depict the language itself as having any theological significance. Moreover, they consistently negated the exaggerated importance that the Hebraists attributed to the language, to the point that Hebrew was described in surprisingly negative terms. As we will see, the Orthodox recoiling from Hebrew modernisation was not related to the linguistic change, but to its implications for the education of the young generation. Hebrew, perhaps, was too sacralised.

12 David Sorotzkin, *Orthodoxy and Modern Disciplination: The Production of the Jewish Tradition in Europe in Modern Times* [Hebrew] (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 2011), 123–28.

13 Gershon C. Bacon, *The Politics of Tradition: Agudat Yisrael in Poland, 1916–1939* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1996), 69. For a recent overview of historical research regarding Orthodox Judaism, see Vladimir Levin, "Denying Tradition: Academic Historiography on Jewish Orthodoxy in Eastern Europe," *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry* 29 (2017): 255–84.

3   The Question of the Ḥadarim

The drive to regenerate and modernise the traditional institution of primary
Jewish learning, the *ḥeder*, was fundamental to the ideology and activity of
the maskilim, who were encouraged (albeit inconsistently) by the Czarist
government.[14] With the turn from Haskalah to nationalism, the negative atti-
tude towards the *ḥeder* was likewise altered. As Steven Zipperstein showed,
Jewish reformers in the early twentieth century perceived the *ḥeder* as a
national institution, a space in which one could guide children towards their
rich heritage and shield them from the increasing temptation of acculturation,
if not full assimilation, into Russian culture.[15] While Yiddishist activism was in
its early stages, national activists from the Hebrew camp sought to introduce it
in schools both as a subject and as a tool for instruction. The place to do so was
the *ḥeder metuqqan*, the reformed school.

Of course, the Hebrew language had played a role in the *ḥeder* for centuries.
But the traditional "translation method," based on repeating a word-by-word
Yiddish rendition of the Pentateuch, was not designed to train the children to
comprehend new texts.[16] While the maskilic approach in modernised schools
favoured German or Russian translations of the Bible and in most cases
neglected Hebrew altogether, the nationalists' suggested solution was "the
natural method," or "Hebrew in Hebrew" [*Ivrit be-ʿivrit*]. The advocates of the
"Hebrew in Hebrew" method presented it as a scientifically approved pedagog-
ical tool that would improve Jewish children's fluency in the language, as well
as their attachment to it. Others argued against it, contending that it would
be impossible to teach a non-spoken language like a living one and that the
method was therefore doomed to fail.[17] In addition to the language instruction,

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14   Eliyana R. Adler, *In Her Hands: The Education of Jewish Girls in Tsarist Russia* (Detroit:
       Wayne State University Press, 2011); Mordechai Zalkin, *Modernizing Jewish Education in
       Nineteenth Century Eastern Europe: The School as the Shrine of the Jewish Enlightenment*
       (Boston, MA: Brill, 2016).

15   Steven J. Zipperstein, *Imagining Russian Jewry: Memory, History, Identity* (Seattle:
       University of Washington Press, 1999), 41–62.

16   Shaul Stampfer, "What Did 'Knowing Hebrew' Mean in Eastern Europe?", in Gilnert,
       Hebrew in Ashkenaz, 129–40; Iris Parush, "Another Look at 'The Life of "Dead" Hebrew':
       Intentional Ignorance of Hebrew in Nineteenth-Century Eastern European Jewish
       Society," *Book History* 7 (2004): 171–214. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1353/bh.2004.0022.

17   Yizhak Epstein, "'Ivrit be-ʿivrit. (ha-šiṭa ha-ṭivʿit be-rešit limmud śefat ʿever)," *Ha-Shiloah* 4
       (1898): 385–96. For a typical example of the pedagogical argument made in favour of the
       method, see Y. Yochelchik [Yeḥiʾel Yeḥiʾeli], "'Ivrit be-ʿivrit." *Ha-Meliṣ*, 9–10 October 1899.
       For an antagonist position, see, for example, I[srael] H[aim] Tawiow, "'Al ha-šiṭah ha-ṭivʿit,"
       Ha-Meliṣ, 4 April 1900.

the *ḥeder metuqqan* aimed to modernise the traditional *ḥadarim* with respect to the teaching process, curriculum, and physical conditions. It was also often nationalist in character, emphasising topics like the Bible, Jewish history, and the geography of the Land of Israel. It was estimated that in 1903, about 10 per cent of the *ḥadarim* in Czarist Russia operated as *ḥadarim metuqqanim*, and Jewish philanthropists in Russia saw them as a successful model for a modern Jewish school.[18]

The *ḥeder metuqqan* appeared during a curious time for legal policy regarding Jewish education. On the one hand, the Czarist government has long abandoned the aggressive introduction of modern education and the state schools that had met with so much antagonism from the Jewish community in the mid-nineteenth century.[19] Jews who had completed some level of elementary school, including basic Russian and mathematics, enjoyed privileges in terms of military service and residual permissions and could also apply for higher education. On the other hand, the growing Jewish presence in Russian gymnasiums and universities led, in 1887, to the introduction of the *numerus clauses*, setting a Jewish quota of few per cent.[20] While the first development raised the popularity of general education thanks to the social and economic options it opened, the latter caused strong competition for the few available spots, increasing the importance of quality education. In this context, the Hebraists needed to convince Jewish parents that time spent in the *ḥeder metuqqan*—an institution that did not grant any official certification—would not be spent in vain. Framing its national tendency as a traditional Jewish spirit was a useful argument.

At its heart, the *ḥeder metuqqan* was a movement of individuals, chiefly powered by young men who turned to the public *talmud torah* in their hometowns and implemented pedagogical innovations among schools for their communities' poorest children. In other cases, some progressive families, with or without Zionist identification, would open a *ḥeder metuqqan* for their own children because of their disaffection with the *ḥeder*'s traditional format. The

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18   Yossi Goldstein, "The 'Reformed Ḥeder' in Russia—The Foundation of the Zionist Educational Network" [Hebrew], *Studies in Education* 45 (1986): 147–57; Brian J. Horowitz, *Jewish Philanthropy and Enlightenment in Late-Tsarist Russia* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2009), 144–52.

19   Michael Stanislawski, *Tsar Nicholas I and the Jews: The Transformation of Jewish Society in Russia, 1825–1855* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1983), 49–96.

20   Steven Gerald Rappaport, "Jewish Education and Jewish Culture in the Russian Empire, 1880–1914" (PhD diss., Stanford University, 2000); Alex Valdman, "A Miracle in Minsk: Secondary Education and Social Mobility in the Pale of Settlement before 1887," *Jewish Social Studies* 24, no. 2 (2019): 135–56. DOI: https://doi.org/10.2979/jewisocistud.24.2.10.

struggle, then, was for public opinion: Would the majority of the community support a *ḥeder metuqqan*, or not?

After the 1905 Russian revolution, the Jewish public space expanded and new groups joined the discourse.[21] Thus, the conversation about reform in Jewish education, which had previously been limited to maskilic and Zionist-leaning papers, now became a widely discussed subject. During the years 1910 to 1913, it developed into a full-blown polemic known as the "Question of the *Ḥadarim*," or *šeʾelat ha-ḥadarim*. The Orthodox press—and more specifically, *Ha-Modiaʿ*—joined the discussion at this point.

Ha-Modiaʿ [The Herald] was published in Poltava (today in Ukraine) by Eliyahu Akiva Rabinovich (1861–1917), a former *rav miṭṭaʿam*—a state-appointed rabbi who had had a formal education—and a Zionist, who at the time of the *ḥeder metuqqan* debate had become committed to attacking both Haskalah and Zionism.[22] In a pattern that we will see again, as a well-educated man himself, Rabinovich did not oppose the study of practical secular topics, as long as this study did not undermine the learning of the Torah or the observance of Jewish law. However, he was worried about the Zionist and maskilic hold on the *korobka* [коробка] money, since the revenues from the hated kosher meat tax were partly directed to maintaining Jewish schools, which allowed those groups to take control of the public *talmud torah*.

According to Rabinovich, the *ḥeder metuqqan*, in which the children who would grow up to become "Hetskel the shoemaker, Gimpel the tailor, and Leiser the carter" studied topics that ranged far beyond their simple needs, seemed to be a waste of time and money. Moreover, "[even] the handful of Hebrew that the children of the poor people do study there, that too they would not know and would not understand, as they [the *ḥeder metuqqan*'s teachers] insist on teaching 'Hebrew in Hebrew.'"[23] Rabinovich continued with examples of daily prayers and customs with which those pupils would presumably not be familiar, drawing a direct connection between Hebrew instruction, modern methods, and ignorance of Jewish practice. In Rabinovich's article, Hebrew is described as an instrument for studying the Chumash and the prayers, not an

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21   Vladimir Levin, *From Revolution to War: Jewish Politics in Russia 1907–1914* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar Center, 2016), 404–13.

22   On Rabinovich and his newspapers, see Yosef Salmon, "Rabbi Eliyahu Akiva Rabinovich: The Speaker of Jewish Orthodoxy in Czarist Russia" [Hebrew], in Salmon, *Keeping Divine Law: Orthodoxy and Ultra-Orthodoxy* (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 2019), 298–326; Menachem Kratz-Keren, "*Ha-Pelles*: An Orthodox Newspaper and Its Struggle with the Challenge of Modern Spirits of the Early Twentieth Century" [Hebrew], *Kesher* 54 (2020): 43–75.

23   "Le-šeʾelat ha-yom," *Ha-Modiaʿ*, 24 February 1911.

independent topic. He did not protest the use of Hebrew to teach secular subjects, but rather the effort to teach children the language instead of teaching them its canonical texts.

A similar notion had been expressed a decade earlier by the important rabbi Haim Berlin, the son of the renowned rabbi and educator Ha-Natziv (Rabbi Naftali Zvi Yehuda Berlin). The father had not entirely prohibited Haskalah literature, but remained concerned about the reforms sought by the maskilim.[24] The son developed this concept further and opposed the *ḥeder metuqqan* because its primary goal was acquiring Hebrew rather than studying Torah.[25] Rabbi Berlin was a well-regarded figure in Russian Jewry, but not all traditional Jews embraced this logic.

For Rabinovich, the *ḥeder*'s most important goal was to pass on the tradition to the next generation, and it could not do so using the "Hebrew in Hebrew" teaching method. For others, the "Hebrew in Hebrew" method seemed to be the ultimate way to maintain Jewish identity. In 1911, the Kalinkavichy community (in what is now Belarus) declared that they would henceforth conduct all educational activities in Hebrew. They argued that this policy would strengthen the youngsters' bond with their religion: "And slowly, the Hebrew language will come alive and will be spoken in our community, since all the children, male and female, will use it as a spoken language. […] And so we will slowly arrive at our goal to put the Torah in the mouths and hearts of our offspring."[26]

It is unclear to what extent this plan was actually realised in Kalinkavichy, and in any case, one community cannot teach us about the Jewish majority. However, this local initiative displays how the aspiration to raise pious Jewish children was connected, at least by some Jews, to the daily use of Hebrew. This approach also provoked very interesting responses wondering about the connection between the language and the religion. While the Zionist press praised the decision, *Ha-Modia'* mocked this "discovery of America." An anonymous writer from Lublin explained the mistake being made by the community's leaders:

> The Hebrew language, which holds within it our great treasure, certainly has a great value. But when it is only a show (*meha-śafah we-la-ḥuṣ*), it cannot influence Judaism's strength and existence. "Hebrew speak"

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24   Shaul Stampfer, *Lithuanian Yeshivas of the Nineteenth Century: Creating a Tradition of Learning*, trans. Lindsey Taylor-Guthartz (Portland, OR: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2012), 163–65.

25   Haim Berlin, "Maʿaneh la-šoʾalim šeloʾ kahogen," *Ha-Meliṣ*, 7 December 1902.

26   "Haḥlaṭat ha-qahal," *Ha-ʿIvri*, 30 June 1911.

[alone] will not resurrect the dry bones of our young generation—this can only be accomplished through Hebrew spirit, Hebrew feeling, and Hebrew life, meaning life according to our religion and Torah.[27]

Once again, the argument was that the Hebrew language's importance was derived from its being a medium of Jewish tradition and that it had no value in itself. The danger of the modern teaching of Hebrew, those two articles hinted, was that it was replacing elementary Jewish knowledge.

The case of Kalinkavichy led to an unusual essay that discussed the issue in depth. It was published both in *Ha-Modiaʿ* and, in a slightly edited version, in *Ha-ʿIvri*, the organ of ha-Mizraḥi, the religious Zionist party. The author, Shimon Volkov, did not deny the existence of Jewish nationalism, including the national language. He even supported the idea of reviving spoken Hebrew, at least hypothetically, since "it is appropriate and adequate for us to speak and use our national language, the language of our fathers and ancestors since the beginning of time."[28]

Volkov's main objection was the artificial status that Hebrew was being granted in the national agenda. If the goal was to maintain a Jewish identity that could withstand external pressure, he argued, then that goal could not be achieved through an emphasis on a language that had no relation to daily life. "Hebrew in Hebrew" might present itself as a natural teaching method, he argued, but it only illuminated the gap between the classroom and the reality outside, where Hebrew fluency provided no actual benefit. An emphasis on the national language was appropriate for Polish or Czech nationalism, Volkov wrote, but it was not suitable for Jews and their relationship to Hebrew; they should, he said, rely on the thing that had protected them during the long years of exile: their religion. Like Rabbi Berlin, he asserted that Jewish education should involve the teaching of Hebrew for the sake of knowing the Torah, rather than the reverse: teaching the Torah as a tool for Hebrew instruction. In the traditional *ḥeder*, a child learned Hebrew because he read the Chumash, and this knowledge remained a part of him forever. After all, "the religion, amongst its keepers, is the essence and purpose of life, while the Hebrew language has nothing to do with life."[29]

According to Volkov, Rabinovich, and others, the problem was not that the sacred language was being secularised. Quite the contrary: the issue was that

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27   "Ivrit be-ivrit," *Ha-Modiaʿ*, 4 August 1911.
28   Shimon Volkov, "Beged šaʾul eino holem," *Ha-Modiaʿ*, 13 October 1911; 28 October 1911; 4 November 1911, here 13 October.
29   Volkov, "Beged šaʾul eino holem," 4 November.

too much importance was being placed on Hebrew. The national ideology gave Hebrew what the historian Arieh Saposnik called "nationalized sacrality," which positioned the language above values like the study of Torah and living an observant life.[30] In this new value system, Jewish learning and practice became secondary to the goal of national education in general and to the acquisition of Hebrew in particular. Hence, the Orthodox press dubbed the *ḥeder metuqqan* the "*ḥeder mesuqqan*" (a "dangerous school," a play on the Ashkenazic pronunciation of the word *metuqqan*)—a concept that endangered the basis of Jewish continuity. In the context of the Eastern European discourse, modern Hebrew became a synonym for dangerous educational reform. As the debate escalated, Orthodox speakers forced themselves into the anti-Hebraist camp.

4   The "Battle of Languages"

The juxtaposition of modern Hebrew and educational reform was not only a theoretical concept. In just a few years, it became a question with immediate implications for the future of Jewish education. In October 1913, the board of the Technion in Haifa, which had been founded by a philanthropic organisation known as the Hilfsverein der deutschen Juden (or Ezra), decided that the primary instruction language at the Technion and at its affiliated high school would be German. The main reason given was that Hebrew was insufficient for the needs of the higher education level scientific studies that the Technion intended to provide. Instead, Hebrew was to be given a minor role and would be used only in teaching Jewish subjects. This decision triggered an extensive protest in the streets of the new *Yišuv* along with a wide-ranging polemic in the Jewish press across multiple countries.[31] The "battle of languages" is well documented in research, but here I want to look at the response of the Orthodox newspapers in Jerusalem, Germany, and Eastern Europe. Their reaction to the intense debate was more than a test case for their opinion; it was a defining moment in Orthodoxy with regard to the use of Hebrew. As it happened, some

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30   Arieh Bruce Saposnik, "Wailing Walls and Iron Walls: The Western Wall as Sacred Symbol in Zionist National Iconography," *The American Historical Review* 120 (2015): 1654. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1093/AHR/120.5.1653.

31   See, for example, Margalit Shilo, "The Language Controversy: A Popular Movement" [Hebrew], *Cathedra: For the History of Eretz Israel and Its Yishuv* 74 (1994): 86–119; Arndt Kremer, *Deutsche Juden, deutsche Sprache: Jüdische und judenfeindliche Sprachkonzepte und -konflikte, 1893–1933* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2007), 306–19; Arieh Bruce Saposnik, *Becoming Hebrew: The Creation of a Jewish National Culture in Ottoman Palestine* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 213–36.

Orthodox groups and writers parted ways with the mainstream and aligned themselves with the non-Orthodox camp, while other Orthodox streams mainly reinforced their previously held beliefs on the issue.

The situation in Palestine is relevant to the discussion of Eastern and Central European Orthodoxy for several reasons. First, both the old and the new *Yišuv* were heavily dependent on the patronage of European Jewish philanthropy—the first relied on *ḥaluqah* money and the second was supported by organisations such as the Hilfsverein, the Alliance Israélite Universelle, the ICA, and the Zionist movement. Public opinion in Europe, then, felt it was within its rights to assess the development and character of Jewish life in Palestine. Second, the presence of recent migrants from Europe in the country aroused the parent communities' interest in the events even though they were not directly connected to a philanthropic body. And lastly, the religious significance of the Land of Israel endowed local disputes with a spiritual meaning that was larger than the concrete question. Jewish European newspapers throughout the ideological spectrum, from Saint Petersburg to Frankfurt, were deeply interested in the Technion debate, and the Orthodox press was no exception.

As had happened in Russia, modern Hebrew and secular education also came to be bound together in Palestine. While the schools of the Hilfsverein (ranging from kindergartens to teacher training) did use Hebrew to varying degrees, their policy was to ensure the religious character of the schools, not to clash with the local communities. This enabled the successful growth of modern education in Palestine, but it was not enough for Zionist activists who wished to revolutionise Jewish education altogether. The independent Hebrew schools, especially the Herzliya Gymnasium in Jaffa, were, as Rachel Elbiom-Dror put it, "a laboratory for educational experiments and the development of national youth culture."[32] This new culture included mixed classes of boys and girls, who studied the Bible without wearing head coverings, and the teaching of biblical criticism. The old *Yišuv*, including those who had supported Hibat Zion at an earlier stage, attacked these schools as the epitome of secular nationalism, charging them with creating a form of Judaism based solely on land and language. Rabbi Abraham Itzhak Kook, known for his appreciation of the Zionists, recoiled from the Gymnasium's practices, but decided to remain silent.[33] Even sworn Hebraists like Yosef Klausner voiced

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32   Rachel Elboim-Dror, *Hebrew Education in Eretz Israel, Volume 1: 1854–1914* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi Institute, 1986), 242.

33   Yehudit Cohen and Yossi Goldstein, "The Struggle over Education in the Yishuv: Rav Kook and the Herzliya Gymnasium," *Modern Judaism* 4 (2022): 107–26.

concerns about the evidently secular character of the Gymnasium, despite its success in instilling the ability to speak Hebrew in everyday contexts.[34]

Nevertheless, when the controversy around the Technion erupted, there was no hesitation in the Zionist ranks, because they recognised an opportunity to take control of the education system. This aspiration was the main threat in the eyes of the Orthodox writers, who were already barely able to tolerate the Hilfsverein's schools with their Enlightenment-inspired worldview. From the other side, the Hebraist youth in Palestine's determination to fight the resolution to favour German inspired the entire nationalist press both in Palestine and abroad. Hebraist or not, whole-hearted Zionist or sceptic, when presented with the choice between Hebrew or German, they all preferred Hebrew. The situation was not completely dichotomic, but again, it was a matter of public opinion. Hence, the Orthodox newspapers faced a dilemma: Should they join the Hebrew camp and, by proxy, encourage the damaging reforms of the Hebraists? Or should they instead announce a preference for German and thus be seen as opposing the holy language in the holy land?

A definitive answer did not take long to come. Yiṣḥaq Yaʿaqov Yelin (1885–1964) was a long-time teacher in the Etz Haim *yešivah* in Jerusalem and the editor of the weekly newspaper *Moriah*. Although his paper served as a mouthpiece for the old *Yišuv*, he did not hesitate to criticise his community and endorsed careful changes in the traditional *yešivot*. Still, Yelin strongly disapproved of the new *Yišuv*'s generally secularist ambitions.[35] Like Rabinovich, his commitment to Jewish traditions and institutions did not mean a rejection of everything modern, but because of that, he understood when innovation threatened the entire conservative structure. During the Technion language debate, he dedicated his newspaper to fighting the Hebraists and anyone who seemed to sympathise with them. Like his peers in *Ha-Modiaʿ*, he argued against forms of Hebrew schooling that omitted any religious aspect as being self-contradictory: "A real Hebrew school, a school that will be Hebrew from beginning to end, cannot exist as such, so long as it is distanced from the *complete Jewish spirit of Israel's tradition (ruaḥ yiśraʾel savaʾ)*—the only form in which it has existed so far."[36]

34   Arieh Bruce Saposnik, "'… Will Issue Forth from Zion?' The Emergence of a Jewish
      National Culture in Palestine and the Dynamics of Yishuv-Diaspora Relations," *Jewish
      Social Studies* 10, no. 1 (2003): 151–84. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1353/jss.2003.0036.

35   Mordechai Eliav, "'Moriah': An Ultra-Orthodox Newspaper Fights for the Betterment of
      Jerusalem" [Hebrew], *Cathedra: For the History of Eretz Israel and Its Yishuv* 70 (1994):
      75–110.

36   Yiṣḥaq Yaʿaqov Yelin, "Iqqar we-ṭafel," *Moriah*, 12 November 1913.

Moriah's stance in the polemic was attacked by Zionist (and religious) writers like Rabbi Binyamim (the penname of Jehoshua Radler), who criticised as a pretence the claim that the fight against Hebrew was motivated by a religious sensibility; the newspaper was also censured for taking money from the Hilfsverein.[37] However, *Moriah* continued to mock the Hebraists' strikes, boycotts, and demonstrations and described them as a "tragicomedy of zealotry for the holy language and not for holiness itself."[38] This expression came from Yeḥi'el Mikhel Tuktsinski, a fellow rabbi and teacher, who opposed any Orthodox involvement in the debate, claiming that the Hilfsverein's schools were no better than the Zionist ones. Still, his wording unintentionally exposed the perceived hierarchy between the language and other religious values. Yelin, however, understood that the emancipatory approach of the Hilfsverein was far less dramatic than the Hebraist-Zionist vision, and he was ready to support the lesser of two evils. After all, "you do find Judaism, to some extent, in the Ezra schools, but you cannot find it in the Hebrew Gymnasium."[39]

The Herzliya Gymnasium, was, for the pro-Hebrew side, the ultimate proof of the language's ability to handle sciences of the kind that would be taught in the Technion. For the Orthodox press, the Gymnasium was emblematic of the threat of modern Hebrew. Watching the events in Palestine from Russia, Rabinovich sharpened his point:

> If Hebrew becomes the ruling language [in the Technion], then it might do much more damage to Judaism and to everything we hold sacred. As is already known, this is the way of all the missionaries in the world—they put a Jewish veil on their faces when they are about to allure Jews to convert. And the Jaffa Gymnasium will prove that the Hebrew language that rules there is a deadly poison to all its teachers, and certainly to its students, who are complete heretics regarding all matters (*ha-kofrim bakol*).[40]

Several years before that, the Jerusalem rabbi Eliyahu David Rabinowitz-Teomim (known as "the Aderet") had compared Zionist Hebrew teachers to pigs—who, in a traditional commentary, intentionally present themselves as

37   Rabbi Binyamin [Jehoshua Radler], "Raq lo' be-šem ha-dat!" *Ha-Ḥerut*, 3 December 1913.

38   Yeḥi'el Mikhel Tuktsinski, "Le-maginei ha-ʿEzra," *Moriah*, 5 December 1913.

39   Yṣḥaq Yaʿaqov Yelin, "Zramim," *Moriah*, 20 November 1913. Yelin made sure to emphasise the ironic title of "*Hebrew* Gymnasium."

40   Eliyahu Akiva Rabinovich, "Ḥanukkah we-ḥag ha-makkabbim," *Ha-Modiaʿ*, 26 December 1913.

being kosher, although they are, of course, very much not so.[41] The analogy would be that in the face of the Zionist commitment to its linguistic ideology, Hebrew had become something improper, but had disguised itself as a language clothed in holiness.

The Zionist move that Rabinovich condemned—the granting of a new, national-secular meaning to religious elements—extended beyond the language question. Since Ḥanukkah occurred during the Technion polemic, publicists used the elementary metaphor of the Maccabeans to describe the fierce young protestors rising against external rule and a foreign culture. Notably, those who did so were not from the secular end of the spectrum: comparisons between the historical heroes and the Hebraists of the *Yišuv* were made by the religious philosopher Hillel Zeitlin, among others.[42] In the holiday issue of *Ha-Modiaʿ*, Rabinovich answered this trend, lamenting the Zionist secularisation of religious ideals in service of their agenda:

> No wonder that […] those who replaced faith and religion with hollow nationalism and changed the name "the holy land," "*Eretz Israel*," to "Palestine" and the "holy language" to "the historical language," "*Hebräisch*," "Hebrew," etc., have now changed the name "Hanukkah" to "the holiday of the *Maccabim*," which they have fabricated.[43]

It should be noted that most of the Orthodox writers quoted here used the term "*Ivrit*" [Hebrew] or "*hebräische Sprache*" [the Hebrew language] and not *lešon ha-qodeš*. Still, the idea behind the semantic differentiation was not unfounded. The depiction of modern Hebrew as a secular fabrication, amongst other Zionist values based in Jewish tradition, enabled Rabinovich to dismiss the claim that Hebrew was an important Jewish value and that every Jew should be concerned about its prospects. Thus, proclamations that "the Jewish tradition is protected by those who fight in the name of the *Hebrew* language" were unimpactful.[44]

Indeed, the Orthodox dilemma in the debate was the most complicated for the religious Zionist stream. The Palestinian branch of ha-Mizraḥi struggled

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41   Haim Beʾer, "From the Language of G-d to the Language of the Devil: On the Struggle of Orthodoxy against the Hebrew Language" [Hebrew], *Ha-Qešet ha-Ḥaddašah* 4 (2003): 131.

42   Hillel Zeitlin, "Der koʾach fun gayst," *Der Moment*, 25 February 1914; Ben Neviʾim, "Ḥanukkah," *Ha-Mišpeh*, 26 December 1913.

43   Eliyahu Akiva Rabinovich, "Ḥanukkah we-ḥag ha-makkabbim," *Ha-Modiaʿ*, 26 December 1913.

44   Sh[muel] T[shernovich], "Ha-ṭradiṣyah ha-yehudit," *Ha-Ṣefirah*, 7 December 1913. Emphasis in original.

to find a place between the Hebraist-but-secular-leaning majority and the pro-German Orthodox minority; its hesitation was attacked by Yelin, who asserted that when "they [the Hebraists] want to sell all of Judaism at the price of Hebrew," there was no place for compromise.[45] Interestingly, ha-Mizraḥi's members in Berlin were quite decisive. *Ha-ʿIvri*, the same journal that published Volkov's essay about the problem of Hebrew nationalism, ultimately adopted the Zionist narrative about the Technion.[46] Despite a decade of controversy with the secular Zionists and their ambitions regarding culture and education, ha-Mizraḥi headquarters found it easier to support the Hebraists over the sea. Within the context of the internal German Jewish dispute between the Hilfsverein and the World Zionist Organization, religious Zionism chose the latter.[47] The Sephardic rabbis, who were also caught between the Hilfsverein's religious tendency and their support in Hebrew education, tended to favour the latter, albeit not explicitly.[48]

In Germany, of course, the main rift between Orthodox leaders and the Zionists was not centred on education. After all, in Germany and Austro-Hungary, compulsory education had already been introduced a century before and the main educational debates had been mostly settled. Modern pedagogy and subjects had been adopted along with the state language; at this point, even in the schools of the Orthodox communities in Germany, Hebrew was almost entirely absent.[49] While in Russia, learning modern Hebrew served as a manifestation of national consciousness in the face of discrimination, in post-emancipation Germany, Hebrew seemed to hold no value for non-Zionists outside the religious sphere.

Against this backdrop, German Orthodoxy negated the Zionist project and rejected ha-Mizraḥi's compromise position. The movement was well-trained in wrangling Zionism and found no reason to join the Hebraist side. Journalists in various newspapers explained that they had no wish to oppose

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45   Yṣḥaq Yaʿaqov Yelin, "Zeḥilah, retiʿah we-ʾi maʿamad," *Moriah*, 28 November 1913.

46   "Ha-Tekhnikum be-Haifa," *Ha-ʿIvri*, 24 November 1913; Shmuel Greenberg, "ʿAkhen loʾ ḥaṣir ha-ʿam," *Ha-ʿIvri*, 16 January 1914.

47   On ha-Mizraḥi and its relations with the World Zionist Organization, see Yaakov Zur, *Between Orthodoxy and Zionism: Religious Zionism and Its Opponents (Germany, 1896–1914)* [Hebrew] (Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 2001).

48   Itzhak Bezalel, *You Were Born Zionists: The Sephardim in Eretz Israel in Zionism and the Hebrew Revival during the Ottoman Period* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi Institute, 2007), 269–72.

49   Mordechai Breuer, *Jewish Orthodoxy in the German Reich, 1871–1918* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar Center, 1990), 108–9. On the response of Galician Orthodoxy to compulsory education, see Rachel Manekin, *The Rebellion of the Daughters: Jewish Women Runaways in Habsburg Galicia* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2020), 18–30.

Hebrew, but that the fight for the language disguised the Zionist aspiration to build a fully secularised culture. "We know too well," wrote one of them, "that this Hebrew culture does not mean the *religious culture*, the highest that can be for religious Jews."[50] Even a moderate publication like the *Frankfurter israelitisches Familienblatt* expressed regret that they could not defend those who did not stand for the Torah.[51]

The bluntest of them all was *Der Israelit*, the unofficial organ of the German Orthodox stream, which was based in Frankfurt. Its editor, Jacob Rosenheim (1870–1965), was a central advocate of political Orthodoxy and was probably the author of an article titled "The Fight for the Youth in Palestine." In this text, he warned readers about the initiative to establish new Hebrew schools in Palestine, following the boycott of the Hilfsverein institutions. Basing himself on the view that modern teaching in Hebrew was equivalent to the implementation of destructive secular reforms, he claimed that more schools like the Jaffa Gymnasium would destroy the next Jewish generation. The piece concluded with a call to support the newly founded international Agudath Israel movement instead of naively following the Zionists and their allegedly holy war.[52]

The apparent political aspect of the debate does not lessen its linguistic meaning. *Der Israelit*, according to some estimations, had the largest distribution of any Jewish paper in Germany, and its unambiguous statement on the matter should not be taken lightly.[53] Given that this occurred shortly after Agudath Israel was established as a separate Orthodox organisation and as a political body aspiring to compete with the Zionist movement, the fact that it took this stand in the debate can be seen as a calculated political move designed to distinguish itself from ha-Mizraḥi.[54] Because this was a political struggle rather than an ideological one, *Der Israelit* deliberately centred its fight with Zionism on secular education, not secular language. This was a similar choice to that made by its Eastern European counterpart, *Ha-Modia'*, which protested the new Zionist approach to Hebrew not because it was used

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50   "Der Streit um die hebräische Unterrichtssprache in Palästina," *Das jüdische Blatt*, 12 December 1913.

51   Heinrich Eisemann, "Zum Sprachenstreit in Palästina," *Frankfurter israelitisches Familienblatt*, 30 January 1914.

52   "Ein zionistischer Cherem," *Der Israelit*, 27 November 1913; "Der Kampf um die Jugend im Palästina," *Der Israelit*, 25 December 1913.

53   Breuer, *Jewish Orthodoxy*, 156.

54   On Rosenheim and the establishment of Agudath Israel, see Daniel Mahla, *Orthodox Judaism and the Politics of Religion: From Prewar Europe to the State of Israel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 54–60.

as a neutral modern language, a tool for teaching general subjects, but because the approach was accompanied by an insufficient level of religious instruction. Neither paper tried to reappropriate Hebrew for the Orthodox camp by seeking to reinforce its spiritual significance as an element belonging exclusively to the religious sphere. Even if these Orthodox publicists did consider modern Hebrew to be a defilement of a sacred religious value, their actions proved time and again that the holiness of Hebrew was an ideal worth sacrificing in the struggle to control the shaping of the next generation. The chain of events perhaps pushed them into a corner, but the conclusion remained the same.

The "battle of languages" nonetheless inspired a rare theological argument about Hebrew, which paralleled the political debate. This was published in the Strasbourg weekly *Das jüdische Blatt* and was reminiscent of the rationale expressed by *Ha-Levanon*'s editor some fifty years earlier. An anonymous author in the Strasbourg paper based his point on the weekly Torah portion, describing the story of Joseph reuniting with his brothers. According to the medieval commentator Naḥmanides, the reason that Joseph's brothers recognised him was not because he spoke Hebrew; that fact could have been explained by his role in the Egyptian administration, because of which even a non-Israelite could have learned Hebrew. Instead, they recognised him because the content of his words showed that he was part of the house of Jacob.[55] The analogy was crystal clear: Hebrew has no significance if it does not reflect the ideals and values of *thoratreue* [lit. loyal to the Torah] Judaism.

Thus, the Orthodox perception of the danger of modern Hebrew developed in Russia, Germany, and Jerusalem alongside the Orthodox group's perceived political interest and without their adopting a specific outspoken linguistic ideology. Jewish Orthodoxy was not worried about the use of the sacred language for "mundane" purposes, such as the teaching of science, or using it when talking with small children. Instead, the Orthodox were generally alarmed by the change of priority—a change that placed the importance of the Hebrew language well above its historical place in Jewish custom, making it more important than studying or obeying the Torah. The problem for them was not the secularisation of the holy language; it was the secularisation of future generations. The Orthodox leadership believed that in order to save Jewish continuity as they envisioned it, Hebrew needed to return to its original role as the vehicle of centuries-old tradition.

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55   "Die heilige Sprache," *Das jüdische Blatt*, 2 January 1914.

5   Conclusion

A twofold linguistic ideology arises from the inconsistent positions taken by Orthodox writers over the years with regard to the project of modernising Hebrew and its use in Jewish education. The first dimension pertains to secularity. This secularisation to which they objected, as we have seen, was not that of the Hebrew language, but rather the secularised education that used and emphasised Hebrew. Their rejection of modern, often relatively secular, and national-leaning schools in Eastern Europe and Palestine was derived from their instinct to resist change and to defend the traditional, Torah-keeping, God-fearing way of life. However, because Hebrew was so central to these new institutions, Orthodox leaders had no choice but to reject modern Hebrew as well. They saw how the focus on Hebrew in the schools' curriculum and their educational ideology overpowered the study of canonical Jewish literature and instruction concerning basic Jewish rituals. As a conservative movement, the Orthodox Jews could not risk the change in the hierarchy—the elevation of Hebrew above other religious values. The more the progressive camp stressed the language, the more the Orthodox speakers rejected it as a symbol of secularity.

The second dimension pertains to the sanctity of Hebrew, or more precisely to its disappearance from the discourse. Influenced by a previous shift in the meaning of *lešon ha-qodeš*, which limited the language's holy dimension, Orthodox journalists merely referred to Hebrew as a sacred language. Even when they mentioned the holy tongue, they did so dismissively, directing the phrase at the Zionists and the exaggerated importance that they ascribed to it. There was no attempt to reinforce the holiness of Hebrew, to claim that knowing Hebrew was essential for being a righteous Jew, or, alternatively, that there was a religious requirement to refrain from using it outside the religious domain. Instead, Orthodox publicists preferred ad-hoc arguments concerning the specific events, people, or institutions involved.

A practical answer to the challenge of modern Hebrew only appeared after World War I, when Agudath Israel established Orthodox, Yiddish-speaking schools (or supported others who established similar schools). These were an alternative to the national schools, mainly the Zionist Tarbut educational network and the ha-Mizraḥi Yavneh network, both of which taught in Hebrew.[56] The new institutions absorbed some of the educational reforms

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of their predecessors—the *ḥeder metuqqan* and the maskilic schools—but they remained religious in character. The most famous of these was the Bais Yaaʿkov network for girls led by Sarah Schnirer, but there were also equivalents for boys.[57] As much as these projects were a product of the inter-war political structure, they also reflected the understanding that education could not be left in non-Orthodox hands, even if the non-Orthodox schools claimed that their goal was the preservation of historical Jewish culture.

The rejection of national and secular education continued to define the Orthodox position, but the antagonism towards the language disappeared. With the growing use of Hebrew in the *Yišuv* in the British Mandate era, there were some halakhic attempts to prohibit the use of modern Hebrew. However, the banning of Hebrew neologisms currently survives only among the most radical groups in Israel and the United States, due to practical necessity.[58]

The issue of the modernisation of the Hebrew language is larger, of course, than the educational aspect. Still, as this article has shown, Jewish Orthodoxy did not develop a comprehensive linguistic ideology even when the role and meaning of Hebrew as a Jewish language was the most debated issue in the Jewish world. Rabbis and thinkers might have their intellectual views on the subject, but in the public discourse, Orthodox voices remain exclusively responsive.

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57   Bacon, *The Politics of Tradition*, 142–77; Kijek, "Was It Possible to Avoid 'Hebrew Assimilation'?"; Naomi Seidman, *Sarah Schenirer and the Bais Yaakov Movement: A Revolution in the Name of Tradition* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2019).

58   Iris Brown, "From Ideology to Halakhah: Ultra-Orthodox Opposition to Modern Hebrew," *Studies in Judaism, Humanities, and the Social Sciences* 1, no. 2 (2018): 33–58; Dalit Assouline, "Between the Pure and the Impure: The Haredi Differentiation between the Holy Tongue and Hebrew" [Hebrew], in *Language as Culture: New Perspectives on Hebrew*, ed. Yotam Benziman (Jerusalem: Van Leer Institute, 2013), 145–63.

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"For Then Thou Shalt Make Thy Way Prosperous"

The Interplay of Scriptures, Sacredness, and Magical Practices

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Abstract

This paper delves into the concept of *imitatio Bibliae*—the imitation of the Bible—in the context of magical operations, specifically nigromancy. By examining a multitude of related texts with rich textual traditions across both Hebrew and non-Hebrew languages, it seeks to explore how the individual segments and the physical embodiment of the Bible were leveraged by practitioners to augment the efficacy of their rituals. At the heart of the discourse is the proposition that practitioners leveraged the intrinsic sacredness of the biblical text and the spiritual stature of characters like King Solomon to imbue their operations with a sense of sanctity and validity. The material form of the holy text was regarded as a potent instrument, with its sanctified presence and material existence providing the rituals with additional validation and potency. The analysis will also highlight the use of oath-taking within magical rituals to summon and bind demons, reflecting a unique facet of *imitatio Bibliae*. By offering these insights, this article will provide a nuanced understanding of the interplay between magical practices and religious texts, ultimately broadening the traditional boundaries of magical and religious discourse.

Keywords

1   Introduction: Torah Scrolls and Magic[1]

Among many Jewish communities, Torah scrolls were and still are seen as sacred objects containing holiness that can affect people's daily lives. The benefits of this divine power can be invoked not only through the recitation of God's words or inscriptions on wearable amulets, but also through the formulas inscribed in the adornments on Torah scrolls.[2] Amulets containing biblical verses circulated widely around the globe, and the idea that the Bible—especially the Torah—concealed hidden, powerful, and useful names was also common.[3] The apex of this concept is probably that expressed through the *šimmušim* genre. *Šimmušim* [שימושים; operations or usages] refers to a group of texts that attribute different powers to different sections of the Torah [*šimmuš torah*], different chapters of the book of Psalms [*šimuš tehillim*], or different blessings in the Jewish *'amidah* prayer [*šimmuš šemoneh 'ešreh berakhot*].[4] In a fifteenth-century manuscript of *šimmuš torah*, for example, we are told that the first pericope of Leviticus can be used to neutralise sorcery.[5] Likewise, in a manuscript of *šimmuš tehillim* from the same period, Psalm 26 is described as having the ability to keep the practitioner safe from any distress.[6]

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2 See, for example, Shalom Sabar, "Torah and Magic: The Torah Scroll and Its Appurtenances as Magical Objects in Traditional Jewish Culture," *European Journal of Jewish Studies* 3 (2009): 135–70.

3 See Moshe Idel, "The Concept of the Torah in Heikhalot Literature and Its Reverberations in Kabbalah" [Hebrew], *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 1 (1982): 23–84.

4 On *šimmuš torah*, see Moshe Idel, *Absorbing Perfections: Kabbalah and Interpretation* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002), 138–41. On *šimmuš tehillim*, see Bill Rebiger, ed., *Sefer Shimmush Tehillim: Buch vom magischen Gebrauch der Psalmen* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010).

5 See Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, héb. 806, fol. 236r:
ויקרא אל משה: מעלה לבטל כשפים. אמור אחר הבדלה על כוס הבדלה [...].

6 See Rome, Biblioteca Casanatense 3158, fol. 161r:
מזמור שפטני יי: מי שהוא בים או ביבשה או בכל מילי דעקא, אמור יתיה עם השם שלו ותשתזיב.

Indeed, it is not solely the biblical text that is perceived as holy. The scrolls themselves or the text, considered as a tangible, material object, are also believed to be endowed with potency. The utilisation of the Bible as a tool for divination, for instance, was a prevalent practice from the Middle Ages onward.[7] In the early modern period, Jewish manuals for making amulets sometimes instruct the practitioner to place the amulet inside a Pentateuch, as if it is supposed to absorb the holiness of the scriptural text to make it sacred, hence active, in a process known as *qidduš* [consecration].[8] In other manuals, one can find instructions to tie an amulet with the strings used to produce a Torah scroll.[9] In order to consecrate a magic ring [*qidduš ṭabba'at*], one sixteenth-century recipe instructs the practitioner to prepare a clean table with a Torah scroll on it and to open the scroll while facing east, putting the ring on the phrase "and the bush was not consumed" (Exod 3:2).[10] Described almost as a physical substance, the sacredness of the biblical text can be transferred by proximity. This allows practitioners to imbue their personal objects with the same divine power simply by bringing them closer to the source.

In this article, we will examine how those two different (albeit connected) usages of the biblical material—its text and form—were used by practitioners of magic, specifically nigromancy (i.e., practices for coercing demons to appear and fulfil the practitioners' wishes), from the late Middle Ages onward, to create their own consecrated books.[11] I will argue that this practice, which I call

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7   On the use of the Bible in bibliomancy, see, among others, Shraga Bar-On, "If You Seek to Take Advice from the Torah, It Will Be Given: Jewish Bibliomancy through the Generations," in *Unveiling the Hidden—Anticipating the Future: Divinatory Practices among Jews between Qumran and the Modern Period*, ed. Josefina Rodríguez-Arribas and Dorian Gieseler Greenbaum (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 161–91. For an interesting case of Jewish borrowing of a Christian ordeal that includes the use of a Psalter, and the use of the Bible in such practices, see Gideon Bohak, "Catching a Thief: The Jewish Trials of a Christian Ordeal," *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 13 (2006): 344–62.

8   See, for example, Moses Zacuto, *Shorshei ha-Shemot*, vol. 1, 2nd ed. (Jerusalem: Nezer Shraga, 1999), 595. On the history of this text and its printed editions, see Eliezer Baumgarten, Yuval Harari, and Uri Safrai, "Zacuto's *Alpha-Beta Shel Ha-Shemot*: Lexicality and the Kabbalah of Holy Names" [Hebrew], *Da'at* 90 (2020): 398–401.

9   See New York, Library of the Jewish Theological Seminary 8721, fol. 4v:
לקדש קימיע(!) צריך לפתוח הקמיע ולקרוא כל הפסוקים אשר בו [...] כשיקשור הקמיע יקשרו בגידין של ס״ת ויקשון[ר] בו ג׳ קשרין[ם] לימין וב׳ בשמאל.

10   See Geneva, Bibliothèque de Genève, Comites Latentes 145 (formerly Sassoon 290), 404:
תעריך(!) שלחן נקיה, פניך לצד מזרח ,ותפתח ס״ת [ספר תורה] בפרשת ״וירא מלאך יי אליו״, ותשים הטבעת על התיבה ״והסנה איננו אוכל״.

11   Since the Middle Ages, the terms *nigromancy* and *necromancy* have sometimes been used interchangeably. However, this was not always the case. For a revealing discussion, see Charles Burnett, *Magic and Divination in the Middle Ages: Texts and Techniques in the Islamic and Christian Worlds* (Aldershot: Variorum, 1996), 2–3, and see the lengthy

imitatio Bibliae [the imitation of the Bible], allowed them to see their opera-
tion as holy as part of a larger attempt to place themselves in a long dynasty of
biblical practitioners. To channel the scriptural power, the practitioners made
efforts to act like biblical figures—in their appearance and behaviour—as well
as to make their books resemble scriptural material, containing both the con-
tent (biblical verses) and form of the scriptures, and to treat them accordingly.[12]

The concept of *imitatio Bibliae* refers to the unique practice within Christian
and Jewish magical (especially nigromantic) traditions from the late Middle
Ages onward, where practitioners treated their magic books with the same
reverence and ritualistic attention given to the scriptures and acted as though
they were biblical figures. To explore this practice, I will examine different
texts—both Hebrew and non-Hebrew[13]—which are interconnected through
a long-standing textual tradition, among them manuscripts of the *Clavicula
Salomonis*, *Liber centum regum*, *Sapientia Salomonis*, *Liber consecrationum*,
and few shorter catoptromantic recipes.[14] I will discuss two aspects of *imitatio
Bibliae*. The first part will concentrate on the emulation of biblical characters,

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discussion in Jean-Patrice Boudet, *Entre science et nigromance: Astrologie, divination
et magie dans l'Occident médiéval (XIIe–XVe siècle)* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne,
2006), 92–94 and 125–31. For the use of *nigromancy* and *necromancy* to reflect approved
and unapproved practice (respectively), see Frank Klaassen, "Necromancy," in *The
Routledge History of Medieval Magic*, ed. Sophie Page and Catherine Rider (London:
Routledge, 2019), 201–11.

12   On the use of liturgy in nigromantic works, especially the reciting of Psalms, see John
Haines and Julien Véronèse, "De quelques usages du chant liturgique dans les textes latins
de magie rituelle à la fin du Moyen Âge," *Cahiers de recherches médiévales et humanistes*
39 (2020): 293–320. The fourteenth-century Berengar Ganell stated in his *Summa sacre
magice* that the practitioner can write his own adjurations using biblical verses, if he is
well-acquainted with "his law"; that is, his religious scripture. See Kassel, Landesbibliothek
und Murhardsche Bibliothek der Stadt Kassel, 4° MS. astron. 3, fol. 56v: "Et talem coniura-
tionem contextam ex factis et dictis vel rebus tue legis, tu viet potes aptissime fabricare
et longam vel brevem facere si scias bene ea que sunt tue legis." On Ganell, see Damaris
Gehr, "Beringarius Ganellus and the *Summa sacre magice*: Magic as the Promotion of
God's Kingship," in Page and Rider, *The Routledge History of Medieval Magic*, 237–53. On
Ganell's use of Hebrew sources to create his own system of magic, see Gal Sofer, "Wearing
God, Consecrating Body Parts: Berengar Ganell's *Summa sacre magice* and *Shi'ur Qomah*,"
Magic, Ritual, and Witchcraft 16 (2021): 304–34.

13   We should be aware that designations such as "Jewish" and "Christian" may not accu-
rately describe such texts, as they often encompass elements found in both traditions in
an extensively intertwined manner. Therefore, I will utilise a more direct categorisation
method based on language to denote the manuscripts' characteristics and cultural origins.

14   On the complex textual relationship between these different sources from the late Middle
Ages onward, see Gal Sofer, "Solomonic Magic: Texts, History, and Reception" (PhD diss.,
Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, 2022).

with particular emphasis on King Solomon, while the second will delve into the mimicry of the Torah scroll. The final part of this article will focus on the use of oath-taking magic rituals to invoke and bind demons, reflecting the role of *imitatio Bibliae*.

2 *Imitatio Bibliae* I: the Practitioner as King Solomon

In her book on the use of biblical allusions in magical texts from the Cairo Genizah, Dorothea M. Salzer introduced the term *unio magica* to denote the merger between the practitioners and the biblical figures whose words they were reciting in the form of biblical verses.[15] This conceptual union, according to Salzer, is the source of the practitioners' authoritative power, and they selected which biblical verses to recite based on the specific authority they wished to evoke. Having examined some works that are attributed to King Solomon, I would suggest using *imitatio Bibliae* to denote the practitioners' identification with biblical figures not through their recitation of specific verses, but by other means—their appearance, their behaviour, and the way they perceived their practice as a holy one.

The *Clavicula Salomonis*, or *Little Key of [King] Solomon*, which circulated from the late fourteenth century in Europe in various versions and languages and is still popular today, is probably the most famous book of magic. It is, in fact, a compendium of different methods and formulas that aim to summon and coerce demons to fulfil the practitioners' wishes.[16] First and foremost, it is an auxiliary manual designed to complement independently circulated recipes and experiments, endowing them with the necessary potency for effectiveness. As auxiliary manuals, the (different) texts of the *Clavicula Salomonis* became extremely popular from the sixteenth century onwards, as Federico

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15 See Dorothea M. Salzer, *Die Magie der Anspielung: Form und Funktion der biblischen Anspielungen in den magischen Texten der Kairoer Geniza* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 218–41.

16 On the *Clavicula Salomonis*, see, among others, Federico Barbierato, *Nella stanza dei circoli: Clavicula Salomonis e libri di magia a Venezia nei secoli XVII e XVIII* (Milan: S. Bonnard, 2002); Julien Véronèse, "La magie rituelle à la fin du Moyen Âge: Le cas de la *Clavicula Salomonis*," in *Le Moyen Âge et les sciences*, ed. Danielle Jacquart and Agostino Paravicini Bagliani (Florence: SISMEL—Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2021), 617–37; Robert Mathiesen, "The Key of Solomon: Toward a Typology of the Manuscripts," *Societas Magica Newsletter* 17 (2007): 1–9. For a systematic discussion of several *Claviculae* and their history, see chapter 3 of Sofer, "Solomonic Magic." For an edition of a fifteenth-century Italian *Clavicula*, see Florence Gal, Jean-Patrice Boudet, and Laurence Moulinier-Brogi, eds., *Vedrai mirabilia: Un libro di magia del Quattrocento* (Rome: Viella, 2017), 362–419.

Barbierato shows in his extensive work on these different *Claviculae* in Venice.[17] As they gained popularity, they also gained opposition, especially from the Church, which included it in the index of prohibited books.[18] Already in 1425, it seems, the *Clavicula Salomonis* had irritated some preachers in Italy, including the famous Bernardino of Siena, who expressed severe opposition to it in one of his sermons: "Do not study the *Clavicola* of Solomon, because if you study and engage in it, you will become Mister Zero."[19]

Since it is attributed to the biblical king, the practitioners are already positioning themselves as performers of a royal and biblical rite whose actions allow them to mimic King Solomon, who was famous for his ability to coerce demons.[20] But they are also doing so by preparing royal objects to be used in their practice, including a staff and a crown of virgin parchment, on which divine names (which derive from the Jewish popular abbreviation 'gl') are to be written.[21] The wearing of a parchment crown is a common practice in nigromantic texts.[22] The practitioner of the *Clavicula Salomonis* is also accompanied by his followers (or friends [*socii*]), leading them as a master in the rite. The behaviour of the master is expected to be in accordance with that of a king, encouraging his followers during the operation, but he is also described as bravely adjuring the demons, as we will soon see.

However, the most striking evidence for the practitioner's self-identification with the biblical king is the "Demonic Response." The Demonic Response is a distinguished textual unit that can often be found in nigromantic texts. It usually contains a detailed description of the scene in which the practitioners will find themselves if they are able to summon the demons; that is, a description of the demons' response to the rite. Such textual units, I suggest, are supposed to give the impression of a tested and proven practice, but also of the divine inspiration experienced by their authors (their clairvoyance, or prophetic

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17   Barbierato, *Nella stanza*.

18   Barbierato, *Nella stanza*, 36–37.

19   Nirit Ben-Aryeh Debby, *Renaissance Florence in the Rhetoric of Two Popular Preachers: Giovanni Dominici (1356–1419) and Bernardino Da Siena (1380–1444)* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2001), 102.

20   Much has been written on the figure of King Solomon as the ruler of demons. See, for example, Pablo A. Torijano, *Solomon, the Esoteric King: From King to Magus, Development of a Tradition* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 41–87 and 192–224.

21   See, for example, Gal, Boudet, and Moulinier-Brogi, *Vedrai mirabilia*, 367: "Sendo dumque così ordinato poiché sii entrato nel circulo, ti dee ponere in capo una corona di carta virginea, nel cui circuito, cioè dinanci et di drietto et dalle parte, siano scritti questi nomi: Agla, Aglay, Aglatha, Aglaoth, et vogliano tutte esser lettere capitale, cioè grande."

22   For example, see the discussion of Ganell's "crown of Solomon" in Sofer, "Wearing God," 312–14.

abilities), who knew what would happen when they summoned the demons. The Demonic Response functions as an indicator for the reader: the scribes must have been successful practitioners, or must "at least" have had prophetic skills. In the case of some *Claviculae*, the scribes describe this Demonic Response after the demonic emperor has revealed himself before the master and his followers:

> When they [the practitioners] have shewed the pentacles, all there [the demons] furour and madnes shall cease, and then there emperour shell say: "from the time of Salomon, there was noe coniurer could see my presence, if that things were not that ye have preparred and that ye shew unto us, and because ye compell us soe greevously I ~~belei~~ beleeve ye are of the progeny of ~~Psal~~ Salomon or of his fellowes, few circusators(!)[23] have those things whereby they may compell us by our hurt and against our will we must come before thee, because we cannot defend our selves, nor say against the wordes that ye speake and for feare of the pentacles we will be obedient and subiect to the[e] in all thy commandements."[24]

In this Demonic Response, the readers (and practitioners-to-be) are told exactly what they are supposed to hear from the demonic emperor when they summon him. The demon will apparently consider them the progeny of the biblical king because of the "things" that they have prepared; namely, the garments. The pentacles, also known as *candarie*, were circular medallions that usually contained magical characters and sacred names, which were often described as having been given to Solomon by divine revelation.[25] Thus, the

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23   From *exorcistae*, i.e., exorcists. Practitioners of nigromancy were often referred to as exorcists; that is, those who recite exorcism formulas. The term "exorcism" was used interchangeably with "adjuration" and "conjuration." On the term "exorcism" in this context, see Stephen Clucas, "Exorcism, Conjuration and the Historiography of Early Modern Ritual Magic," in *Aisthetics of the Spirits: Spirits in Early Modern Science, Religion, Literature and Music*, ed. Steffen Schneider (Göttingen: V&R unipress, 2015), 261–85.

24   London, British Library, Sloane 3847, fol. 57r. See also the eighteenth-century Hebrew version in London, British Library, Or 14759, fol. 11v:
ואחר שהראה אותם להם ינוחו הרעדות כלם. ואז יאמר הקיסר: ״מזמן שלמה לא הי[נ]ה] משביע אשר הי[נ]ה] לו היכולת לראות את עצמי אם לא היו הדברים המוכנים לך אשר תראֵני וע״כ [ועל כן] עתה תכבוש אותי בחוזק נפלא. אני מאמין כי מזרע שלמה וחביריו אתה, כי מעט מהמשביעים אשר להם הדברים אשר לכם נגד שהם אונינו וחפצינו. ועל כרחינו אנחנו מוכרחים לבוא לפניכם. ולכבוד הפינטקולי אשר לך אנחנו נסור למשמעתך בכל דבר ולכל אשר תצוה הננו.״

25   For example, see their description in a fifteenth-century Latin *Clavicula* in a manuscript known as Private Collection, Coxe 25 (formerly Amsterdam, Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermetica 114), 42: "Sciendum est quod perscripte Candarie Novem sunt celestes divina

holders of such medallions, who perform a rite with royal clothing and accessories, are depicted as being closely related to King Solomon, imitating the appearance of the biblical figure and using his own symbols and seals.

In the fifteenth-century *Liber centum regum* [Book of One Hundred Kings] that circulated in northern Italy, which was later known as *Sapientia Salomonis* [The Wisdom of Solomon] and circulated in Poland and Ukraine in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the imitation of the biblical king is even more explicit.[26] This work, explicitly inspired by and drawing upon the *Clavicula Salomonis*, focuses on the preparation of a magical book. Following the instructions in the *Sapientia*, practitioners are supposed to prepare a catalogue of *centum regum*; that is, one hundred demonic kings. They will be able to summon each of those demons according to their wishes, as long as they make the catalogue correctly and "activate" it with a consecration ritual. This consecration ritual mostly focused on summoning the demonic kings and subjugating them for the purpose of "giving power" to the book. Accordingly, the book was known as a "consecrated book." In *Sapientia Salomonis*, we also read about the master (or rabbi in the Hebrew manuscripts) being with his followers, holding a laurel staff, and reciting exorcisms with which he will coerce and subjugate demonic kings. These acts posit the master above the royal demonic figures, implying his higher royal rank. This becomes even clearer when the master also recites a list of biblical events in which God explicitly involved Himself in earthly matters and answered the one who prayed, sorted in chronological order:

> God of the heavens and earth, [who] made the whole world […] and destroyed the human race in the time of the Deluge and saved the eight families that maintained the human race. And appeared to Abram in human form; that is, of three persons in the plain of Mamre […]. And looked after the prophet Jonah for three days and three nights inside the

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revelatione pro corporis et anime protectioni proprii Salomoni revelati valet quod ad multa non solum ad ydee vel eutente operationem sanctam etiam in diversis subveniunt necessitatibus."

26   On the *Sapientia Salomonis* and *Liber centum regum*, see chapter 3 of Sofer, "Solomonic Magic." See also Gal Sofer, "Crooked Manners and Strange Figures: Visuality as a Tool for Constraining Demons," *Mabatim: Journal for Visual Culture* 1 (2022): 77–100. For the Latin-Italian version, I will use Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Plut. 89 sup. 38, fols. 35r–51r. For the Hebrew version, I will cite from New York, Library of the Jewish Theological Seminary 1870, fols. 1r–110v.

fish's guts without any harm and made many other countless miracles for him. Therefore, hear the prayer of your servant.[27]

More biblical figures appear in this prayer, including Adam and Eve, Moses, the three youths (Daniel 3), and Daniel in the lions' den (Daniel 6), in biblical chronological order. The manner in which these events are ordered implies how the master sees himself and his practice: he is one figure in a long chain of biblical figures whose prayers have been answered by God. His prayer, thus, is the prayer of a biblical figure. The resemblance between the practice offered by the *Clavicula Salomonis* and the *Sapientia Salomonis* should not surprise us since the scribe of the Latin-Italian fifteenth-century *Liber centum regum* explicitly used formulas and methods from the *Clavicula* to create his own nigromantic rite, referring to the *Clavicula* as the authority behind the practice:

> And when [it is] time to operate, he must perform those solemnities that the *Clavicula di Salamon* commands, which commands that the said master and his companions must remain within the circle [...] conjuring all of them with a conjuration as in the *Clavicula*.[28]

At the same time that manuscripts of the *Clavicula Salomonis*, as well as the *Liber centum regum*, were circulating in Italy, the Italian kabbalist Yohanan Alemanno was in Florence working on his last work, his *magnum opus*, in which he described a detailed cosmology and presented different sources and methods to be used in order to ascend to the apex of this cosmology; that is, the divine realm.[29] Alemanno was well aware of the art of nigromancy, and he used several sources—Jewish, Christian, and Muslim—in this work. While it is rare to find practitioners who also describe the theory behind their practice, which includes their names and a clear practical orientation, we do know

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27 MS Florence Plut.89, sup.38, fols. 39v–40r: "Dio de li cieli et la tarra(!) facesti tuoto el mondo [...] et destruesti la specia humana nel tempo de lo delluvio et la octava famiglia(!) scampasti li quali mantenero la specia humana. Et aparisti ad abram in forma humana cioè de tre homini in la pianura de Mambre [...]. Et Iona propheta per tre die et tre noote in le budelle de lo pesce governasti senza alcuno danno, et a lui molti altri miraculi senza numaro(!) facesti. Adonca(!) exaudi la oratione de lo tuo servo."

28 MS Florence Plut.89, sup.38, fol. 45r–v: "Et quando uora operare, debia fare quelle solen[n]ità che comanda la Clavicula de Salamon, la quale comanda che debia stare lo dicto maestro con li soi compagni infra lo circulo [...] coniurando tuoti quanti con una coniuratione como sta in la Clavicula."

29 See Gal Sofer, "Lover, Son and Prophet: Magic and Kabbalah in the Autobiography of Yohanan Alemanno" [Hebrew], *Tarbiz* 86 (2019): 663–94.

about such figures in Italy, of whom Alemanno is one.[30] From Alemanno's writings, it is clear that he saw the practitioner of nigromancy like a biblical king. On the use of crowns during the rites, Alemanno wrote:

> The crowns [are used so that] you will rule them as a king, ordering them when talking with them, calling them in a loud voice, by memory, with a brave and knightly heart, and with agility and memory like the great kings of the past. And do not rush, lest you fail, since if you call them with divine names and [with] bravery, as a leader and commander of the people,[31] they will come in terror and fear, and they will answer you with a loud and clear voice, as clear as day, and they will not hide anything from you […]. And when they arrive as servants, kneeling in front of their king with his royal crown on his head, they will bow to the holy names and seals, so you will bring them like a king who receives his servants with a pleasant countenance, and they should be considered valued by you, as servants [are valued] by their masters.[32]

Donning a crown serves as another method of articulating the practitioner's, or master's, royal status and authority over demonic beings. These entities serve him, just as they did the ancient kings, "the great kings of the past." The term "kings of the past," which can also be understood as the kings of the east [מלכי קדם], does not refer generically to royal figures. Instead, it specifically denotes King Solomon and his influence, who is prominently cited in the magical literature that inspired Alemanno.[33]

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30   On another such figure, see Nicolas Weill-Parot, "Antonio Da Montolmo's *De occultis et manifestis* or *Liber intelligentiarum*: An Annotated Critical Edition with English Translation and Introduction," in *Invoking Angels: Theurgic Ideas and Practices, Thirteenth to Sixteenth Centuries*, ed. Claire Fanger (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 2012), 219–93; Weill-Parot, "Cecco d'Ascoli and Antonio Da Montolmo: The Building of a 'Nigromantical' Cosmology and the Birth of the Author-Magician," in Page and Rider, *The Routledge History of Medieval Magic*, 225–36.

31   Based on Isa 55:4.

32   Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, héb. 849, fol. 52r:
הכתרים: כמלך תמלוך עליהם ותצום בדברך עמם לקראם בשם קריאה רמה ועל פה ובלב אמיץ ואבירות לב וזריזות וזכרון כמלכי קדם גדולי הנפש. ולא תרוץ פן תכשל כי אם תקראם עם שמות אלהיות ואבירות לבב כנגיד מצוה לאומים המה יבאו באימה ופחד וישיבו לך בקול רם וברור כיום ולא יעלימוך דבר [...]. ובבואם כעבדים משתחוים למלכם וכתר מלכות בראשו ויכרעו אל השמות והחותמות הקדושים אף אתה תביאם כמלך מקבל עבדיו בסבר פנים יפות ויהיו חשובים בעיניך כעבדים אל אדוניהם.

33   See Sofer, "The Magical Cosmos of Yohanan Alemanno."

3   *Imitatio Bibliae* II: the Practitioner's Book as a Torah Scroll

Just as the scribes of the *Liber centum regum* used the *Clavicula Salomonis* as a source of methods and formulas, they also used the understudied *Liber consecrationum*, the "book of consecrations."[34] Already circulating in fifteenth-century Germany and Italy, the *Liber consecrationum* was used as an auxiliary manual, much like the *Clavicula Salomonis*. A practitioner who wishes to restore the potency of an experiment that has lost its efficacy—due to errors and corruption—must prepare the "book of consecrations," which is supposed to accompany other texts containing experiments. Almost all experiments are false, according to the *Liber consecrationum*, and "this science prevails over all other sciences, because all experiments are truly corrupted, some of them are fictitious, so nearly all [of them] are false."[35] When making such a "book of consecrations," the practitioners are instructed to keep the usual ascetic rules (abstaining from food, drink, and "all defilement of mind and body"), while attending Mass for nine days. During those nine days, they must bring the booklet [*libellum*, which contains prayers and exorcisms] to the church and secretly place it on the altar until the end of the rite.[36] Each day, after the Mass, the book should be kept in a secret place prepared by the sprinkling of blessed water and the burning of incense. After the book has been bound in the form of the cross (on each side) with a priest's girdle and stole [*cingulo sacerdotali et stola dedicata*], the main operation begins with prayers and exorcisms that are recited while the practitioner is facing east, kneeling in front of the closed and bound book. Then, he should recite seven psalms with *letania et*

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34   See Richard Kieckhefer, "The Holy and the Unholy: Sainthood, Witchcraft and Magic in Late Medieval Europe," in *Christendom and Its Discontents: Exclusion, Persecution, and Rebellion, 1000–1500,* ed. Scott L. Waugh and Peter D. Diehl (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 327–28; Kieckhefer, *Forbidden Rites: A Necromancer's Manual of the Fifteenth Century* (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 1998), 8–10; Stephen Clucas, "*Regimen animarum et corporum*: The Body and Spatial Practice in Medieval and Renaissance Magic," in *The Body in Late Medieval and Early Modern Culture*, ed. Darryll Grantley and Nina Taunton (London: Routledge, 2016), 119–20; Frank Klaassen, *The Transformations of Magic: Illicit Learned Magic in the Later Middle Ages and Renaissance* (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 2013), 137–38.

35   MS Coxe 25, 188: "Nota quod multi sunt qui multa et magna querunt et multa scripta habunt et credunt de die in diem ad effectum per veniem et in iniquam per venerunt et se ipsos sic decipiunt et tempora sua in utilitus amittunt nam nichil intelligunt. Quoniam melius est scire vim unius verbi quam pondus auri, unde dicitur: 'Melius est scientia quam secularis potentia.' Sic ista scientia praevalet omnibus aliis scientiis quia omnia experimenta vere sunt corrupta quorum quaedam sunt ficta sic omnia pene sunt falsa."

36   MS Coxe 25, 188: "Et istum libellum secum portare et ponere in altari quousque omnes transacti fuerint in ecclesia quousque missa finiatur."

collecti, making his requests with humble devotion and intention.[37] As in many Christian prayer books, the prayers in this book contain crosses as instructions to make the gesture of *signum crucis* [the sign of the cross].[38] The consecration of the book "activates" it, and hence it plays an essential role: the scribe states that the book is worthless without this consecration ritual.[39]

Placing the *Liber consecrationum* on the altar during the Mass is quite suggestive regarding the practitioners' perception of this holy book, since it is usually the Gospel that is placed on the altar. The bringing of the book to a secret place that had been purified by blessed water and the burning of incense, as well as the act of kneeling in front of it facing east, also point to its centrality in a scene that is located in a consecrated quasi-church, during a quasi-Mass, in which every prayer that is directed to God is recited towards the altar, *ad orientem*. In this analogy, naturally, the followers of the master play the role of the congregation.[40]

The *Sapientia Salomonis* is heavily based on the *Liber consecrationum*, and the practitioner who has made his catalogue of demons is also instructed to consecrate it, thus transforming it into an activated object. There are also specific instructions for making such a catalogue, which often describe it as a book made of one hundred parchments of kid skin, at a specific astrological moment. On each of these parchments, the practitioner is instructed to write the name of one of the devils/demons, along with their seals and abilities.

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37   MS Coxe 25, 188: "Omnipotens deus misericordia et bonitate sua sancti + ficet et bene + dicat et conse + creat librum istum sanctissimis nominibus insignitum ut virtutem quam optinere debeat potenter obtineat, videlicet, ad consecrandum vinculum spirituum et ad omnes invocationes et conurationes ipsorum et ad omnia alia experimenta."

38   This is a very common practice in Christian liturgy. See, for example, Pierre-Hector Coullié, *Consécration de l'Eglise N.-D. de Fourvière* (Lyon, 1896), 80: "Sancti + ficetur, et conse + cretur hoc templum. In nomine Pa + tris, et Filii, et Spiritus + sancti."

39   MS Coxe 25, 188: "Hunc librum habenti non valere nisi ab ipso veniet(?) denuo consecretur."

40   The use of the Mass as the form into which practitioners of nigromancy often poured their content is beautifully shown in some manuscripts of the *Clavicula Salomonis*, in which the ritual is completed with a dismissal formula that includes "the last Gospel," a passage from John (1:1–14) that was incorporated into the rite of the Mass in the late Middle Ages. See, for example, the fifteenth-century Italian *Clavicula* in Gal, Boudet, and Moulinier-Brogi, *Vedrai mirabilia*, 386: "Poi, dica questo evangelio di san giovanni, cioè Inprincipio erat verbum, et verbum erat apud Deum etc." The question of whether the "last Gospel" is or is not an integral part of the mass is a controversial matter among theologians. See Adrian Fortescue, *The Mass: A Study of The Roman Liturgy* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1912), 393–95. It is relevant to note that the "last Gospel" was one of the last elements to be incorporated into the Mass. The dismissal formula is spoken by the deacon at the end of all liturgies. See ibid., 391–92.

Often, the practitioner is also instructed to draw the figure of the devil/demon. There is no doubt concerning the model on which the book was based. In the case of the *Liber consecrationum*, putting the book on the altar during the Mass suggests that it mimics a Gospel book, which usually appears on the altar at these moments. In the case of the *Sapientia Salomonis*, the recitation of specific formulas seems to suggest that both the Christian (Latin) practitioner and the Jewish (Hebrew) practitioner saw their magical book as a Torah scroll, as this is attested in both Latin-Italian and Hebrew texts of the *Sapientia Salomonis*. First, the Latin *Sapientia* instructs the master to recite: "And then say this benediction: bless the blessed God. Blessed are you, God, our God, the king of the world, who gave us true law, and an eternal life placed inside us. Blessed are you, God, who gave the law."[41] This is undoubtedly an Italian translation of parts of the Hebrew blessings of the Torah.[42] The later Hebrew scribes of the *Sapientia* realised that these are indeed the blessings of the Torah, but developed them further to mimic the synagogal performance of these blessings:

> And then say: "Bless God, who is blessed," and his companion will answer: "Blessed be God, who is blessed for all eternity." And the master will say: "Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, who hath given us a Law of truth and planted eternal life in our midst, blessed art Thou O Lord, who giveth the Law."[43]

Here, the Jewish practitioner acts as if he is holding a Torah scroll, and the companion reacts in the way expected from the congregation in a synagogue. Thus, both Christian and Jewish practitioners are treating their book of *Centum regum* like a Torah scroll. This is even clearer in the case of the Hebrew versions, in which the practitioner is instructed to use parchment folios that were processed "for the sake of *STaM*" (*Sefer Torah, Tefillin, and Mezuzot*), a common practice among Jewish scribes.[44] Further evidence for this attitude towards the book appears in the last part of the Hebrew *Sapientia*, where we

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41 MS Florence Plut.89, sup.38, fol. 40r: "Et dapoi dica questa beneditione: benedicati dio benedeóto. Benedeóto sei tu dio l'dio nostro re de lo seculo lo quale ha dato a noi lege vera et vita eterna a posta dentro da noi. Benedeóto sei tu dio che desti la lege."

42 On the Torah benedictions and their talmudic background see, among others, Joseph Heinemann, *Prayer in the Talmud* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1977), 167–71.

43 MS New York 1870, fol. 108r:

ואח״כ [ואחר כד] תאמר ״ברכו את ד׳ המבורך,״ וחבירו יענה ״ברוך ה׳ המבורך לעולם ועד.״
והאומן יאמר ״בא״י אמ״ה [ברוך אתה יהוה אלהינו מלך העולם] אשר נתן לנו תורת אמת
וחיי עולם נטע בתוכינו בא״י [ברוך אתה יהוה] נותן התורה.״

44 MS New York 1870, fol. 2r:

והעורות יהיו מעובדים לשם קדושת סת״ם.

can find the instruction to keep the book in a silver box, as well as to love it "as [you love] your soul,"[45] along with the instruction to "observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success," an obvious allusion to the description of the Torah scroll in Joshua 1:8.[46]

As already mentioned, Alemanno was well aware of nigromancy, and he also referred to this kind of consecrated book in his writings. During the same time when the *Liber centum regum* was circulating in Italy, Alemanno wrote in his notebook:

> When he immerses himself in these things, then such a great efflux will come to him that he will be able to cause the spirit of God to descend upon him and hover above him and flutter about him all day. Not only that, but "the writing of God, the spirit of the living God" will descend upon the scroll to such a degree that the scroll will give him the power to work signs and wonders in the world. And such are the books called *sagratu* [i.e., *sacratus*, sacred], and all the incantations are the sacred words that come from evil spirits.[47]

The *sagratu* books are the consecrated books, which gain their power from the divine power that "descend[s] upon the scroll." The phrase "the writing of God," מכתב אלהים, is a clear reference to the Torah scroll. Thus, according to Alemanno, consecrated books receive their power "to work signs and wonders in the world" like Torah scrolls. This notion fits very well with the idea of treating the *Liber centum regum* as a Torah scroll, reciting the blessings of the Torah on it, and keeping it as though it were a Torah scroll.

A fourteenth-century recipe, which was written by a professional scribe who was probably from northern France, but circulated in other versions across

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45   MS New York 1870, fol. 110r:
ותשמור הספר הזה בטהרה תוך כלי כסף, ותאהבהו כנפשך, כי אין כמוה[ו] בכל הארץ.

46   MS New York 1870, fol. 2r:
ושמור לעשות ככל הכתוב בו, ואז תצליח את דרכיך ואז תשכיל.

47   Oxford, Bodleian Library, Reggio 23, fol. 164r:
וכשיהיה האדם בזמן מרובה עד ישוב החטוף(!) מורגל תקוע ושקוע באלה, הנה ישפע עליו
שפע רב עד כי יוכל להוריד על עצמו רוח אלהים מרחפת עליו וחופף עליו כל היום, והיה
כאלהים. ולא עוד, אלא שיוכל להוריד על המכתב, מכתב אלהים, רוח אלהים חיים עד יהיה
לספר ההוא כח לחדש אותות ומופתים בעולם. וכמו אלה נקראים ספר סגראטו, וכל הלחשים
הם דבורים סגראטו מרוחות רעות.
For a discussion of this passage, see Gal Sofer, "The Magical Cosmos of Yohanan Alemanno: Christian and Jewish Magic in the Service of a Kabbalist," *Jewish Thought* 2 (2020): 73–75, and the references there.

Western Europe and beyond, also uses the term that Alemanno used to refer to a consecrated book; namely, "*sagraṭu* book" [ספר סאגראטו]. Interestingly, it is a nigromantic recipe in which a catoptromantic practice is utilised to communicate with demons, attributed to one Rabbi Ṣadoq Ṣa'aluni:

> The operation of the flask from Rabbi Ṣadoq Ṣa'aluni z"l [may his memory be for a blessing], and he [the practitioner] can also do it with a cup. Take a flask full of water, clear spring water, and say: "Suseyah Req Naygil Refa'el Almini'al Seraq Nila'af Yehi'el Gadi'el, and by the name 'agaf nagaf agla'a, and by the name Šadday El Šadday, I adjure you by the name of the God of Heaven, and by the name of the One whose name lives and abides forever, and by the name of all heavenly angels, so that you will quickly come into this flask or into this cup, which is full of water, and show this child whomever I want, and talk to him and show him everything I wish to ask from you, without any fear or harm and without harming any human in the world, and tell him the truth about everything that he will ask you." And after they have come, make them swear upon their *sagraṭu* book [to fulfil] your wishes and [to come] any time you call them. And after they have fulfilled your wish, permit them to leave so that they will come again each time [you call them] by the name of Yah, living God. And according to the experienced one, it is clear(!).[48]

While the identity of the summoned entities is not made explicit, it is common to see demons as the addressees of this operation, in which a child is commonly used as a medium.[49] These entities, in any case, must swear by their consecrated book to come whenever the practitioner calls them and to fulfil

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48 New York, Library of the Jewish Theological Seminary 8114, fol. 36r:

מעשה הצלוחית מר׳ צָדוֹק צַאֲלוֹנִי ז״ל, ויכול גם כן לעשותו בכוס. קח צלוחית מלאה מים, מי מעין צלולים, ותאמר: סוּסְיָה רֵיק נַיגִיל רְפָאֵל אַלְמִינִיאַל סָרַק נִילַאַף יְהִיאֵל גַדִיאֵל, ובשם אַגַּף נַגַּף אַגְלָא ובשם שַדַּי אֵל שַדָי, משביע אני עליכם בשם אלהי השמים, ובשם חי וקיים שמו, ובשם כל מלאכי מעלה, שתבואו מהר תוך הצלוחית הזאת או תוך הכוס הזה שהוא מלאה מים, ותראו לזה הנער למי שארצה מצדי, ותדברו עמו ותראו אליו כל מה שאני רוצה לישאל מאתכם בלי פחד והיזק כלל, ולא מהיזק שום אדם שבעולם, ותגידו לו האמת מכל אשר ישאל מאתכם. ואחר שבאו תעשה שישבעו על ספר סַאגְרַאטוֹ שלהם לכל בקשתך ולכל שעה שתקראם. ואחר שעשו שאילתך תן להם רשות שילכו על מנת שיחזרו בכל פעם בשם יָה אלהים חיים. ולפי דעת המנוסה הוא ברור(!).

The word ברור was probably בדוק [tested (and proven)].

49 See Armand Delatte, *La catoptromancie grecque et ses dérivés* (Liège: Vaillant-Carmann, 1932), 23–24; Sarah Iles Johnston, "Charming Children: The Use of the Child in Ancient Divination," *Arethusa* 34 (2001): 97–117; Claire Fanger, "Virgin Territory: Purity and Divine Knowledge in Late Medieval Catoptromantic Texts," *Aries* 5 (2005): 200–224.

all his wishes. What precisely was this consecrated book? Considering other closely related recipes, which we will investigate shortly, this book could be the Bible, or potentially also other books of equivalent value to the practitioner.

4   Oath-Taking: Demons in the Magical Court

In everyday life, the sanctity of the scriptures—whether in the form of a Torah scroll, Pentateuch, or Gospel—was present in activities taking place outside the church or synagogue. As is well known, since at least the early Middle Ages, the holy book had been used in both official and unofficial courts as an object that was supposed to augment the legal and moral obligation of the one taking an oath upon it. Taking an oath upon an object, thus, suggests that this object—a holy book, though relics could also play the same role—has certain features that can enhance the bindingness of a contract. In late antique Babylonian Jewry, this legal terminology was harnessed for banishing demons and evil spirits, sometimes in the form of a vow-curse, when used in incantation bowls.[50]

In daily life, the taking of an oath upon a sacred object was, of course, dependent on the religious identity of the one who took it. This was important not to the one taking the oath, but rather to the one for whom it was made. Thus, while Christians often took oaths on Gospels and relics, Jews took oaths on a Torah scroll (in the most important cases) or a Pentateuch.[51] In the eyes of some practitioners of nigromancy, demons, too, had their own religious

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50   See Avigail Manekin-Bamberger, "The Vow-Curse in Ancient Jewish Texts," *Harvard Theological Review* 112 (2019): 340–57. See also Manekin-Bamberger, "Who Were the Jewish 'Magicians' behind the Aramaic Incantation Bowls?", *Journal of Jewish Studies* 71 (2020): 235–54. See also the use of a phrase on a late antique silver amulet that reflects a popular folk pledge according to Rivka Elitzur-Leiman, "Jewish Metal Amulets from Late Antiquity" [Hebrew] (PhD diss., Tel Aviv University, 2021), 83.

51   See Ilona Steimann, "'Das es dasselb puch sey': The Book as Protagonist in the Ceremony of the Jewry-Oath," *European Journal of Jewish Studies* 13 (2019): 77–102; Andreas Lehnertz, "The Erfurt Judeneid between Pragmatism and Ritual: Some Aspects of Christian and Jewish Oath-Taking in Medieval Germany," in *Ritual Objects in Ritual Contexts*, ed. Claudia D. Bergmann and Maria Stürzebecher (Jena: Bussert & Stadeler, 2020), 12–31. On the rabbinic response to Jewish oath-taking and the debate raised by such an act in medieval Europe, see Ephraim Shoham-Steiner, "'And in Most of Their Business Transactions They Rely on This': Some Reflections on Jews and Oaths in the Commercial Arena in Medieval Europe," in *On the Word of a Jew: Religion Reliability and the Dynamics of Trust*, ed. Nina Caputo and Mitchell B. Hart (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2019), 36–61.

affiliation. Thus, we can sometimes find adjurations that address this, using the relevant symbol to adjure the summoned demons:

> If you are Israelites, I adjure you by Moses Our Rabbi, peace be upon him, and by the holy Torah. And if you are Ishmaelites, I adjure you by Mohammad, son of Abdallah, and by the Qur'an. And if you are Christians, I adjure you by Isa, son of Maryam, and by the Gospel, so that you will come quickly and fulfil my wish and desire.[52]

In the case of taking an oath on a book as part of the nigromantic ritual, the identity of the consecrated book is not always clear. While in the case of the *Sapientia Salomonis*, the book is hand-made by the practitioner and he is instructed to treat it both implicitly and explicitly as a Torah scroll, the case for shorter recipes—such as the one we have discussed—is less obvious. Since the scribe used the possessive pronoun שלהם [of them, their] regarding the *sagraṭu* book, I tend to see this as the scribe's flexibility concerning the identity of the summoned demons: the practitioner is instructed to let the demons bring *their* consecrated book, whatever it may be.

The taking of an oath on a book as part of a ritual involving the summoning of demons was not unique to Latin or Hebrew texts. Stéphanie Vlavianos-Tomaszyk has studied several Greek catoptromantic recipes, some of which originated in fifteenth-century Italy, which share this element of making the summoned entities take an oath upon a book (as part of a feast), and she presented the variety of options when it comes to the identity of that book.[53] In one case (which Vlavianos-Tomaszyk named H1), the demons are asked to take an oath upon "*your* book of *your* testament" [τό βίβλίον σας τῆς διαθήκης σας].[54] Vlavianos-Tomaszky's interpretation of the word "testament" was probably inspired by another work that appears in the same fifteenth-century codex: *The Testament of Solomon*. That is, the demons are supposed to bring *The Testament of Solomon* and take an oath upon the story of their

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52 Ramat Gan, Bar-Ilan University Library 1222, fol. 143r:

אם אתם ישראל, משביע אני עליכון במשה רע״ה [רבינו עליו השלום] ובתורה הקדושה. ואם אתם ישמעאלים, מא״ע [משביע אני עליכון] במחמד בן עבדולא ובקורען. ואם אתם נוצרים, מא״ע [משביע אני עליכון] באיסא בן מרים ובאנג׳יל, שתבואו כהרף ותעשו שאלתי ובקשתי.

53 Stéphanie Vlavianos-Tomaszyk, "Les démons se mettent à table: Les festins démoniaques dans les rituels magiques byzantins et post-byzantins (xvᵉ–xviiiᵉ s.)," *Medioevo Greco* 12 (2012): 313–35.

54 I have consulted the text that was published by Armand Delatte and the manuscript itself in London, British Library, Harley 5596, fol. 38r. See Delatte, *Anecdota Atheniensia*, vol. 1 (Liège: Vaillant-Carmann, 1927), 430.

submission.[55] While this may surely be the case, I suggest reading the word διαθήκης as pointing to the scriptures (e.g., Καινή Διαθήκη [New Testament]). This does not mean that "the book of Solomon," whether this is the *Testament* or not, was not used for such purposes. In a fifteenth-century Latin text, we read about a *Librum consecratum*, in which King Solomon sealed all the [demonic] kings and rulers.[56] In a later nineteenth-century Hebrew recipe, we read about the same feast and oath-taking occurring as a part of a catoptromantic procedure (this time, an oiled palm is used as the reflective surface), with the mention of "the book of King Solomon":

> And when they come to you and [the child] sees them, the child should be ordered to say to them, "peace be upon you," and then he should tell them to bring the [demonic] king and his armies, and then the child [should] tell them to bring a lamb, and they will slaughter it, roast it, and eat it. And after they have finished eating, the child should tell them, "I want to ask you about a certain thing, which is so and so," and they will tell him, "Ask." And he should tell them, "Bring the book of King Solomon, peace be upon him," and they will go to bring the book. And then the child should tell them, "Take an oath to me upon it to tell me the truth and do not lie to me." And then they will put their hands on the book and take an oath upon it. And after they have taken the oath to him, he should ask them about everything he wishes to ask, and they will answer everything, and they will not hide [anything] from him.[57]

The precise identity of "the book of King Solomon" remains uncertain, but an earlier Hebrew recipe from the fifteenth century differentiates between the Solomonic authority and the book itself, providing an explicit identification of the book: "And when they come, order him(!) to bring a throne and sit on it, and

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55   Vlavianos-Tomaszyk, "Les démons," 328.

56   ms Coxe 25, 25: "Cum omnibus supradictis sigillis Salomon in suum librum omnes reges et imperatores sigillavit qui dicitur librum consecratum." On this important codex and its content, see Julien Véronèse, *L'Almandal et l'Almadel latins au Moyen Âge: Introduction et éditions critiques* (Florence: SISMEL—Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2012), 119–25.

57   Tel Avivi, Gross Family Collection, B.294, 70r–v:
ובעת שיבואו אליך ויראה אותם יצוה לנער שיאמר להם שלום עליכם ואח״כ יאמר להם
הביאו המלך וחילותיו ואח״כ אמר להם הנער שיביאו שה אחד וישחטוהו ויצלוהו ויאכלוהו
ואחר אשר יגמרו אכילתם יאמר להם הנער אני רוצה לשאול מכם על דבר פלוני שהוא כך
וכך והם אומרים לו תשאל ויאמר להם הביאו ספר של שלמה הע״ה והם ילכו ויביאו הספר
ואח״כ יאמר להם הנער השבעו לי בו שתגידו לי האמת ולא תשקרו עלי ואח״כ ישימו ידיהם
על הספר וישבעו בו ואחר שישבעו לו ישאל להם על כל מה שירצה לשאול והם ישיבו אותו
על כל דבר ודבר ולא יכחדו ממנו.

also to bring a table with a golden cloth on it, and to bring [the] twenty-four [i.e., the Bible] and take an oath upon it and upon the seal of Solomon to tell the truth."[58] In a sixteenth-century recipe from the Cairo Genizah, we find another imitation of the courtly scene in which the demons are asked to bring a Torah scroll, open it at the Ten Commandments, and take an oath to tell the truth upon the word אנכי ([I am], the beginning of the Ten Commandments), as Jews often did in Jewish oath-taking ceremonies.[59] This can also be found in a seventeenth-century Hebrew manuscript of Italian provenance in which a servant of the king of demons is ordered to bring a Torah scroll from a synagogue and take an oath upon it.[60] In another Greek recipe (which Vlavianos-Tomaszyk named B3), only the word "book" appears: this book is not identified, but it is described as having been brought by παπάς ὑποστατικός, an apostate pope. In light of our discussion, we can assume that the scribe might have been thinking about the Gospel, brought by a clerical nigromancer.[61]

There is good reason to discuss those catoptromantic nigromantic practices in the context of the *Sapientia Salomonis* and the *Liber consecrationum* discussed above since they undoubtedly share histories.[62] They often circulated together, shared formulas, and were written and practised in related intellectual milieus. In the case of *Sapientia Salomonis*, it is interesting to see how far the oath-ceremony scene goes:

And turn your face to the east, and say: "Where is Oriens the king and his friends?" and he will answer you and say: "Here I am, here I am." And say:

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58   Gideon Bohak, ed., *A Fifteenth-Century Manuscript of Jewish Magic* (Los Angeles: Cherub Press, 2014), 1:134:

וכשיבאו אז תצוהו שיביא כסא וישב עליו ושיביא ג"כ [גם כן] שולחן ועליו בגד זהב ויביא עשרים וארבע, וישבע עליו ועל חותם שלמה להגיד האמת.

I also consulted the manuscript itself, and my reading is slightly different. See New York, New York Public Library, Heb. 190, fol. 52v.

59   This recipe from the Cairo Genizah was published in Peter Schäfer and Shaul Shaked, eds., *Magische Texte aus der Kairoer Geniza III* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999), 89–106.

ואחר שאכל תאמר לו שיביא ס"ת [ספר תורה] ושיבקש העשרת הדברות וישישבע במלת אנכי לומר האמת כל מה שתשאל ממנ[ו].

60   See Jerusalem, National Library of Israel, Fr. 1030A, fol. 69v:

ואח"כ [ואחר כך] יאמר לאותו המשרת לך לבית הכנסת וקח ספר תורה ושים ידך עליו והשבע לי לעשות את כל מה שאני רוצה. וכשיראה אותו המשרת נשבע לו לעשות חפצו יאמר הנני משביעך בשם יהוה שתאמר לי האמת מכל הצריך אלי למען השבועה שנשבעת לי.

61   The association of clerics with nigromancy and their contribution to the diffusion of nigromantic texts are well known. See Richard Kieckhefer's "clerical underworld" in Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 151–75.

62   See chapter 11 of Sofer, "Solomonic Magic."

"[…] and take this book and this staff and grant it(!) the power that is written in it, as I adjured you." [And] he will take the book and the staff, and they will all stand in one place, consulting, and they will put the power in the book and return it to the master. And adjure this king again with all of his companions, [so] that they will take an oath of allegiance to be forever willing to obey your commands, and they will take an oath upon [the name of] the life of the worlds [i.e., God].[63]

"The power that is written in it" is the power to summon demons and coerce them. This is clear from a prayer that is recited before the demonic ritual, in which the practitioner asks God to

give this book thy kindness so that it will have the necessary virtue—that is, so that it will prevent [or imprison] the ability of the air and the devils from hell, willingly or unwillingly, so they will obey humans' wishes—[and] when I wish to open the book, I will be able to congregate and scatter them, and with them I will be able to do all that the book commands.[64]

While the explicit identity of "the book of King Solomon" used in nigromantic practices often remains ambiguous in the sources, when a specific book is mentioned, it is mostly the Bible. Without mentioning the Bible, the *Sapientia Salomonis* combines the concept of *imitatio Bibliae* with oath-taking practices. This results in the practitioner not only holding a magical book that is ritually treated as a Torah scroll, but also using it as such in a binding ritual "to congregate and scatter" demons.

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63   MS New York 1870, fol. 110r:

והתהפוך(!) פניך לצד מזרח ותאמר: איה אורייִנאס המלך מזרח וחבריו. וישיב אליך ויאמר:
הנני הנני. ותאמר: ״[…] וקח הספר הזה והמטה הזה ותן לו כח הכתוב בו כאשר השבעתי
אותך.״ [ו]הוא [י]קח הספר והמטה ויעמדו במקום א׳ כולם יעשו עצה וישימו הכח בספר
ויחזרו אותו לאומן. ותחזור ותשביעהו המלך הנ״ל עם כל חבורתו ישבעו לו בנאמנות שלעולם
יהי[ו] מוכנים לעשות מצותיך והם יעשו שבועה בחיי העולמים.

Oriens is the name of one of the four demon kings in many nigromantic texts.

64   MS New York 1870, fol. 107v:

שתתן חסדיך ע״ז [על זה] הספר שיה[יה] לו כל הסגולה הצריכה לו דהיינו שיעצור יכולת
האויר ושטנים מגהנם הם(!) מרצונם והן בע״כ [בעל כורחם] שישמעוהו לרצון האנשים
שכשארצה לפתוח הספר אוכל לקבצם ולפזרם ואוכל לעשות מהם כמו שהס[פר] מצוה.

5   Conclusion

Religious objects are often treated as though they have the ability to change human lives. Their sacredness is often regarded as transferable, and some practitioners seem to imitate elements of such objects in order to obtain this kind of sacredness to make their procedures effective. Moreover, practitioners often saw themselves as agents of biblical rites and knowledge, continuing an antique practice as links of a long chain of biblical prophetic figures. If an object mimicked the Bible, this also allowed the practitioners to grant it sacredness, whether its source was the Mass and the church altar or the Torah blessings and the synagogal performance. These two distinguished aspects of *imitatio Bibliae*—imitating a biblical figure and mimicking the Bible as an object—were strongly connected to the notion of nigromancy as a powerful prophetic tool used not only to fulfil the practitioner's everyday wishes, but also to redeem the world.[65]

By exploring the multifaceted nature of *imitatio Bibliae* and underscoring its function as a device to enhance the efficacy of magical rituals by imitating both the physicality of the Bible and biblical figures, I have argued that this approach served to increase the credibility of the rituals performed, reinforce the practitioner's authority, and strengthen their connection to a deeper, more profound prophetic tradition. Drawing on an array of sources from different periods, but a shared textual tradition, including Hebrew and non-Hebrew texts, has revealed that this imitation not only involved the literal replication of the form and use of the scriptures, but also extended to embodying the roles of biblical figures, casting the practitioner in a prophetic role. These practices, deeply ingrained in the cultural and religious fabric, had the power to create a sense of continuity with ancient and divine wisdom, bestowing upon their practitioners the requisite authority to perform them. This augmented the credibility of texts already regarded as the work of biblical figures, potentially intensifying the irritation felt by the Church and the authorities.

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Translating Race

Hebrew Victorians and Benjamin Disraeli

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Abstract

A trend was forming in the Hebrew literary field in Eastern and Central Europe in the late nineteenth century: Hebrew writers, translators, editors, and readers were being drawn to Victorian literary works depicting Jews and the Holy Land. The first Hebrew translation of a Victorian literary work, Benjamin Disraeli's 1847 novel *Tancred*, was released in Warsaw in 1884, instigating a public debate over the definition of Jews as a race and the role that literary activity could play in transforming political realities. By examining the Hebrew translation of Disraeli's *Tancred*, this article lays the foundations for a broader study of Hebrew Victorianism in early twentieth-century Eastern European Jewish literature and Zionist thought. It argues that the first Hebrew versions of Victorian literary works participated in the introduction of a concept of race into modern Jewish thought, thereby showcasing the Zionist ambivalence towards the construction of Jewish national identity as a racial identity.

1 Introduction: Hebrew Victorians

Several Victorian literary works were translated into Hebrew between the 1880s and the 1910s, a period of transition from the Hebrew Haskalah (the Enlightenment movement in modern Hebrew literature) to the *teḥi-yyah* (the renaissance movement in modern Hebrew literature). In 1884, the

Minsk-born Hebrew poet Yehuda Leib Levin translated Benjamin Disraeli's 1847 novel *Tancred*, possibly relying on existing German and Russian translations rather than on the English original,[1] and in 1893, the Hebrew poet and editor David Frishman—who criticised Levin's translation of *Tancred* shortly after its publication—translated George Eliot's 1876 novel *Daniel Deronda*.[2] Moreover, between 1904 and the late 1910s, a number of works by Oscar Wilde and Charles Dickens were translated into Hebrew by the celebrated Hebrew writer Yosef Haim Brenner and others.[3] The names of Victorian novelists frequently appeared in the Hebrew press during those years, creating the impression of a strong affinity between Victorian literature and Eastern European Hebrew culture.

Multiple factors contributed to the Victorian trend in late nineteenth-century Hebrew literature, from the general growth in the Hebrew translation industry in the late nineteenth century to the particular set of interests displayed by Jewish writers and readers: sea travel, biblical tales, and Jewish-Christian relations.[4] While this article will not account for all (or even most) of these factors, it seeks to lay the foundations for a future study of "Hebrew Victorians": Jewish thinkers between the 1880s and 1910s who believed that Victorian writing needed to be incorporated into Hebrew literature.

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1   Using existing translations into other languages and abbreviating novels were common practices in late nineteenth-century Hebrew literature. See Robert Singerman, *Jewish Translation History: A Bibliography of Bibliographies and Studies* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2002).

2   See Mikhal Dekel, "'Who Taught This Foreign Woman about the Ways and Lives of the Jews?': George Eliot and the Hebrew Renaissance," *ELH* 74 (2007): 783–98.

3   In 1906, Brenner founded the Maṣada publishing house in London and established and edited its journal *Ha-me'orer*, sustaining it for two years thereafter. The journal published translations of some of Oscar Wilde's prose poems, which were produced either by Brenner himself, who sometimes signed his work using different pseudonyms, or by A. Sheffer, the joint pseudonym chosen by the co-translators of Wilde's *Salome*, Shmuel Perlman and Abraham Robinson. See Yiṣḥaq Baqon, *Brener ha-ṣa'ir: ḥayyaw we-yeṣirotaw šel Brener ad le-hofa'at "Ha-me'orer" be-london* (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1975). Another Wilde translator, the Hebrew pedagogue Y.Ḥ. Tevyov, also translated Charles Dickens's *The Pickwick Papers* in the 1910s.

4   For a discussion of the Hebrew literary landscape and the meta-discussions of original and translated writing in it, see Dan Miron, *When Loners Come Together. A Portrait of Hebrew Literature at the Turn of the Twentieth Century* [Hebrew] (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1987) and Ken Frieden, *Travels in Translation: Sea Tales at the Source of Jewish Fiction* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2016). For insight into the Victorian preoccupation with Jewish-Christian relations, sea travel, and biblical themes, see Nadia Valman, *The Jewess in Nineteenth-Century British Literary Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) and Jessica Duffin Wolfe, "Distant Views: *Daniel Deronda*, Illustrated Travel Books, and the Spectre of Palestine," *Victorian Literature and Culture* 44 (2016): 577–606.

These were critical years in the development of the Zionist movement; years in which the idea of Jewish mass migration to Palestine for the creation of a Jewish nation-state began taking shape. The translation of Victorian literature offered an opportunity to explore Zionist ideas, with Disraeli's work holding particular appeal, as he was known for praising the Jewish connection to the biblical land of Israel which at that time was known as Ottoman Palestine in his literary works and political speeches.

Levin, who was Disraeli's first Hebrew translator, was a member of the *ḥibbat ṣiyyon* literary movement, whose poets produced elaborate paeans to Jerusalem and which played a part in the evolution of early Zionist thought.[5] Levin admired Disraeli for allegedly staying loyal to his Jewish origins despite his conversion to Christianity at a young age. Like other Eastern European Jewish intellectuals, he believed that Disraeli's positive depictions of Jews in his fiction and public sermons had a positive influence on the non-Jewish perception of Jews in Britain and beyond.[6] Other Eastern European Jewish intellectuals, such as Frishman, disagreed with Levin, deeming Disraeli's conversion to Christianity and his idea that Jews were a pure, superior, and unassimilable race to be deplorable. When the Hebrew translation of *Tancred* was published in 1883, Frishman censured it in a long review-essay, rejecting the Victorian discourse about the Jewish "race" and attacking Levin for disseminating it.

As Levin's attraction to Disraeli's work stemmed not only from Disraeli's idealisation of Jews and Jerusalem in *Tancred*, but also from the novel's explicit critique of greed, he reacted to Frishman's review-essay with indignance. A member of the *ḥibbat ṣiyyon* movement, Levin was also a self-identified socialist and one of Karl Marx's first Hebrew translators.[7] He believed that Disraeli's novel was worth translating for the way it combined positive messages about Jews and negative messages about the British aristocracy. While Disraeli was no Marxist, Levin read him as such. He thus defended Hebrew readers' right to be exposed to Disraeli's fiction in his translator's prefaces to the first and second parts of the Hebrew translation of *Tancred*. The second part was released after Frishman had published his negative review of the first, and Levin responded to Frishman's review in its preface.

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5   The *ḥibbat ṣiyyon* movement also promoted the idea of Jewish settlement in Palestine, yet its main activity was textual. See Alter Druyanow, *Ketavim le-toldot ḥibbat ṣiyyon we-yišuw ereṣ-yiśraʾel*, 3 vols. (Odessa: 1918 [vol. 1]; Tel Aviv, 1925–1932 [vols. 2–3]).

6   Things were more complicated than this. See Todd M. Endelman and Tony Kushner, eds., *Disraeli's Jewishness* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2002).

7   For more on Levin as one of the first Hebrew translators of Karl Marx's work, see Eliyahu Stern, *Jewish Materialism: The Intellectual Revolution of the 1870s* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2018).

In what follows, I will tell the story behind the Hebrew version of *Tancred* in order to illustrate how the translation of Victorian novels into Hebrew in late nineteenth-century Eastern European Jewish culture facilitated discussions of Jewish identity in general and of Jewish racial identity in particular. I will argue that an examination of Frishman's review offers a glimpse into a moment in European Jewish intellectual history in which the modern notion of race did not exist. Levin could not settle on a single Hebrew translation of the English term "race," whereas Frishman believed that the idea that Jews were a race—rather than a nation or a culturally connected group—endangered the Jewish collective that had been constructed through texts. I will show how Levin and Frishman's exchange touches on the very definition of Jews as biologically distinct, which played a pivotal role in the interlinked histories of Europe and Palestine in the twentieth century.

Neither Levin nor Frishman could anticipate how both Zionism—as a movement that considered all Jews, even those with only a loose connection to Jewish textual culture, potential members of the movement—and Nazism—which orchestrated the murder of millions of Jews and other minorities in Europe in the early 1940s–would employ the notion of race for their political purposes. Yet Frishman foreshadowed more famous reactions to Disraeli's impact on the spawning of modern race thinking, notably Hannah Arendt's analysis of his persona in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. This article will end with a brief discussion of Arendt's claims about cultural assimilation, religious conversion, and the modern notion of race. Yet my goal here is modest. I will attempt to make three claims about Jewish intellectual history through an exploration of the translation of *Tancred*:

(1)   The Victorian trend in late nineteenth-century Hebrew literature should be further mined for its meaningful effects on the evolution of the Zionist movement and the geo-political change that was facilitated by this multifaceted movement.

(2)   Attention should be paid to nineteenth-century Jewish thinkers such as David Frishman, who deemed the notion that Jews were a race reductive and dangerous. Such thinkers anticipated later debates on the ramifications of dividing the world into racial groups, fighting against Zionist thinkers who adopted the notion of Jews as a race either readily or passively.

(3)   Finally, translated literature plays a paradoxical role in modern Jewish history. On the one hand, translation has always enabled writers, publishers, and readers to open themselves up to what is foreign to them. On the other, it has often served as a site of self-centred and exclusionary discussions of Jewish collective identity, as in the case of the Hebrew *Tancred*.

2   Disraeli's *Tancred*: Judaism and Christianity in Translation

The eponymous protagonist of Disraeli's *Tancred*—published serially in England in 1847 and 1848—is a young English lord named after a crusader ancestor. Eager to get away from what he sees as a spiritually deprived England, Tancred travels to the Eastern Mediterranean sometime in the first half of the nineteenth century. His goal is to experience spiritual revelation, and experience it he does. On Mount Sinai, an angel tells Tancred that he should establish "theocratic equality" across the world, sending the young English aristocrat on a mission to create political and theological bonds with locals in and around Jerusalem. He befriends a Lebanese prince, whom he recruits for this mission, but the pair soon face multiple obstacles: Tancred is abducted before falling ill and then in love with the daughter of a wealthy Jewish banker from Damascus, while the Lebanese prince turns out to be fickle, and theocratic equality is never achieved.

The very last sentence of *Tancred* contains an announcement about Tancred's parents' arrival in the Eastern Mediterranean—an ending that prompted the literary critic Edward Said to interpret Disraeli's novel as a reflection of British imperialist aspirations in the nineteenth century. In some circles today, *Tancred* is mainly known for providing the epigraph to Said's 1978 book *Orientalism*: "The East is a career."[8] In Disraeli's novel, this statement is made by a minor character, a British aristocrat, during a dinner party in which the future of the British Empire is discussed. Tellingly, like many other sections of dialogue and entire scenes that were omitted by *Tancred*'s Hebrew translator, it does not appear in the Hebrew version of the book.

By today's standards, Levin's translation of *Tancred* would be considered an adaptation: not only did he abbreviate the novel, but he also probably used a German or Russian translation in order to produce the Hebrew version.[9] Levin came up with a new title for the novel, turning the English title *Tancred; Or, The New Crusade* into the Hebrew *Nes la-goyim, o Tanqred*, which means "a banner to the nations, or Tancred." The new title alludes to Isaiah 5:26, which describes God's use of the people of Israel to set an example to all other peoples ("a banner to the nations"). The changed title aptly represents Levin's style in translating *Tancred*, which downplays the novel's non-Jewish themes by

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8   Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), epigraph.

9   Levin's was a common practice. See Svetlana Natkovich, "Elisha Ben Abuya, the Hebrew Faust: On the First Hebrew Translation of *Faust* within the Setting of the *Maskilic* Change in Self-Perception," *Naharaim* 8 (2014): 48–73, and Gideon Toury, "Introduction," in Robert Singerman, *Jewish Translation History: A Bibliography of Bibliographies and Studies* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2002), ix–xxxi.

eliminating scenes taking place in British aristocratic homes. Levin's adaptation foregrounds the novel's Jewish characters, thereby transforming *Tancred* from a story about Britain and its imperialist aspirations, as Said interpreted it, into a novel about monotheism and its Jewish roots.

As a member of the *ḥibbat ṣiyyon* literary movement, Levin dedicated his literary career to representations of Jerusalem. His attraction to Disraeli's *Tancred* hinged on the novel's idealisation of both Jews and Jerusalem, as well as on Disraeli's Jewish ancestry and his critique of greed. Put into context, Levin's choice of the novel and his translation style seem unremarkable. The Hebrew literary field of the nineteenth century produced many translations that would today be perceived as "unfaithful," with changed titles that matched the purported needs of Jewish readers.[10]

Levin's translation followed the Hebrew literary norms of its time, relying on the stylistic and thematic conventions known as the *meliṣa* or the *šibbuṣ*: collages of verses from the Hebrew Bible. The Hebrew translation of *Tancred* combines biblical grammar and syntax with later forms of Hebrew, which itself contributes to the novel's rebranding as a Jewish-centric work. Levin's biblical Hebrew shifts some of the novel's emphases, with the translation of the notion of "theocratic equality" serving as an edifying case in point. In his reading of *Tancred*, Jon Parry suggests that "theocratic equality" should be understood to be emblematic of popular notions of the origins of monotheism that were circulating in Victorian England in Disraeli's time.[11] Victorians showed an avid interest in the Hebrew Bible, viewing it through an evolutionary lens. They were interested in how it told the story of a small group of Israelites—forebears of the Jews of their time—who changed the course of history by adopting the idea of worshipping a single deity.[12] This evolutionary explanation appealed to Victorians as part of the rise of Darwinism in the life and social sciences. As Parry shows, one of the most popular historical books in Victorian England was H.H. Milman's *History of the Jews*, which described Jews in evolutionary terms, arguing that the Israelites had been an ancient Eastern Mediterranean tribe ruled by sheikhs. Milman dubs Jews an "unmingled race"—an idea that Disraeli reiterates in both his fiction and his nonfiction.

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10   For a discussion of the Hebrew literary landscape in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, see Miron, *When Loners Come Together* [Hebrew]. For a discussion of the question of faithfulness in Jewish translation history, see Naomi Seidman, *Faithful Renderings: Jewish-Christian Difference and the Politics of Translation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006).

11   Jon Parry, "Disraeli, the East and Religion: Tancred in Context," *English Historical Review* 132, no. 556 (2017): 570–604.

12   Parry, "Disraeli, the East and Religion," 585.

In Levin's translation of *Tancred*, ideas about the history of monotheism and the so-called Jewish race are explained in biblical terms. In the scene with the angel on Mount Sinai in the original English text, the angel says to Tancred, "Announce the sublime doctrine of theocratic equality. Fear not, faint not, falter not. Obey the impulse of thine own spirit, and find a ready instrument in every human being.'"[13] In Levin's translation, a Hebrew phrase from Numbers 15:16 replaces the words "theocratic equality." In Hebrew transliteration, the phrase reads *torah aḥat u-mišpat eḥad le-khol bney ha-ʾelohim*, which translates back into English as "one law and one rule to all of God's children" or "one law and one ordinance for all of God's sons."[14] Levin's translation shifts the emphasis from equality among those who worship a single deity to equality before God's law. In the book of Numbers, the idea of "one law and one manner" relates to God's expectation that both the Israelites and the people who dwell among them will abide by the same law that was dictated to Moses. A Hebrew reader in the nineteenth century could thus understand Disraeli's idea of "theocratic equality" as fictionalising the biblical promise to the Israelites that they would be "a banner to the nations." This represents a departure from the original novel, which has largely been read as conveying a message about the hope of a universal Christendom.[15]

Levin's translator's preface makes it clear that he sought to downplay both the Christian resonances and the evolutionary ardour of *Tancred*. The preface includes a biography of Disraeli in which Levin claims Disraeli for the Jewish people while minimising his baptism. Levin dedicates a sizeable portion of the preface to a discussion of Disraeli's conversion, portraying Disraeli's father, Isaac D'Israeli (the son used a different spelling of the name), as a key figure in the synagogue he attended. In his retelling of Disraeli's conversion story, Levin describes Isaac D'Israeli as a belligerent character who had multiple arguments with the Jewish congregation to which he belonged until he decided to leave it and have his children baptised. In his translator's preface, Levin dwells more on this internal Jewish feud than on any other factor that may have led to Disraeli's baptism, least of all the question of social mobility among non-Anglican minorities in Victorian England. He also highlights Disraeli's young age at the time of his baptism, intimating that he was too young to make a conscious independent decision about leaving the Jewish fold as he was only twelve years old at the time. Finally, Levin suggests that Disraeli never fully relinquished his Jewishness for a twofold reason: his Jewish ancestry left an

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13   Benjamin Disraeli, *Tancred; Or, the New Crusade* (London: John Lane, 1927), 393.

14   Yehuda Leib Levin, trans., *Nes la-goyim, o Tanqred* (Warsaw, 1883–1884), 1:144.

15   Parry, "Disraeli, the East, and Religion," 144.

indelible mark on him and he accepted the purportedly prevalent idea in the England of his time according to which Judaism and Christianity were one continuous religion:

> And the child [Disraeli] entered the Christian covenant at a time when faiths could no longer be distinguished from one another. But the sign of a covenant made in flesh and blood has left a great mark on his soul and spirit.[16]

Arguing that Disraeli converted at a time in which Judaism and Christianity were no longer seen as adverse religions, Levin situates Jewish identity in the body. He alludes to the rite of circumcision, stressing the way in which the Jewish male identity requires the drawing of blood and the mutilating of flesh. Levin's statement raises the question of Jewishness as a racial category, then implicitly answers it by treating a convert as Jewish. His admiration for Disraeli runs through his translator's preface, premised as it is on a dismissal of Disraeli's conversion. The same admiration would later come to characterise many Jewish intellectuals' approach to Disraeli, especially in early Zionist thought.

3   Disraeli in the Hebrew Imagination: before and after Levin's Translation

In the years that followed Levin's translation of *Tancred*, Disraeli became a revered figure among Zionist thinkers.[17] Operating mainly in Eastern and Central Europe in the early twentieth century, the Zionist thinkers who celebrated Disraeli viewed him as a historical figure who nevertheless impacted the world in which they themselves were acting. They embraced Disraeli's definition of Jewishness as a racial identity rather than a religious or cultural one and were unbothered by his conversion to Christianity, as many of them also turned their backs on Jewish traditional life. In Disraeli's biography, Zionist thinkers found proof of the Jewish potential to exercise political power, particularly lauding his decision to purchase Suez Canal shares for Britain—a move that they perceived as part of the process that led up to the Balfour Declaration of 1917.[18]

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16   Levin, preface to *Nes la-goyim, o Tanqred*, my translation.
17   Endelman and Kushner, *Disraeli's Jewishness*, 4.
18   Endelman and Kushner, 4.

The Zionist admiration for Disraeli also manifested itself in the literary field. In the 1920s, the Russian writer and Zionist politician Vladimir Jabotinsky called for as many of Disraeli's novels as possible to be translated into Yiddish and Hebrew.[19] On the other side of the Zionist political spectrum, the socialist Zionist leader Haim Arlosoroff produced a detailed and poetic description of his experience of looking at Disraeli's statue in London after attending a Zionist conference there:

> There he stands: the great Jew […] who, as an outsider, said to a society that rejected the outsider […] I shall conquer you! […] The clean-shaven Jew […] whose willpower propelled him to become Great Britain's prime minister remained Jewish and an artist.[20]

However, Jabotinsky's and Arlosoroff's deferential approaches to Disraeli differed significantly from earlier reactions to him in the Jewish literary field.

Around the time when Levin began translating *Tancred*, the bilingual Hebrew and Yiddish writer Sholem Yankev Abramovitsh (better known by the name of the fictional figure he created, "Mendele the Book-Peddler" or Mendele Mokher Sforim) published both the Hebrew essay "National Love and Its Consequences" and his Yiddish novel *The Travels of Benjamin the Third*, both of which were initially released in 1878. In the Hebrew essay, Abramovitsh criticises Disraeli's idea of Jews as a racially distinct group, deploying Disraeli's doctrine of race to mock the concept of national self-love and warn against the adoption of race-based definitions of religious and ethnic groups. Abramovitsh's essay likens Disraeli's positive statements about Jews to anti-Jewish statements, which were familiar to the Eastern and Central European Jews of his time. Abramovitsh argues that there is little difference between Christian preachers who tell their congregants that the Jewish population in their country is growing more rapidly—because Jews are allegedly immune to diseases—and Disraeli's claim that Jews are a pure race. Quoting Disraeli directly, though partially, Abramovitsh repeats the ideas that he voices in his fiction:

> To quote Disraeli, "the unmixed race of the human species" is multiplying […] and to remove this awful offence, one scheme remains

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19   Ze'ev Jabotinsky, "Books" [Hebrew], *Project Ben Yehuda*, https://benyehuda.org/read/1676, accessed October 2022.

20   Ḥayim Arlozorov and Mikhtevey Arlozorov, "Letters" [Hebrew], *Project Ben Yehuda*, https://benyehuda.org/read/7582, accessed October 2022.

available: […] to send Israel back to the land of their fathers, where they will no longer drink the milk of the nations or eat the peoples of the world.[21]

Using both irony and hyperbole, Abramovitsh seeks to draw attention to the extreme nature of Disraeli's ideas. With unmistakable ridicule, he describes the British novelist as unenlightened, scorning not only his racial doctrine, but also his idea that Jews should (and could) be "sent back" to the land of Israel.[22]

When he published his essay, Abramovitsh could not have known what traction Disraeli's ideas were to have among Jews and non-Jews alike. Yet as a popular writer, his position reverberated across the Jewish intellectual field in Eastern and Central Europe in the 1880s. In *The Travels of Benjamin the Third*, Abramovitsh ridicules Disraeli further, incorporating references to him into the novel and its title. As Dan Miron and Anita Norich have pointed out, the eponymous protagonist of *The Travels of Benjamin the Third* represents two Jewish travellers named Benjamin, Benjamin of Tudela (a twelfth-century explorer) and the nineteenth-century explorer known as Benjamin the Second.[23] At the same time, Benjamin the Third is an inverted image of Disraeli, "the exponent of British imperialist mobility."[24]

While Abramovitsh explores the limits of imperialism in "National Love and Its Consequences," in *The Travels of Benjamin the Third*, he mocks its intellectual roots. The novel tells the story of two Jewish men who are so enamoured with both Enlightenment and Romantic ideals that they embark on a journey of geographical exploration to find the lost tribes of Israel. Their journey mirrors colonialist desires and the linked Enlightenment imperative to know the world. It equally betrays their sense of Romantic nationalism, as they seek to recover their purportedly lost origins. The travellers repeatedly fail both to enlighten themselves and to find their national origins, with their competing ideals becoming one of Abramovitsh's prime objects of satire. In its time, the novel served as a cautionary tale against both imperialism and the adoption

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21   Šolem Yanqev Abramoviṣ, "Aḥwah le'umit we-toledoteyhah," *Ha-Meliṣ* 6 (September 1878), my translation.

22   In his study of Abramovitsh's Yiddish fiction, Dan Miron notes that Abramovitsh "was never swept away by the nationalistic trends of the 1880s." See Miron, *A Traveler Disguised: The Rise of Modern Yiddish Fiction in the Nineteenth Century* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1996), 107.

23   Dan Miron and Anita Norich, "The Politics of Benjamin III: Intellectual Significance and Its Formal Correlatives in Sh.Y. Abramovitsh's *Masoes Benyomin Hashlishi*," *The Field of Yiddish* 4 (1980): 1–115.

24   Miron and Norich, "The Politics of Benjamin III," 1–30.

of any reductive perception of Jewish identity. In Abramovitsh's view, Jews had to worry not only about universalising their identity (the Enlightenment's vision), but also about racialising it (the nationalist agenda).

Levin's translation of *Tancred* veered from Abramovitsh's critique, inching closer to the later wave of Zionist admiration for Disraeli. Yet Levin has manipulated the novel to such an extent that his translation does not reproduce the original's stance on race and empire. Still, the translation may have acted as one catalyst among many for reconsidering Abramovitsh's position against Disraeli in the Hebrew press in the 1880s, leading—alongside a growing canon of Zionist writings—to widespread admiration for Disraeli among Jewish intellectuals from Jabotinsky to Arlosoroff. One of Levin's readers, the Hebrew writer David Frishman, sided with Abramovitsh (rather than Levin and the later Zionists) in ascribing danger to the adoption of Disraeli's ideas about race in general and Jews in particular.

4   "All Is Race": Frishman on Disraeli

Frishman published his virulent review of Levin's translation of *Tancred* shortly after the first volume of the translation was released. While Frishman would later become a prominent critic, translator, and editor in the Hebrew literary press, he was unknown to most Hebrew readers in 1884. He attacked Levin for his style, which he associated with the lax translation norms of Levin's literary generation, and for his misrepresentation of Disraeli's ideas about race, particularly in the translator's preface to the first part of the Hebrew *Tancred*. Frishman joined Abramovitsh in ridiculing Disraeli and the notion that Jews belonged to a superior race, yet his review takes the possible ramifications of circulating Disraeli's thought among Hebrew readers far more seriously. The primary question that Frishman raises in the review touches on the possible consequences of limiting Jewish identity to a biological category. To him, it seemed urgent to promote a version of Jewish identity that placed a Hebrew textual tradition at its heart. Thus, in the concluding part of the review, he argues against the very relevance of a novel like *Tancred* to Hebrew readers in Eastern Europe in the 1880s, going so far as to suggest that it should never have appeared in Hebrew translation in the first place. Frishman ostensibly assumes that the Hebrew readers of his time had to be educated on matters related to identity in a thoughtful, even vigilant manner, connecting literary consumption and the European Jewish quest for consolation against the backdrop of existential external and internal threats: persecution, assimilation, and mass emigration. In later literary essays and reviews, Frishman makes the same

assumption, praising art in general and literature in particular for their poten-
tial to offer collective and individual solace.[25]

As Frishman found no artistic merit in Disraeli's *Tancred*, he dismissed the
novel not only for political reasons, but also for aesthetic ones. His review
consists of textual analysis through which he draws attention to the lack
of consistency in Levin's work as a translator, and it specifically dwells on
Levin's translation of the English term "race." Rather than settling on a single
translation, Levin uses at least four Hebrew terms to translate "race": *ševeṭ*
[tribe]; *leʾom* [a people/nation]; *min* [species]; and the verbose *tkhunat ha-ʿam
ve-segullato* [a people's quality and virtue]. The latter phrase appears in the
scene from which Edward Said took the statement "the East is a career." In this
scene, a key character is the wise Jewish banker Sidonia, who plays the role of
cultural commentator not only in *Tancred*, but also in the novels that join it
in making up Disraeli's "Young England" trilogy: the earlier *Coningsby*, about
an Eton-educated orphaned aristocrat, and *Sybil*, about the English working
classes and their plight. Many of the statements about Jews as a race in *Tancred*
already appear in *Coningsby*. In the latter novel, Sidonia says of Jews:

> It is a physiological fact; a simple law of nature, which has baffled Egyptian
> and Assyrian Kings, Roman Emperors, and Christian Inquisitors. No
> penal laws, no physical tortures, can effect that a superior race should
> be absorbed in an inferior, or be destroyed by it. The mixed persecuting
> races disappear; the pure persecuted race remains. And at this moment,
> in spite of centuries, of tens of centuries, of degradation, the Jewish mind
> exercises a vast influence on the affairs of Europe.[26]

In this description, Jews are part of a superior race, with their superiority
explained through their persistence as a group and their supposed influence
across Europe. These two tropes prevailed in the Victorian discourse on both
race and Jews: the idea that persistence and collective longevity attested to
superiority was a hallmark of Victorian Darwinian thought, while the idea of

25   See, for example, David Frishman, "Shirey Bialik be-tirgum russi," in Frishman, *Kol
      Kitvey David Frishman*, vol. 8 (Warsaw: Shtibel, 1924), 187–91. For scholarly discussions
      of Frishman's ideological convictions and aesthetic theory, see Menuḥa Gilboa, *Between
      Realism and Romanticism: David Frishman's Path in Criticism* [Hebrew] (Tel Aviv:
      Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1975) and Iris Parush, *National Ideology and Literary Canon*
      [Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Mossad Bialik, 1992).

26   Benjamin Disraeli, *Coningsby; Or, The New Generation*, https://www.gutenberg.org
      /ebooks/7412, accessed October 2022.

Jews being influential reflected the Victorian public preoccupation with the Rothschild family (a branch of which had settled in England in the early 1800s).

In *Tancred*, Sidonia makes similar comments about Jews, without naming them explicitly. During the dinner party in which the statement "the East is a career" is made—that the social, economic, and political success of any people depends entirely on the purity of their race, he states: "All is race; there is no other truth." In Levin's Hebrew translation, Sidonia's statement is expanded and could be translated back into English as: "For anything and everything depends on a people's quality and virtue. This truth is eternal and there is no other truth like it!"

Levin ostensibly believed that Sidonia's statement required clarification, expanding it to the point of distortion. He translated the English term "race" in this case as *tkhunat ha-ʿam ve-segullato* (again, "a people's quality and virtue"), an explanatory translation suggesting that he was confused, at best, about Disraeli's ideas, or sought to obfuscate them. Frishman contended that Levin simply did not understand Disraeli. In his review, he cites the translation of the term "race" as key evidence of Levin's failure as both a translator and a Jewish intellectual. It was not Levin's inconsistency that bothered Frishman, but rather his presupposition that Disraeli's approach to Jewish identity was worth disseminating among Hebrew readers. His review strives to correct Levin's mistakes, telling readers how Disraeli espoused mass Jewish conversion to Christianity and how he reduced Jewish identity to a fact of nature. In Frishman's view, Disraeli's racialisation of Jewish identity harmed the main purpose of Hebrew literature in his time: invigorating and modernising Jewish textual culture. Frishman thus used Levin's translation of *Tancred* to present a broader claim about both the stakes of translation in the Hebrew literary field and the future of Jewish identity.

Against the backdrop of competing ideological reactions to the interrelated issues of persecution, emigration, and assimilation, Frishman attributed to Hebrew literature the power to mitigate confusion and social fragmentation and to create a cohesive Jewish identity organised around art.[27] The Victorian approach to Jewish identity seemed to him to be at odds with this goal, even as it displayed broad interest in Jewish history and sources. Victorian perceptions of Jews, after all, tethered Judaism to both Christianity and the notion of race, thereby posing a danger for Hebrew readers. Frishman insisted that Levin should have known this and that he should never have presented Disraeli in adulatory terms. Refraining from participating in a Victorian-like debate on the meaning of race or on the division of the world's population into racial groups, Frishman's review raised the question of whether the concept of race was

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27   See Parush, *National Ideology and Literary Canon.*

worth translating into Hebrew at all. In this, he anticipated Hannah Arendt's line of questioning in her discussion of race in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, in which she consciously focuses on understanding what race is *for* rather than what it is.[28]

Arendt, too, refrains from partaking in a discussion of race that renders the category valid, instead opting for an exploration of its deployment by specific actors in culture and politics such as Disraeli. Arendt portrays Disraeli as a "magician" who "realized much more quickly than other Jews that being a Jew could be as much an opportunity as a handicap."[29] In a society obsessed with various forms of Darwinism, Disraeli racialised his Jewish identity in order to retain credibility as a practising Christian without ignoring his pedigree, which his opponents maliciously exploited whenever they wished to discredit him. Arendt suggests that Disraeli both outsmarted his political opponents and endured their negative comments about his Jewish roots by transforming Jewishness from a limitation into an asset. She emphasises the paradox at the heart of this transformation: Disraeli's notion of Jewish racial superiority necessitated emptying Jewish identity of any meaning other than that of blood.

Like Frishman, Arendt sees vacuity in Disraeli's idea of Jewish identity: "He had few connections with Jewish society," she comments, in order to show that his distance from Jewish life served as a condition rather than an inhibition in the development of his racial doctrine. "Jewishness, from the beginning, was a fact of origin which he was at liberty to embellish, unhindered by actual knowledge."[30] Disraeli's ignorance of Jewish life, especially outside Britain, which had a relatively small Jewish population in his time, afforded him the freedom to tailor Jewish identity to his political needs. His embellishment of Jewish identity—the rebranding of an abstract Jewish collective as a pure race—both betrayed and spread his ignorance (and that of his British contemporaries). If Frishman could have read Arendt's discussion of Disraeli's brand of racism, he would have agreed with it. Yet the goal of his own earlier critique of Disraeli differed from Arendt's in its focus. New to the field of Hebrew literary criticism when the review was published, Frishman mostly warned against the incorporation of Disraeli's ideas into the Jewish literary canon. His critique of the racialisation of Jewish identity may have been incidental to his review, yet he was as averse to Disraeli's ideas as Arendt would be after him.

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28   Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1968).

29   Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 69.

30   Arendt, 70.

However, unlike Arendt, Frishman remained indifferent to the challenges that Disraeli faced as a Jewish convert to Christianity in Victorian society. His review foregrounds Disraeli's political shrewdness and his affiliation with the Conservative branch of the British Parliament, which has always been less inclined to support minorities compared to other British political parties. Frishman's tone in his review is striking, mixing irony and urgency in order to suggest that the translation of *Tancred* was an intellectual disaster that exerted a great impact. In other words, the publication of the Hebrew *Tancred* made such an impression on Frishman that he issued a call for a re-evaluation of both Hebrew translation norms and the discourse on Jewish identity. He sent his readers a nuanced message about cultural transfer, arguing that translation norms had to move in the direction of stricter adherence to the language, style, and structure of the original work. At the same time, he objected to the adoption of concepts such as race from major literatures like English, rejecting some non-Hebrew influences on Jewish culture without shunning translation as an intellectual practice altogether.

5   Conclusion: towards a Study of Hebrew Victorianism

Frishman's review of *Tancred* may be interpreted as emblematising a moment in European Jewish intellectual history prior to the racialisation of Jewish identity. Penning the review in the early 1880s, Frishman could not have known how both Zionism and Nazism would use race-based definitions of Jewish identity to remove Jews from Europe either by encouraging their migration to Palestine (territorial Zionism) or by murdering them (Nazism). Crude as this reading of Frishman's argument may be, it is founded on his patent rejection of Disraeli's ideas in general and his notion of Jews as a pure race in particular. Frishman approached Hebrew literature as an arena in which a battle over the meaning of Jewishness was currently being fought. In his review of Levin's translation, he portrays the Haskalah not only as a movement that produced stale literary works, but also as one that failed to deliver on its own promise to save European Jews from marginalisation and persecution by advancing their integration into non-Jewish societies. At the same time, his review opposes something that would become a Zionist tenet and that could easily be deduced from Disraeli's work: the belief that Jews belonged in the Eastern Mediterranean rather than anywhere else in the world.

In Jewish intellectual historiography, the Haskalah's failure to put an end to the marginalisation and persecution of Jews in parts of Europe is usually

seen as one of the reasons for the rise of Zionist thought.[31] Zionist thinkers from Jabotinsky to Arlosoroff famously modified the *haśkalah* values of Jewish acculturation and assimilation to match the plight of Eastern European Jews in the wake of pogroms from the 1880s up to the Russian Revolution. Largely assimilated themselves, Jabotinsky, Arlosoroff, and other Zionist thinkers began seeing their efforts to integrate fellow Jews into European societies as futile, while nationalist trends of separation became more appealing. In Frishman's case, his rejection of Haskalah values remained ambivalent and incomplete, as did his adoption of nascent Zionist ideas.[32] On the one hand, he belittled Haskalah writers and translators like Levin, maintaining that the Hebrew canon could benefit from more faithful translations of works whose merit exceeded their link to Jewish history (based on either their themes or the origin of their author). On the other, he feared—indeed, he sensed the advent of—a racialised perception of Jewish identity.

At the end of his review of Levin's *Tancred*, Frishman repeats his claim that Levin's translation misleads its readers by presenting Disraeli as both Jewish and an inspiration for Jewish thought. Alluding to Leviticus 10, "and lest wrath come upon all the people,"[33] Frishman stresses what he views as the far-reaching ramifications of allowing poor translation practices to welcome the Victorian gaze on Jews as a racially distinct group of potential converts into the Hebrew canon. At stake for Frishman was the building of a collective identity, one of Leviticus's major themes. By the time Levin published the second part of his adaptation of *Tancred*, he had had a chance to read Frishman's review. In the translator's preface to the second volume, he defends his interest in Disraeli's portrayal of Jews in Jerusalem, as well as the Hebrew readers' right to be exposed to world-renowned literary works such as *Tancred*. Accusing Frishman of cynicism, Levin remains unresponsive to the question of race, as if the concept bears no importance.

The story behind the Hebrew *Tancred* is one of several stories of translation from Victorian literature to Eastern European Hebrew literature in the nineteenth century. It is a story about literary translation and its contribution to early Zionist thought and the development of a critical Hebrew discourse

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31 See Hannan Hever, *Hasidism, Haskalah, Zionism: Chapters in Literary Politics* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2023).

32 See Parush, *National Ideology and Literary Canon*.

33 The full verse reads: "And Moses said unto Aaron, and unto Eleazar and unto Ithamar, his sons, Uncover not your heads, neither rend your clothes; lest ye die, and lest wrath come upon all the people: but let your brethren, the whole house of Israel, bewail the burning which the LORD hath kindled" (Lev 10:6, KJV).

on race, nation, conversion, migration, and assimilation. While it is widely acknowledged that early Zionist ideas about race and the nation-state both responded to and followed the major political events and philosophies of nineteenth-century Europe, the impact of Victorian discourses on early Zionist thought is rarely taken into account. An exception is Mikhal Dekel's analysis of Frishman's own translation of a Victorian literary work, George Eliot's novel *Daniel Deronda*.[34] Dekel argues that even readers who chose to ignore Frishman's translation came to either admire or abhor Eliot for creating the character of Daniel Deronda: an English aristocrat who discovers his Jewish roots and decides to travel to Palestine and seek redemption.

Ironically, Frishman's translation of *Daniel Deronda* is no less partial and heavily edited than Levin's translation of *Tancred*. In his translator's preface, Frishman accounts for these edits as being informed by the assumption that Hebrew readers would not be interested in vast parts of the plot of Eliot's novel. Yet he relies less heavily on biblical allusion in the translation, abiding by his own rule of greater proximity to the original. He writes of Eliot's erudition, praising her as fiercely as he discredits Disraeli in his review of Levin's translation of *Tancred*. Frishman was impressed with Eliot's deep interest in Jewish history and her nuanced, rather than reductive, description of Jewish identity. Still, just like the debate over *Tancred*, the debate occasioned by Frishman's translation reveals a drive to control the building of Jewish collective identity among Hebrew writers and critics in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

In this article, I have attempted to show that the incorporation of Victorian literature into the Hebrew canon in the 1880s instigated a discussion of Jewish racial identity, in the hope of demonstrating why translated Victorian literature should be further mined in Jewish intellectual historiography and Hebrew literary studies for what it can teach us about Zionist thought and identity politics. Any Hebrew translator of a Victorian literary work in the late nineteenth or early twentieth century had to deal with a unique set of challenges emanating from the asymmetry between the British and Eastern European Jewish cultures. The former relied on a rich and established English vernacular, while the latter participated in vernacularizing Hebrew. More critically, Hebrew literature's readership in the late nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth century consisted mainly of educated Jewish men whose consumption of literary works was inseparable from their interest in rethinking the place of Jews in Europe. Disraeli's answer to the so-called Jewish question—the invention of Jews as a superior race originating in the Eastern

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34   Dekel, "'Who Taught This Foreign Woman about the Ways and Lives of the Jews?'", 783–88.

Mediterranean—appealed to only some of these Jewish readers. Nevertheless, it later held a grip on Zionist thinkers like Jabotinsky and Arlosoroff. In this sense, Frishman did not overestimate literature's power to transform political realities, or at least impact their development. To understand the origins of Zionist thought—both its originality and its enormous debt to all forms of translation—one ought to look beyond Eastern and Central Europe in the direction of Victorian Britain.

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Al-Ġazālī, Descartes, and Their Sceptical Problems

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Abstract

This paper will offer a systematic reconstruction of al-Ġazālī's Sceptical Argument in his celebrated *Deliverer/Delivered from Going Astray* [*al-Munqiḏ/al-Munqaḏ min al-Ḍalāl*]. Based on textual evidence, I will argue that the concept of certainty [*yaqīn*] in play in this argument is that of the philosophers—most notably Ibn Sīnā—and that it is firmly tied to demonstration [*burhān*] and hence to the materials of syllogism [*mawwād al-qiyās*]. This will show that contrary to what many scholars believe, this Sceptical Argument is al-Ġazālī's discovery of a latent sceptical problem in Muslim philosophers' epistemological theories based on Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics* that escaped even the agile mind of *al-šayḫ al-ra'īs* Ibn Sīnā. This reconstruction will also shed some light on the widespread assumption that al-Ġazālī anticipates Descartes's sceptical considerations in the *First Meditation*. I will argue that not only do the two thinkers use incompatible strategies to reach their respective sceptical conclusions, but both their conclusions and their use of God in refuting them are also essentially non-identical. The conclusion is that the two sceptical arguments are essentially different.

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To the memory of the late Sarah Broadie

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1　　Introduction[1]

Sceptical arguments are rare in the Islamic tradition.[2] One celebrated exception is offered by the Iranian thinker Abū Ḥāmid al-Ġazālī (ca. 1058–1111) in his semi-autobiographical *Deliverer/Delivered from Going Astray* ([*al-Munqiḏ/ al-Munqaḏ min al-Ḍalāl*], henceforth *Deliverer*).[3] In the book, he describes

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2　What is meant by "scepticism" here is philosophical scepticism regarding knowledge or belief; other forms of scepticism, e.g., religious or moral scepticism, are not considered. For discussions about philosophical scepticism and other forms of scepticism in the Islamicate world, see, e.g., Josef van Ess, "Skepticism in Islamic Religious Thought," *Al-Abhath* 21 (1968): 1–18; Sarah Stroumsa, *Freethinkers of Medieval Islam: Ibn al-Rāwandī, Abū Bakr al-Rāzī, and Their Impact on Islamic Thought* (Leiden: Brill, 1999); and Paul L. Heck, *Skepticism in Classical Islam: Moments of Confusion* (New York: Routledge, 2014).

3　As for the English title of the book, it is, following W. Montgomery Watt, normally translated as *Deliver*ance *from Error*, though some readers translate it as *Deliver*er *from Error* to stress al-Ġazālī's aim of establishing his authority as the reviver of Islam and the deliverer of Muslims (Kenneth Garden, *The First Islamic Reviver: Abu Hamid al-Ghazali and His* Revival *of the Religious Sciences* [New York: Oxford University Press 2014], 4–5, 160). Depending on the vocalisation of the first word of the Arabic title, however, it can mean either the deliverer *[munqiḏ]* or the deliver*ed* [*munqaḏ*]. In the former case, it would refer to either the book or al-Ġazālī himself as the deliverer of others, while in the latter case, it would refer to al-Ġazālī as the one who is delivered, which is consistent with the story of his deliverance that he narrates in the book. I would suggest that al-Ġazālī, a master of Arabic—and for that matter, Persian—prose, probably meant his readers to appreciate this ambiguity and that it is preferable to preserve it in translation. In addition, *ḍalāl* is normally translated as "error," which has strong epistemological connotations. It is, however, a Qurʾānic term that means going astray from the path of God, as, for example, 1:6–7 reads: "Guide us upon the straight path, the path of those whom Thou hast blessed, not of those who incur wrath, nor of those *who are astray* [*ḍāllīn*]" (Seyyed Hossein Nasr et al., eds., *The Study Quran: A New Translation and Commentary* [New York: Harper Collins, 2015], 5, emphasis mine). Given the fact that the epistemological problems play only a preliminary role in the overall project of

two sceptical crises, one of an epistemological character concerning knowl-edge [*ʿilm*] and certainty [*yaqīn*]—or the lack thereof—and one of a practical nature regarding their usefulness in achieving felicity in the Hereafter.[4] The first crisis originates in what I shall call the Sceptical Argument that is pre-sented in the first chapter of *Deliverer*, along with some preliminaries in the introduction. There is an abundance of scholarly works concerning this Sceptical Argument and its autobiographical, historical, and mystical aspects. What is less appreciated is that it also has a systematic and philosophical aspect and that it builds upon the epistemological theories developed by the *falāsifah* preceding al-Ġazālī.[5] It is this Sceptical Argument and its systematic aspect that is the topic of this paper.

In recent decades, there has been a wave of revisionary readings of al-Ġazālī in which scholars have begun to appreciate his debts to the *falāsifah* in general and Ibn Sīnā in particular.[6] This paper intends to add one more piece of evidence to this narrative and argues that the Sceptical Argument he puts forward in the first chapter of *Deliverer* fits this new picture as well. Despite not having any field identical to what is known in contemporary philosophy as epistemology, the Peripatetic philosophers before al-Ġazālī developed highly sophisticated epistemological theories, following in the footsteps of

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the book and the larger—and more important—part concerns felicity in the Hereafter, I would suggest that "going astray" is a better translation than "error," hence my translation as *Deliverer/Delivered from Going Astray*. For the sake of brevity, however, I shall stick to *Deliverer* throughout this article.

4   For two examples of recent scholarly works that are particularly conscious of these two dif-ferent crises, see Carol L. Bargeron, "Sufism's Role in al-Ghazali's First Crisis of Knowledge," *Medieval Encounters* 9 (2003): 32–78, and Taneli Kukkonen, "Meditating on the Meditations: Al-Ghazali, Teresa of Avila, Descartes," *Oxford Studies in Medieval Philosophy* 8 (2020): 113–45. Heck, *Skepticism in Medieval Islam*, also ascribes a kind of scepticism to al-Ġazālī that he calls "learned ignorance," in which one is aware of human beings' inability to know God in His total infiniteness.

5   I use *falāsifah* or "the philosophers" in this paper in the technical sense to refer to the Peripatetic philosophers before al-Ġazālī, in particular al-Fārābi, Ibn Sīnā, and those who share their basic teachings. For the development of this particular usage, which was in fact due to al-Ġazālī's own attack on the *falāsifah*, see Frank Griffel, *The Formation of Post-Classical Philosophy in Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021).

6   For short reviews of such works, see Alexander Treiger's introduction to *Inspired Knowledge in Islamic Thought: Al-Ghazali's Theory of Mystical Cognition and Its Avicennan Foundation* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 1–4, and Kenneth Garden's introduction to his *First Islamic Reviver*, 1–7, two works that also serve as evidence in support of this new movement. Of particular importance here is the apologetic nature of *Deliverer*, as discussed by both Treiger (*Inspired Knowledge in Islamic Thought*, 96–101) and Garden (*First Islamic Reviver*, 143–68). In his last years in Nišāpūr, al-Ġazālī faced the charge of being influenced by the philosophers—and the Ismaʿīlites, for that matter—and *Deliverer* is written in that vein in order to defend him against these charges. This in part explains why he writes the book in this way and does not acknowledge his real debts to the philosophers.

al-Faylasūf in his *Posterior Analytics*, as part of their logical theorisations. In these theories, knowledge, certainty, and demonstration [*burhān*] are closely linked as they are considered to constitute the highest human epistemic achievement. These philosophers, however, did not pay much attention to a latent sceptical problem in their epistemology. It is to al-Ġazālī's credit that he discovered this problem—which escaped even the agile mind of *Šayḫ Al-raʾīs* Ibn Sīnā—and reported it as what had led him to his sceptical crisis in the first chapter of *Deliverer*. I will argue that it is al-Ġazālī's logical works, such as the logical part of *Aims of the Philosophers* ([*Maqāṣid al-Falāsifah*], henceforth *Aims*), *Criterion of Science in the Art of Logic* ([*Miʿyār al-ʿilm fī fann al-Manṭiq*], henceforth *Criterion*), and *Touchstone of Reasoning in the Art of Logic* ([*Miḥakk al-naẓẓar fī fann al-Manṭiq*], henceforth *Touchstone*), which build on Ibn Sīnā's logical works, to which one should look in order to recognise the systematic nature of his Sceptical Argument.[7]

Appreciating the nature of this argument also undermines a widespread assumption among al-Ġazālī scholars. It has been argued that the Sceptical Argument anticipates Descartes's sceptical considerations in the *First Meditation*.[8] The facts that both thinkers start with a demanding notion of

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7   *Aims* does not necessarily represents al-Ġazālī's own views. However, I think it is safe to ascribe to him what he says in *Aims* as long as it is confirmed by his other writings. Thanks to Reza Hadisi for pressing me on this issue.

8   Al-Ġazālī's alleged anticipation of Descartes's—and Hume's—sceptical arguments has been dicussed—as Kukkonen, "Meditation on the Meditations," 129, argues—since the publication of George Henry Lewes's *The Biographical History of Philosophy, from Its Origin in Greece Down to the Present Day* (New York, 1857), which was itself apparently based on Auguste Schmölders's *Essai sur les écoles philosophiques chez les arabes et notamment sur la doctrine d'Alghazzali* (Paris, 1842). Some scholars even go as far as to argue that Descartes had access to a translation of *Deliverer* and that there is a direct lineage between the two—as, for example, Mahmud H. Zakzuk (Kukkonen, "Meditation on the Meditations," 114 n. 4) and V.V. Naumkin (Catherine Wilson, "Modern Western Philosophy," in *History of Islamic Philosophy*, ed. Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Oliver Leaman [London: Routledge, 1996], 1805–36) claim. Other scholars, however, did not go that far and only claimed that what-ever their sources may have been, they put forward the same sceptical argument and/or the same response thereto. Such claims can be found in M. Sheykh, "Al-Ghazali," in *A History of Muslim Philosophy, Volume 1*, ed. M.M. Sharif (Karachi: Royal Book Company, 1963), 581–641; Sami M. Najm, "The Place and Function of Doubt in the Philosophies of Descartes and al-Ghazali," *Philosophy East and West* 16 (1966): 133–41; M.M. Sharif, "Philosophical Influence from Descartes to Kant," in *History of Muslim Philosophy, Volume 2*, ed. M.M. Sharif (Karachi: Royal Book Company, 1966), 1381–87; Tamara Albertini, "Crisis and Certainty of Knowledge in al-Ghazali (1058–1111) and Descartes (1596–1650)," *Philosophy East and West* 55 (2005): 1–14; Edward Omar Moad, "Comparing Phases of Skepticism in al-Ghazali and Descartes: Some First Meditations on *Deliverance from Error*," *Philosophy East and West* 59 (2009): 88–101; Syed Rizwan Zamir, "Descartes and al-Ghazali: Doubt, Certitude and Light," *Islamic Studies* 49 (2010): 219–51; Taneli Kukkonen, "Al-Ghazali's Skepticism Revisited: The Missing Medieval Background," in *Rethinking the History of Skepticism*, ed. Henrik Lagerlund (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 29–59; Kukkonen, "Meditating on the Meditations"; Ulrich Rudolph, "Auf der

knowledge and certainty, that they both appeal to one version or another of the dream hypothesis to motivate their scepticism, and that they both allude to God in refuting it are cases in point offered in defence of this assumption. Building on the systematic reconstruction of the Sceptical Argument as found in *Deliverer*, I will argue that these two sceptical arguments belong to wholly different philosophical traditions and as such are essentially different, and therefore that these ostensible similarities do not withstand scrutiny.

In what follows, I will present a systematic reconstruction of al-Ġazālī's Sceptical Argument by first sketching out his own presentation of the problem and his solution to it (section 1). I will then proceed to fill in the gaps of the argument (section 2) and argue against any systematic affiliation between al-Ġazālī's and Descartes's sceptical arguments (section 3). I will end the paper with some concluding points (section 4).

2 The Sceptical Argument

In the introduction to *Deliverer*, after describing how he has witnessed arguments among different schools of thought and has started to despair as to where the truth should be found, al-Ġazālī writes that his aim is to find the true nature of things, for the sake of which it is necessary to know what knowledge really is:

> Then it became clear to me that sure and certain knowledge [*ʿilm al-yaqīnī*] is that in which the thing known is made so manifest that *no doubt* clings to it, nor is it accompanied by *the possibility of error* and deception, nor can the mind even suppose such a possibility (*Deliverer*, 64; 20, emphasis mine).[9]

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Suche nach Erkenntnis zwischen Asien und Europa: Al-Ġazālī, Descartes und die moderne Forschungswissenschaft," *Asiatische Studien—Études Asiatiques* 72 (2018): 1–29; and Saja Parvizian, "Al-Ghazālī and Descartes on Defeating Skepticism," *Journal of Philosophical Research* 45 (2020): 133–48. Reza Hadisi, "Ghazālī's Transformative Answer to Skepticism," *Theoria* 88 (2022): 109–42, also argues for a fundamental difference between both the sceptical problems and their responses, though with a different approach to mine.

9 The first number refers to the page numbers in Abū Ḥāmid al-Ġazālī, *Al-Munqiḏ/Al-Munqaḏ min al-Ḍalāl wa-l-muṣil ilā ḏi al-ʿizza wa-l-ǧalāl*, ed. Jamīl Ṣalībā and Kāmil ʿAyyād (Beirut: Dār al-Āndulus, 1967) and the second to Richard J. McCarthy's translation in al-Ġazālī, *Al-Ghazali's Path to Sufism: His* Deliverance from Error (*al-Munqidh min al-Dalal*), trans. Richard J. McCarthy (Louisville, KY: Fons Vitae, 2000). All translations of *Deliverer* are quoted from the latter, with occasional emendations with help from Watt's English (al-Ġazālī, *Deliverance from Error and the Beginning of Guidance*, trans. W. Montgomery Watt, rev. ed. [Kuala Lumpur: Islamic Book Trust, 2019]) and Elschazli's German (al-Ġazālī, *Der Erreter*

The criterion for certain knowledge with which he ends up, therefore, is that the claims to knowledge must be both *indubitable* and *infallible*.[10]

Al-Ġazālī then begins to inquire into what he has taken himself to know and to see whether this constitutes certain knowledge. He reports that he has examined his knowledge and that he has found all of it wanting except for sensible propositions ([*ḥissīyāt*], henceforth "sensibles" for short) and necessary propositions ([*ḍarūrīyāt*], henceforth "necessities" for short), and thus takes these two as the *prima facie* candidates for knowledge.[11] He then examines even these two things to see whether it is possible to doubt them and finds that even sensibles are open to doubt:

> Whence comes your reliance on sensibles [*maḥsūsāt*]?[12] The strongest of the senses is the sense of sight. Now this looks at shadow and sees it standing still and motionless and judges that motion must be denied. Then, due to experience and observation an hour later it knows that the shadow is moving [...]. Sight also looks at a star and sees it as something small, the size of a dinar; then geometrical proofs demonstrate that it surpasses the earth in size (*Deliverer*, 65–66; 21; translation amended).

Here, al-Ġazālī gives two examples in which we take ourselves to know something based on our senses, but are proven wrong by a higher judge, the judge of the intelligence [*ʿaql*].[13] Hence,

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aus dem Irrtum, trans. Abd-Elsamad Abd-Elhamid Elschazli [Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1988]) translations.

10   It is, however, not a definition of *ʿilm* in the philosophical sense of giving its genus [*ǧins*] and differentia [*faṣl*], as in *A Distillation of the Science of The Principles* [*al-Mustaṣfa min ʿilm al-uṣūl*], he considers it "difficult to define in the true sense [of definition], with an accurate formula including its genus and essential differentia" (Treiger, *Inspired Knowledge in Islamic Thought*, 29). For his purposes in *Deliverer*, however, giving the criteria seems to be enough. For a more detailed discussion of his concept of *ʿilm*, see ibid., 29–34.

11   Regarding the translation of technical terms, see n. 30 below.

12   Al-Ġazālī uses both *ḥissīyāt* and *maḥsūsāt* interchangeably in this context and therefore it seems innocent to translate both as "sensibles," as Watt also translated both as "sense-perceptions." Elschazli, however, sometimes translates them as "sinnliche Wahrnehmungen" and other times as "Sinne," probably having in mind at times the power of sense-perceptions and at others the beliefs resulting from them. In McCarthy's translation, both are translated as "sense-data," therefore showing an appreciation of the fact that they are used interchangeably. However, as the term "sense-data" has strong connotations in analytic philosophy, I have translated both the Arabic terms as "sensible propositions" or "sensibles" throughout this essay.

13   Throughout this essay, I follow Treiger in translating *ʿaql* as "intelligence" rather than "intellect" or "reason." See Treiger, "Inspired Knowledge in Islamic Thought," 18–19.

> I can rely only on those rational data which belong to the category of primary propositions [*awwalīyāt*], such as our asserting that "Ten is more than three," and "One and the same thing cannot be simultaneously affirmed and denied," and "One and the same thing cannot be incipient and eternal, existent and non-existent, necessary and impossible" (*Deliverer*, 66; 22; translation amended).

From the two remaining candidates, then, it is only necessities that are immune from doubt and that might therefore be worthy of the name "knowledge." However, al-Ġazālī continues his inquiry:

> Then the sensibles [*maḥsūsāt*] spoke up: "What assurance have you that your reliance on rational data is not like your reliance on sensibles [*maḥsūsāt*]? Indeed, you used to have confidence in me (*sic*). Then the intelligence-judge [*ḥākim al-ʿaql*] came along and gave me the lie. But were it not for the intelligence-judge, you would still accept us as true. So there may be, beyond the perception of intelligence [*ʿaql*], another judge. And if the latter revealed itself, it would give the lie to the judgements of intelligence, just as the intelligence-judge revealed itself and gave the lie to the judgments of sense. The mere fact of the nonappearance of that further perception does not prove the impossibility of its existence" (*Deliverer*, 66; 22; translation amended).

Primary propositions (henceforth "primaries" for short) being the last arrow in our quiver, we are now left with nothing to know, and therefore al-Ġazālī concludes his Sceptical Argument.

How was al-Ġazālī cured of this disease and malady—as he himself calls it—which lasted for two months? He writes:

> At length God Most High cured me of that sickness. My soul regained its health and equilibrium and once again I accepted the self-evident data of intelligence [*ʿaql*] and relied on them with safety and certainty (*Deliverer*, 67–68; 23; translation amended).

From what he says, it seems that his illness was cured by direct help and intervention from God.

3 Filling in the Gaps of the Sceptical Argument

The Sceptical Argument can easily be summarised in a couple of sentences. Al-Ġazālī puts forward a concept of knowledge as infallible and indubitable.

He then considers two *prima facie* candidates for such knowledge and proceeds to prove them lacking. Hence the sceptical result and his subsequent sceptical crisis. However, some stages of the argument are missing. Most importantly, the question is whence the two candidates for knowledge came and how exactly he proves both to be insufficient. The fact that in the introduction and first chapter of *Deliverer*, al-Ġazālī himself uses obvious philosophical terminology such as "certain knowledge" (*Deliverer*, 64; 20), "sensibles" and "primaries" (ibid., 65–68; 21–22), and "demonstration" (ibid., 67; 23),[14] which are technical terms used in the Peripatetics' epistemological theory as part of their logic, gives us the first clue as to where to search for an answer to these questions.

Al-Ġazālī inherited from his master teacher al-Ǧuwaynī a firm distinction between "real knowledge" as opposed to "knowledge in the broad sense," the former being the property of a small, privileged group of known facts.[15] Certain knowledge, the criteria for which he gives at the end of the introduction, is the former: real knowledge. When, at the beginning of the first chapter, he claims that he has investigated all his "knowledge" to see what part of it could be a candidate for real knowledge, it should be understood as knowledge in the broader sense. He therefore scrutinises all his knowledge in the broader sense of the term to see whether there is anything worthy of being considered real or certain knowledge.

But what, according to al-Ġazālī, is certainty? In *The Book of Knowledge* [*Kitāb al-ʿIlm*] in *Revivification of the Religious Sciences* ([*Iḥyaʾ al-ʿUlūm al-Dīn*], henceforth *Revivification*), he observes that the term *yaqīn* is homonymous in the usage of two different groups of people. The first group contains the theoreticians [*nuẓẓār*, sg. *nāẓir*], by which he means the *falāsifah*,[16] and

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14   Here, al-Ġazālī uses *dalīl* instead of *burhān*, which is the standard term for "demonstration." However, from the fact that he is explicit that *dalīl* can be formulated only by means of primaries, and that it is also not unprecedented in this logical context to use these two terms interchangeably, it seems plausible to assume that he is referring to demonstration here. This seems to be the reason why Watt also translated the term as "demonstration" and why McCarthy used "proof."

15   Richard M. Frank, "Al-Ghazali on Taqlid: Scholars, Theologians, and Philosophers," *Zeitschrift für die Geschichte der arabisch-islamischen Wissenschaften* 7 (1991/92): 207–8.

16   Garden, *First Islamic Reviver*, 49–52, forcefully argues that in *Scale of Action* [*Mīzān al-ʿAmal*], *nuẓẓār* refers to the philosophers. His first argument is that the source of the term *nāẓir*, the singular of *nuẓẓar*, seems to be related to *al-ʿilm al-naẓarī*, meaning theoretical science, as opposed to *ʿilm al-ʿamalī*, practical science. This is obviously philosophical terminology and shows that *nuẓẓār* has something to do with the philosophers. The second reason is that if *nuẓẓār* was meant to refer to a third group in addition to the philosophers and the Sufis, then there should have been a reference to it in *Scale*. The lack of any such reference shows that al-Ġazālī does not take these two terms to refer to different groups. Lastly, he argues based on textual evidence that "'theoreticians' [...] are those

the theologians [*mutakallimūn*, sg. *Mutakallim*], to whom "the term *yaqīn* signifies lack of doubt" [*ʿadam aš-šakk*] (*Revivification*, 123; 185).[17] The second application is that of the jurists [*fuqahāʾ*, sg. *Faqīh*], the Sufis, and most of the learned, which occurs when "the soul inclines to the acceptance of anything which prevails over the heart and takes hold of it, and as a result becomes the ruler and dispenser of the soul either by urging it to action or by forbidding therefrom, such a thing is called *yaqīn*" (*Revivification*, 125; 188). Thus stated, it seems that the first meaning of the term is *yaqīn* in an epistemological sense and that the latter meaning is in a psychological sense. Remarkably, al-Ġazālī uses both of these meanings in one sentence when he writes "I have never seen a certainty with no doubt in it more resembling a doubt with no certainty in it than death" [*mā raʾaytu yaqīnan lā šakka fīhi ašbaha bi-šakk lā yaqīna fīhi min al-mawt*] (*Revivification*, 125). In this sentence, the first case (certainty with no doubt in it) refers to the former, epistemological sense of certainty, while the second (a doubt with no certainty in it) refers to the latter, psychological sense. That is, we know—in the epistemological sense—without any doubt that we will face death sooner or later, but psychologically speaking, we resist believing it, doubt it, and live in such a way as if there will be no death.[18] From the description that al-Ġazālī gives, it seems reasonable to translate the first use of the term as "certainty" and the second as "conviction."[19] It also seems plausible to assume that it is the first, philosophical meaning that is at play in *Deliverer*, since he himself makes it clear that by "certain knowledge," he means something "in which the thing known is made so manifest that no doubt clings to it, *nor is it accompanied by the possibility of error and deception*"[20] (*Deliverer*,

who seek knowledge of the true affairs of things through the theoretical science [*ʿilm an-naẓarī*], which, in this passage includes even the groups of philosophers with tenets al-Ġazzālī rejects" (ibid., 52). One can, I would suggest, plausibly make the same case for *Revivification*, in which, as quoted above, he contrasts theoreticians and theologians with jurists, Sufis, and other generally learned men. Another reason is that in this particular context in *Revivification*, the notion of *yaqīn* in question is similar enough to that of Ibn Sīnā to maintain that *nuẓẓār* refers to the philosophers. Nabih Amin Faris's translation of *The Book of Knowledge* translates *nuẓẓār* as "philosophers," and it seems quite fitting in the context.

17   The first number refers to the original Arabic text in Abū Ḥāmid al-Ġazālī, *Iḥyāʾ al-ʿulūm al-dīn* (Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-ʿilmīyah, 2002), and the second to the English translation of *The Book of Knowledge*: al-Ġazālī, *The Book of Knowledge*, trans. Nabih Amin Faris (New Delhi: Islamic Book Service, 1962). The quoted passages are from Faris's translation.

18   Thanks to an anonymous reviewer who suggested this distinction and brought this example to my attention.

19   Faris translated the second meaning as "faith." This might lead to confusion with *ʾimān*, which is closer to faith than *yaqīn*, hence my translating it as "conviction."

20   Cf. Kukkonen, "Al-Ghazali's Skepticism Revisited," 47, who argues that this characterisation of certainty has some precedence in *Bāqillanī*.

64; 20, emphasis mine). It is in the philosophical, epistemological sense of the term that one does not face the possibility of error.

In describing the first meaning of *yaqīn*, al-Ġazālī mentions four different levels of a person's readiness to accept a proposition: namely, doubt [*šakk*], opinion [*ẓann*], belief approaching certainty [*iʿtiqād muqarrab li-l-yaqīn*],[21] and certainty [*yaqīn*]. It is only the last, according to al-Ġazālī, that is the meaning of certainty in this context. He defines it as "real knowledge [*maʿrifah al-haqīqīyah*] resulting from demonstration [*burhān*] in which there is neither doubt nor the possibility of doubt. When doubt or any possibility of doubt are ruled out, they [i.e., philosophers and theologians] call it certainty [*yaqīn*]"[22] (*Revivification*, 186; 124; translation amended). This passage is of great importance for understanding the nature of knowledge and the Sceptical Argument. First, it shows once again that what al-Ġazālī has in mind is knowledge in the strict sense of the term. Second, when he writes that real knowledge is called "certainty" under certain circumstances, he shows that "knowledge" and "certainty" are identical. And third, he shows that this knowledge is achieved via demonstration. However, "demonstration" is a technical term used by the philosophers in the context of their logical theories based on Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics*. Since, as shown above, the concept of knowledge at work in *Deliverer* is exactly this concept of certainty, it is to this concept that one should look to understand the nature of the Sceptical Argument.[23]

The *Posterior Analytics*'s counterpart to *ʿilm* is *epistēmē*, and, it is argued, there is no concept analogous to *yaqīn* in the Philosopher's own text. However, as Deborah L. Black has shown,[24] in Abū Bišr Mattā's monumental translation of Aristotle's treatise, *ʿilm* and *yaqīn* are used interchangeably to render

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21   Treiger argues that *iʿtiqād* should be translated as "opinion" and gives tempting reasons not to equate it with "belief." However, since I, following Black, will translate *ẓann* and its cognate terms such as *maẓnūnāt* as "opinion," and also because the details of difference between *iʿtiqād* and *ẓann* do not play an important role in my overall argument, I will stick to this translation.

22   Treiger, *Inspired Knowledge in Islamic Thought*, 33–34, notes that there is a "soft" difference between *ʿilm* and *maʿrifa* in some technical contexts and prefers to translate the latter as "cognition." He makes it clear, however, that in most contexts, they are "roughly the same." In the context of the Sceptical Argument and *The Book of Knowledge*, however, they seem to be used interchangeably, and therefore I will translate them both as "knowledge."

23   Kukkonen, "Meditating on the Meditations," 131, quoting this passage from *Revivification*, argues that the first meaning of *yaqīn* is related to the first crisis of knowledge and that the second meaning maps to the second crisis of knowledge.

24   Deborah L. Black, "Knowledge (*ʿilm*) and Certitude (*yaqīn*) in al-Farabi's Epistemology," *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 16 (2006): 13–14.

epistēmē into Arabic.[25] This led the Muslim philosophers to assume firm ties between *ʿilm* and *yaqīn*, to the extent that Ibn Sīnā took the two as identical,[26] and this seems to be what al-Ġazālī has in mind in the above-quoted passage. Moreover, this concept, again as al-Ġazālī mentions, is believed to be related to demonstration in such a way that certainty can only be achieved via demonstration and demonstration is defined by way of certainty.[27] Al-Ġazālī's epistemological discussions in his logical works—namely, *Aims*, *Criterion*, and *Touchstone*—are based on this tradition. For al-Ġazālī, just like Ibn Sīnā before him, *ʿilm* and *yaqīn* are essentially the same concepts, and the only way one can achieve them is through demonstration. It is here, I would suggest, that one should look to find out whence the two *prima facie* candidates of knowledge come.

Other readers, however, seem to have thought that al-Ġazālī simply adopted these candidates from previous thinkers.[28] Yet this position does not tell the whole story, as is evident from the very first sentence of the first chapter, in which he explicitly says that "I then scrutinized all my cognitions and found

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25   However, it is important to note, as Black makes clear, that Mattā "does not reserve either term for this technical usage, and he will use both terms to render a variety of non-technical epistemic expressions in the Greek text" (Black, "Knowledge [*ʿilm*] and Certitute [*yaqīn*]," 14). However, as she makes clear, the term *yaqīn* finds a technical usage in the following philosophers: "Abū Bišr's decision to introduce it [*yaqīn*] into the definition of demonstration, the very subject matter of the *Posterior Analytics*, could easily have led Arabic audiences to assume that *yaqīn* was a pivotal concept within Aristotelian epistemology" (ibid., 14).

26   Robert Pasnau, *After Certainty: A History of Our Epistemic Ideals and Illusions* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 177.

27   Black, "Knowledge (*ʿilm*) and Certitute (*yaqīn*)," 13–14. See also Deborah L. Black, "Certitude, Justification, and the Principles of Knowledge in Avicenna's Epistemology," in *Interpreting Avicenna*, ed. Peter Adamson, 120–42 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 13, and Pasnau, *After Certainty*, 26–30; 176–78.

28   In one, Kokkunen understands the "two roads" to gain knowledge as "sense-perception and intellection" and views them as representing a "common division both among the philosophers and the theologians," claiming that al-Ġazālī "follows this kind of reasoning implicitly and as a matter of course." He mentions as an example the Neoplatonist al-ʿAmirī, who was faithful to both the Platonic and the Peripatetic positions in seeing these two stances as providing access to reality: see Kukkonen, "Al-Ghazali's Skepticism Revisited," 46. A similar stance is taken by Stephen Menn: "Scepticism arises not just from a critique of dogmatic theses, but from a critique of our *faculties*; Ghazali, like Galen (notably in *Errors of the Soul* c6 and *On the Best Kind of Teaching*, concerned with such sceptical critiques) presents sensation and reason as separate and analogous powers, each with its own domain of primitively intuited truths" (Menn, "The *Discourse on the Method* and the Tradition of Intellectual Autobiography," in *Hellenistic and Early Modern Philosophy*, ed. Jon Miller and Brad Inwood [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003], 161).

myself devoid of any knowledge answering the previous description except in the case of sensibles [*ḥissīyāt*] and the self-evident truths" (*Deliverer*, 65; 21; translation amended). This sentence clearly shows that choosing sensibles and necessities as the *prima facie* candidates for certain knowledge is the result of a process of argumentation on al-Ġazālī's part in which he investigates all his knowledge in the broadest sense. Given the above-mentioned ties between knowledge, certainty, and demonstration, it is here that one must look in order to reconstruct this process. In particular, I suggest, it is his discussion of syllogism [*qiyās*] and the materials of syllogism [*mawwād al-qiyās*] that is of importance here.

In this picture, there are five different forms of syllogism and more than a dozen materials of syllogism that are used in these different forms of argumentation.[29] The five different forms of syllogism are as follows:

1.   Demonstration [*burhān*]
2.   Dialectical Argument [*qiyās al-ǧadalī*]
3.   Rhetorical Argument [*qiyās al-ḥiṭābī*]
4.   Fallacious or Sophistical Argument [*qiyās al-muġālaṭī/sūfasṭāʾī*]
5.   Poetical Argument [*qiyās aš-šiʿrī*]

Among these five different forms of syllogism, it is only the first two that have a connection to certainty, the latter being "close to certainty" [*muqāribah li-l-yaqīn*] and the former being "certain, true and indubitable" [*yaqīnīyah ṣādiqatan bi-la šakk*] (*Aims*, 45–46). In *Criterion*, al-Ġazālī also takes demonstration to be the only form of syllogism to deliver us certainty. There, in his discussion about the premises of syllogism [*muqaddamāt al-qiyās*], he differentiates them into highest [*aqṣā*] and lowest [*adnā*], taking the highest to be demonstration, which "gives us certain knowledge" [*al-muḥaṣṣalu li-l-ʿilm*

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29   Here, I follow al-Ġazālī's own presentation in his logical works, which is based on different descriptions that Ibn Sīnā offers in various works. Jules Janssens, "Le Miyār al-ʿilm fī fann al-Mantiq d'al-Ghazzālī: Sources avicenniennes et farabiennes," *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du Moyen Âge* 69 (2002): 39–66, shows that al-Ġazālī also uses al-Fārābī's works in some of his texts (thanks to an anonymous reviewer for the tip about this reference). Comparing them, however, goes beyond the scope of this paper. Ibn Sīnā presents his discussion about this matter in several places, e.g., Ibn Sīnā, *Al-Naǧāt min al-Ġarq fī Baḥr al-Ẓalalat* (Tehran: Dānišgāhi Tehran, 1985), 113–23; Ibn Sīnā, *Al-Išārāt wa at-tanbīhāt*, vol. 1 (Qom: Matbūʿāt ad-Dīnī, 2004), 385–90; and Ibn Sīnā, *Al-Manṭiq Al-šifāʾ* (Qom: Golwerdī, 2012), 63–67. For some representative scholarly discussions of these matters, see G.C. Anawati, "Ishām Ibn Sīnā fī taqaddum al-ʿulūm," *At-Turāt al-ʿArabī* (1981): 16–42; Dimitri Gutas, "The Empiricism of Avicenna," *Oriens* 40 (2012): 391–436; Black, "Certitude, Justification, and the Principles of Knowledge"; and Seyed N. Mousavian and Mohammad Ardeshir, "Avicenna on the Primary Propositions," *History and Philosophy of Logic* 39 (2018): 201–31.

al-yaqīnī] (*Criterion*, 41). Since there is still a possibility of mistakes in the case of a dialectical argument, which makes it dubitable, it is only the first that is worthy of being called certain knowledge.

Whence comes the certainty of demonstration? Here is where the discussion of the materials of syllogism comes into the picture. One major difference between these types of syllogism is the different materials used in them; the more trustworthy these materials are, the more trustworthy the syllogism itself. And it is in fact the materials used in demonstration, having the highest degree of certainty, that make it worthy of the name "real knowledge." Of more than a dozen such materials, there are only four that al-Ġazālī believes can be used as premises in a demonstration:

1. Primaries [*awwalīyāt*]; e.g., two is bigger than one.
2. Sensible propositions [*ḥissīyāt/maḥsūsāt*]; e.g., the sun is shining.
3. Empirical propositions [*taǧrubīyāt/muǧǧarrabāt*]; e.g., fire burns.
4. Testimonials [*mutawātirāt*]; e.g., Mecca exists.[30]

It is these four, therefore, that are to be the candidates for certain knowledge in this picture. Yet how do they fit the two *prima facie* candidates that al-Ġazālī mentions at the beginning of the first chapter?

Before answering this question, however, I must make a quick detour to consider the matter in two other logical works by al-Ġazālī and show that in those works as well, it is these four candidates that are at work. In *Criterion*, al-Ġazālī enumerates four different such materials: (1) purely

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30 Abū Ḥāmid al-Ġazālī, *Maqāṣid al-Falāsifah* [*Aims of the Philosophers*] (Damascus: Miṭbaʿat al-ṣabāḥ, 2000), 46–50. The other materials are as follows:

     5. Propositions with innate syllogism [*qaḍāyā llatī qiyāsātiha fī l-ṭabʿ maʿahā*]

     6. Estimative premises [*wahmīyāt*]

     7. Widely accepted propositions [*mašhūrāt*]

     8. Received propositions [*maqbūlāt*]

     9. Common grounds [*mussalamāt*]

     10. Comparative propositions [*mušabbahāt*]

     11. Apparently acceptable propositions [*mašhūrāt fiẓ-ẓahir*]

     12. Opined/supposed beliefs [*maẓnūnāt*]

     13. Imaginative premises [*muḫayyalāt*] (ibid., 47–50)

I follow Black's translation of this list in Black, "Certitude, Justification, and the Principles of Knowledge," as far as possible, except for those on al-Ġazālī's list that are not included in her discussion. As for *mussallamāt*, although the term can be translated as "certain propositions" and in fact in some contexts its singular *mussalam* and *yaqīnī* are used interchangeably, based on al-Ġazālī's own explanation I prefer "common grounds": "It is what the opponent accepts or it is a common ground between the opponents" (*Aims*, 49). *Mašhūrāt fī l-ẓahir* are also those that seem acceptable in the first place but upon contemplation are found wanting, e.g., the proposition that one should help one's brother whether innocent or guilty (ibid., 49–50).

intellectual primary propositions [*awwalīyāt al-ʿaqlīyata al-maḥḍa*], (2) sensible propositions [*maḥsūsāt*], (3) empirical propositions [*muǧǧarrabāt*], and (4) propositions that are not known in themselves, but through a mediator, but the middle term does not shy away from the mind [*qaḍāya allattī ʿurifat lā bi-nafsihah bal biv-wasata wa -lākin lā yaʿzaba ʿan al- ḏihni awsaṭahā*].[31] The first three are exactly the same as *Aims*, so the question would concern the fourth material. The reason that this does not appear on the list of materials that provide us with certain knowledge, I would suggest, is that they ultimately end with a tacit argument, and as such, by al-Ġazālī's own lights, they are dependent on primaries. Therefore, if primaries are out—as they will be in due course, as will be shown—this fourth group would also, *ipso facto*, be out.

The case of the discussion in *Touchstone* is more complicated. There, al-Ġazālī enumerates seven materials that give us certainty: (1) primaries [*awwalīyāt*], (2) introspective observations [*mušahadāt al-bāṭinīyah*], (3) sensible propositions [*maḥsūsāt aẓ-ẓāhira*], (4) empirical propositions [*taǧrubīyāt*], (5) propositions known by testimony [*maʿlūmāt bi-l-tawātur*], (6) estimative propositions [*wahmīyāt*], and (7) widely accepted propositions [*mašhūrāt*].[32] Here, (1), (3), and (4) are what is to be found in the former two books. However, a justification as to why the other four are not found in the other sources, and why they are not among the *prima facie* candidates of certain knowledge, is in order. The reason is that in *Touchstone*, he discusses not the materials for demonstrative proof, as is his aim in *Aims* in particular, but certain knowledge in the broader sense, which includes both epistemological and psychological certainty, as discussed above. In this book, just before he enumerates these materials, he distinguishes three different meanings of certainty [*yaqīn*]. First is a certainty in which there is no possibility of falsehood [*lā yumkinu ʿan yakūna fīhi sahwa wa-lā ǧalata wa-lā iltibās*], which is epistemological certainty. Second is what he calls dogmatic belief [*iʿtiqāda ǧazma*], which is "most of the beliefs of the laity among Muslims, Jews, and Christians" that relate to their religious observance. This, I would suggest, is comparable to the psychological certainty he discusses in *Revivification*. And the third one, which should be taken as certainty in the loose sense, is opined belief, in which one believes in something, "but is aware of its negation, or is not aware of its negation, but if he comes to know it, his nature will not hate to believe it."[33] This shows that what

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31   Abū Ḥāmid al-Ġazālī, *Miʿyār al-ʿilm fī fann al-Manṭiq* [*Criterion of Science in the Art of Logic*] (Beirut: Dar al-Kotob al-Ilmiyah, 1971), 178–83.

32   Al-Ghazālī, *Criterion*, 116–29.

33   Abū Ḥāmid al-Ġazālī, *Miḥakk al-naẓẓar fī fann al-Manṭiq* [*Touchstone of Reasoning in the Art of Logic*] (Beirut: Dar al-Minhaj, 2016), 112–15.

this book counts as materials for certainty includes what al-Ġazālī takes to be materials for certainty in all three of these meanings, not just epistemological certainty, which is our concern here. Therefore, I would suggest that what is certain in the sense that is interesting in the context of the Sceptical Argument are just these four materials of syllogism enumerated above.

Now, back to the question I posed before this digression; namely, how to equate these four with the two *prima facie* candidates of certain knowledge. The most obvious case is to equate the primaries on the list of the materials of syllogism with the necessities or intellectual propositions that al-Ġazālī mentions in the first chapter. First, when continuing his discussion in the first chapter, al-Ġazālī uses "necessities" and "primaries" interchangeably, such as when he writes, after considering the counterexamples to sensibles, "My reliance on sensibles has become untenable. Perhaps, therefore, I can rely on those rational data which belong to *the category of primaries* [*min al-awwalīyāt*]" (*Deliverer*, 66; 22, translation emended and emphasis mine), using "primaries" as the second candidate for real knowledge where he had previously used "necessities" or *ḍarūriyyāt*. Second, and more importantly, he gives similar examples of necessities and primaries in both *Deliverer* and *Aims*. The first example of necessities that he gives in *Deliverer* is the mathematical example that ten is a bigger number than three (*Deliverer*, 66; 9), and he gives the same example, only changing the numbers, in *Aims*, stating that two is bigger than one (*Aims*, 46). The other examples he gives in *Deliverer* are different variations of the law of non-contradiction, which is one of the principal examples of primaries in the standard texts.

This is also the case for sensibles. Not only does he use the technical terms *ḥissīyāt* and *maḥsūsāt* interchangeably to refer to the first candidate,[34] but the examples of them that he gives in *Deliverer* are also similar enough to those given in *Aims* as to leave no doubt that his first candidate is the second material of syllogism on *Aims*'s list. His two examples of sensibles in *Deliverer* are the observations that shadows stand still and that the sun is small (*Deliverer*, 66; 22), while in *Aims*, they are that the sun shines and that the light of the moon increases and decreases (*Aims*, 46), which are beliefs directly based on

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34 As in the very first paragraph of the first chapter, when he writes: "I then scrutinized all my knowledge and found myself devoid of any knowledge answering the previous description except in the sense of sensibles [*ḥissīyāt*] and the self-evident truths [...]. With great earnestness, therefore, I began to reflect on my sensibles [*maḥsūsāt*] to see if I can make myself doubt them" (*Deliverer*, 65; 21, emphasis mine). Here, al-Ġazālī uses both *ḥissīyāt* and *maḥsūsāt*—emphasised in bold—as the first candidate for knowledge, hence my translation of both as "sensibles."

sense-perception.[35] Hence, his first candidate for real knowledge is the second source on the list of the materials of syllogism.

What about empirical propositions? Al-Ġazālī, following Ibn Sīnā, takes these propositions as the result of a combination of sense-perception and intelligence: "What results from the combination of sense and intelligence [*ḥiss wa-l-ʿaql*] is our knowledge that fire burns or […] alcohol makes us drunk. So the sense perceives drunkenness after drinking alcohol several times, and the intellect infers that there must be some sort of causality at work here" (*Aims*, 47). This shows that unlike the case of sensibles, the mere presence of sense-perception is not enough to form empirical beliefs and the intelligence must contribute as well. This is, again, exactly like Ibn Sīnā's theory, in which, as Black explains, "the mind must implicitly reason that the repeated connection between the terms of the proposition represents an essential, and not merely an incidental, relation."[36] As such, the acceptability of empirical propositions as *prima facie* candidates for certain knowledge is based on the acceptability of sensibles—they are sensibles plus something more. However, because al-Ġazālī will show that sensibles are not to be trusted from early on in the Sceptical Argument, there is no reason to take empirical propositions as candidates in this way; hence his omission of the empirical propositions from the list of the candidates.[37]

This is also the case with testimonials. The term *mutawātirāt* (sg. *mutawātir*) is drawn from Islamic jurisprudence in discussions of the Prophet's traditions, in which a tradition is counted as *mutawātir* if it is narrated by enough trustworthy people as to remove the possibility of doubt. Ibn Sīnā generalised this notion and used it as a material of syllogism,[38] and al-Ġazālī followed him in taking it as one of the materials eligible to be used in demonstration. Although al-Ġazālī does not elaborate on this issue, as Black notes, these propositions are "in some way empirical" (ibid). That is, they are sensible—or in some cases empirical—propositions and as such their trustworthiness rests on the trustworthiness of the sensible propositions.[39] But since sensibles are among

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35   Al-Ġazālī's examples are similar to those of Ibn Sīnā, and at least one of them, e.g., that the sun is shining, is quoted verbatim from him. See Black, "Certitude, Justification, and the Principles of Knowledge," 128.

36   Black, "Certitude, Justification, and the Principles of Knowledge," 128. This is the second requirement that Black mentions, the first of which is that "the sensation must be repeated and preserved in memory" (ibid., 128).

37   In addition, the reasoning of the intelligence is arguably based on primaries, which will be refuted in the next step of the Sceptical Argument.

38   Black, "Certitude, Justification, and the Principles of Knowledge," 132.

39   See Black, 133. Although al-Ġazālī does not explicitly say anything about this, given that his theory on this matter is entirely based on Ibn Sīnā's, it seems reasonable to assume

the *prima facie* candidates and are to be proved wanting in due course, testimonials as well as empirical propositions are *ipso facto* doubtful, hence their absence among the *prima facie* candidates.

There seems to be another reason at work here in al-Ġazālī's reasoning for omitting testimonials from the list of candidates for knowledge. Since I do not have any textual evidence, however, I would rather put it forth as a conjecture. Al-Ġazālī, being influenced by the *Ašʿarite* school of thought, shares their aversion to *taqlīd*; namely, emulative acceptance of something based on the authority of others. As Frank Griffel argues, "earlier *Ashʿarites* saw a clear opposition between *taqlīd* and knowledge [*ʿilm, maʿrifah*] in the sense that the one excludes the other."[40] Al-Ġazālī embraces, generalises, and offers a more sophisticated version of this theory. Richard Frank writes in his seminal work on the issue:

> The earlier *Ashʿarites* had raised and treated the question of *taqlīd* almost exclusively within the context of religious assent and had conceived intrinsic and latent instability as one of the defining characteristics of belief founded on *taqlīd*. Al-Ġazzālī looks at the problem of the passive adoption of, or uncritical acquaintance to, the beliefs and teachings of the others in a broader and more general framework than had his predecessors and thereby extended the concept of *taqlīd* and its applicability.[41]

Al-Ġazālī, therefore, broadens the concept of *taqlīd* from mere religious beliefs to also encompass other, epistemological areas. In this generalised sense, he considers *taqlīd* and knowledge in the strict sense—that is, certain knowledge—to be exclusive, though he allows it to be consistent with knowledge in the broader sense.

Now, it is of course true that the two notions of testimonials and emulative beliefs [*muqalladāt*] are conceptually different, and even in *Aims*, al-Ġazālī goes as far as to claim that concerning what is based on the testimony of many, "when the possibility of doubt is removed it is called testimonial" (*Aims*, 47). However, there is a shared element in both kinds of belief; namely, that it is based on others' reports and does not reach the level of certainty of something one experiences oneself—one of them is dependent on the authority of

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that he also shares this limitation, hence the elimination of testimonials from the list of *prima facie* candidates.

40   Frank Griffel, "*Taqlīd* of the Philosophers: Al-Ghazālī's Initial Accusation in His *Tahāfut*," in *Ideas, Images, and Methods of Portrayal: Insights into Classical Arabic Literature and Islam*, ed. Sebastian Günther (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 273–96, 279.

41   Frank, "Al-Ghazali on Taqlid: Scholars, Theologians, and Philosophers," 208.

a single person and the other on the authority of a group of people. It seems at least plausible to assume that in the context of the Sceptical Argument, where al-Ġazālī is seeking certain knowledge in the strictest possible sense, which is indubitable and infallible, he will rule out something that is based on the authority of others. Moreover, it is entirely consistent with what he says at the beginning of the introduction to *Deliverer*, where he says that he escaped from *taqlīd* and climbed "to the highland of independent investigation" (*Deliverer*, 61; 18). This is of course no more than a conjecture, and it would be an interesting topic of research to see the relationship between testimonials and *taqlīd* in al-Ġazālī's corpus. However, this would go beyond the limited space of this paper.

How, then, does al-Ġazālī proceed to reach his sceptical conclusion? The best way to understand his reasoning is by appreciating what I call the Hierarchical Account of Knowledge, in which the sources of knowledge are organised in order of superiority. This is, of course, a corollary of his accepted epistemological theory, as described above, in which there is such a hierarchy both in the different kinds of syllogism—with demonstration being the highest—and in its materials, with the first four occupying the highest position. Yet even among these four, we learn in the first chapter that sensibles stand in a lower position compared to necessities. It is by means of this hierarchy that he proceeds to argue for his sceptical conclusion, first by showing that necessities, as a higher judge, prove sensibles to be insufficient and then by showing that the possibility of a still higher judge undermines the acceptability of the necessities themselves.

The criterion for certain knowledge, as mentioned above, is that the knowledge claims be infallible and indubitable. As for the first candidate, the sensibles, al-Ġazālī gives two examples of actual mistakes; namely, perceiving the shadow to be standing still and then realising that it is moving very slowly, and taking the sun to be as small as a *dīnār* coin and then, by means of mathematical reasoning, finding out that it is larger than the Earth. In these examples, al-Ġazālī argues, it is the higher judge, the intelligence-judge, that proves the sensibles wrong. These actual examples of mistakes show that sensibles do not satisfy the infallibility criterion, and hence they cannot be considered certain knowledge.

The case of the second *prima facie* candidate is more complicated, as al-Ġazālī gives no example of actual mistakes, and it is here that he alludes to his celebrated dream example. In arguing against the necessities, al-Ġazālī has the sensibles complain that he used to trust them until the necessities came along as a higher judge and proved them wrong. How can he be sure, they ask, that there is no higher judge to prove even the necessities wrong? He writes:

> For a brief space my soul hesitated about the answer to that objec-
> tion, and sensibles [*ḥissīyāt*] reinforced their difficulty by an appeal to
> dreaming, saying: "Don't you see that when you are asleep you believe
> certain things and imagine certain circumstances and believe they are
> fixed and lasting and entertain no doubts about their status? Then you
> wake up and know that all your imaginings and beliefs were groundless
> and unsubstantial. So while everything you believe through sensation or
> intelligence in your waking state may be true in relation to that state,
> what assurance have you that you may not suddenly experience a state
> which would have the same relation to your waking state as the latter has
> to your dreaming, and your waking state would be dreaming in relation to
> that new and further state?" (*Deliverer*, 66–67; 22; translation amended).

Here, al-Ġazālī considers the possibility of a higher judge that can prove neces-
sities to be insufficient, just as was proven for sensibles. The case of sensibles
was easier, as we saw, because there is actually a higher judge and actual cases
of mistakes. In the case of necessities, however, not only are there no actual
cases of mistakes—or at least, al-Ġazālī does not report any—but there is no
higher judge on the list of the materials of syllogism. It is because of this lack
of an actual judge that al-Ġazālī alludes to the example of dreaming—just as
when waking one realises that what one saw in one's dream was faulty, there
might be a higher state in which one could see that one's waking observations
are faulty. This shows that the criterion of indubitability is not satisfied—there
is always a possibility of there being a higher judge that can prove me wrong.
What higher state might that be? Al-Ġazālī gives two examples:

> It may be [*la'alla*] that this state beyond reason is that which the Sufis
> claim is theirs [*ḥāl*]. For they allege that, in states they experience when
> they concentrate inwardly and suspend sensation, they see phenomena
> which are not in accord with the normal data of reason. Or it may be
> [*la'alla*] that this state is death. For the Apostle of God—God's blessing
> and peace be upon him!—said: "Men are asleep: then after they die they
> awake" (*Deliverer* 67; 22–23; translation amended).

Sufis report cases of *ḥāl* in which they (claim to) see contradictions as true and
false simultaneously. Death also, according to the tradition related from the
Prophet Muhammad, can show one things that seem impossible to perceive in
this world. These are the examples that al-Ġazālī gives regarding what a higher
judge might be. What is important, however, is that these are just examples.
First, his use of the term *la'alla*—"maybe" or "may"—shows that he means

them to be mere possibilities and nothing more. In addition, what he tries to do is to prove that there is space for doubt, that even necessities are dubitable, and that the mere possibility of there being such a higher state is enough. Even if someone denies these two—for example, if one is sceptical of there being such a thing as a Sufi *ḥāl*, or even of the existence of the Hereafter—one can still believe in the mere possibility of there being a higher judge and hence accept the dubitability of necessities. As one would say in Arabic, his examples are used merely to bring the case "closer to mind" [*taqrīb bi-l-ḏihn*] and are not committed to them *per se*.

Once one accepts this dubitability, one sees that there is no refuge, at least in the current state in which we find ourselves. As al-Ġazālī argues, in refuting such a possibility, one needs to formulate demonstrations. Since demonstrations need primaries in their formulation, and primaries are exactly what are under attack here, formulating demonstrations against the possibility of such a higher judge—to use a contemporary turn of phrase—begs the question against the sceptic. It is because of this, I suggest, that al-Ġazālī does not offer any treatment of the Sceptical Argument and writes that "that was *not achieved by constructing a proof or putting together an argument*. On the contrary, it was the effect of the light God Most High cast into my breast" (*Deliverer*, 67–68; 23, emphasis mine). In fact, from al-Ġazālī's point of view, there is no way for humans to prove the falsity of this sceptical argument by way of argumentation, but it is God who can directly intervene to make them regain their trust in primaries and continue in their normal epistemic affairs.

4   Comparison with Descartes

The general consensus among al-Ġazālī scholars—though not, I reckon, among Descartes scholars—is that the Sceptical Argument anticipates Descartes's sceptical considerations in the *First Meditation*, to the extent that in a recent contribution, Taneli Kukkonen calls it common "knowledge":

> Among professional historians of philosophy it is by now common knowledge that Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad al-Ghazālī (1058–1111 CE) in his works anticipates both Descartes's and Hume's sceptical arguments with a closeness that at times borders on the eerie. Like Descartes in the Discourse on Method, Ghazālī in his autobiography expresses dissatisfaction with the teachings of the established schools of the time. Also like Descartes (this time in the Meditations), Ghazālī describes in remarkably personal terms a quest for certain knowledge that could act as a secure

foundation in his search for truth. As in Descartes's case, Ghazālī's casting around for certitude leads him to a series of sceptical doubts ranging from the very trivial to the very grave. It results in an impasse from which only the recognition of God as the ultimate guarantor of all truth will deliver the inquiring mind.[42]

It is not obvious, however, what this anticipation amounts to, and most of the works seldom go beyond some superficial affinities and do not offer any systematic discussion about the similarities and dissimilarities between the two thinkers.[43] In fact, given the Sceptical Argument's dependence on the Aristotelian theories of the Muslim Peripatetics, as I argued above, and Descartes's famous aversion towards Aristotelianism, it seems highly doubtful that the two arguments could share anything philosophically interesting. What I want to do in this section is to make a case for this *prima facie* intuition. I will look at three ostensible similarities that often appear in the literature as the most obvious cases of their convergence; that is, their search for certain knowledge, their use of the dream hypothesis, and finally their allusion to God when refuting scepticism. Then, I will argue that in all three of these cases, there are systematic differences between al-Ġazālī and Descartes, hence the essential dissimilarity between their arguments.[44]

Before discussing these three ostensible similarities, however, one preliminary point is in order. This is in fact a point that was already made by Myles Burnyeat some four decades ago in his seminal 1982 paper "Idealism and Greek Philosophy: What Descartes Saw and Berkeley Missed,"[45] but its application to the particular case of al-Ġazālī's Sceptical Argument has escaped the attention of scholars. This point is based on the fact that Descartes's sceptical considerations are founded on his conviction that we have direct access only to our ideas, our very own mental episodes, and that our access to external objects

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42   Kukkonen, "Al-Ghazali's Skepticism Revisited," 29.

43   See n. 8 above for reference to the literature in this area. In addition, in fairness to Kukkonen, he also makes it clear that the stories that attempt to find a lineage between al-Ġazālī and Descartes are "fanciful" and that "the philosophical rewards of precursorism are soon reaped and often prove thin" (Kukkonen, "Al-Ghazali's Skepticism Revisited," 30).

44   Like any other area in philosophy and its history, however, the matter of reading the *First Meditation* is highly controversial, and I do not wish to enter into such a big debate here. Instead, I will concentrate on some points about Descartes's sceptical considerations and his response thereto, for which there is powerful textual evidence, and—hopefully—with which many different readings, although not all of them, are consistent.

45   Myles Burnyeat, "Idealism and Greek Philosophy: What Descartes Saw and Berkeley Missed," *The Philosophical Review* 13 (1982): 3–40.

is instead indirect, via an inference from these mental episodes—Descartes's so-called representationalism.[46] This theory, Burnyeat argues, is something to which the ancients—and arguably their medieval followers—had no access.[47]

This thesis finds support in Descartes's writings, such as when he writes in a letter to Guillaume Gibieuf dated 19 January 1642 that "I am certain that I have no knowledge of outside me except by means of the ideas I have within me" (AT, 3:474; CSM, 3:201).[48] He is quite clear that he takes his sceptical considerations to be based on this conviction, as becomes evident when he offers a summary of his sceptical argument at the beginning of the *Third Meditation*:

> Yet I previously accepted as wholly certain and evident many things which I afterwards realized were doubtful. […] But what was about them that I perceived clearly? Just that the ideas, or the thoughts, of such things appeared before my mind. Yet even now I am not denying that these ideas occur within me. But there was something else which I used to assert, and which through habitual belief I thought I perceived clearly, although I did not in fact do so. This was that *there were things outside me which were the source of my ideas* and which resembled them in all respects. This was my mistake (AT, 7:35; CSM, 2:24–25; my emphasis).

Or when he writes in the *Sixth Meditation*:

> Since the ideas perceived by the senses were much more lively and vivid and even, in their own way, more distinct than any of those which I deliberately formed through meditating or which I found impressed on my memory, it seemed impossible that they should have come from within me, so the only alternative was that they came from other things. Since *the sole source of my knowledge of these things was the ideas themselves*, the supposition that the things resembled the ideas was bound to occur to me (AT, 7:75; CSM, 2:52; my emphasis).

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46   This is, of course, not uncontroversial, but I think that the textual evidence below shows that it is not unwarranted to ascribe this to Descartes.

47   Burnyeat, "Idealism and Greek Philosophy," 32, 44.

48   AT refers to volumes in René Descartes, *Oeuvres de Descartes*, ed. Charles Adam and Paul Tanerry, 13 vols. (Paris: Vrin, 1974–1983), while CSM refers to the English translation in Descartes, *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, trans. John G. Cottingham, Robert Stoothof, Dugald Murdoch, and Anthony Kenny, 3 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984–1991). All quoted passages are taken from the latter.

This shows that as philosophers as early as Kant have recognised,[49] the force behind Descartes's sceptical argument is that we should infer the existence or qualities of external objects from our ideas, and such an inference is always doubtful. In other words, if we reject Cartesian representationalism, his sceptical argument is *ipso facto* blocked. The matter of the ancients and the medieval philosophers following them, however, is more controversial, and there are philosophers who reject Burnyeat's claim.[50] Whatever our stance towards this issue *überhaupt* may be, the reconstruction of the Sceptical Argument offered above shows that it does not rely on this Cartesian theory. Contrary to the case of the Cartesian sceptical argument, which depends on Descartes's representationalism, it is completely consistent with our having direct access to external objects. In the case of sensibles, al-Ġazālī has no need to base his argumentation on a doubtful inference from our mental episodes to the existence of external objects, and the case of necessities' independence from this representationalism is even more obvious.

Scholars, nonetheless, normally point to some cases of actual similarities in formulation; that is, the three cases of similarities mentioned above. The first, as Kukkonen writes in the passage quoted above, is that both philosophers seek "certain knowledge that could act as a secure foundation in [their] search for truth." This is of course true, but it is not specific to these two thinkers. As I argued above, although there is no concept analogous to certainty in the *Posterior Analytics*, it becomes a recurring ideal throughout medieval Arabic and Latin traditions. Modern philosophers—most notably, for my present purpose, Descartes—also share this ideal with their scholastic predecessors.[51] This shows that this type of aspiration to the ideal of certainty was quite common in the traditions in which al-Ġazālī and Descartes were writing. That they both have such an ideal in mind, therefore, does not say anything specific about them, and thus cannot be accepted as evidence that al-Ġazālī anticipated Descartes.

The second point often mentioned in this regard is that both al-Ġazālī and Descartes appeal to the dream hypothesis as a motivation for their respective

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49   See Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), B 274.

50   For some criticism of his point, see Stephen Everson, "The Objective Appearance of Pyrrhonism," in *Companions to Ancient Thought 2: Psychology*, ed. Stephen Everson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 121–47, and Gail Fine, "Subjectivity, Ancient and Modern: The Cyrenaics, Sextus, and Descartes," in *Hellenistic and Early Modern Philosophy*, ed. Brad Inwood and Jon Miller (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 192–231. See also Pasnau, *After Certainty*, Lecture 4.

51   See Lecture 2 in Pasnau, *After Certainty*.

sceptical arguments. It is of course true that both talk about dreaming at some stage of their sceptical arguments, but it plays essentially different roles—in al-Ġazālī's case, it is based on his Hierarchical Account of Knowledge, whereas in Descartes's, it is within his representationalist framework. In al-Ġazālī's Sceptical Argument, as argued above, the dream example is introduced to illustrate the possibility of there being a higher state in which we have access to a judge higher than the necessities. This only makes sense if one assumes the hierarchy among the sources of knowledge. Quite to the contrary, in the case of Descartes, the dream example is introduced as an example of an alternative cause of our ideas. I argued above that Descartes's sceptical argument is based on the position that we should infer the existence of external objects from the fact that we have ideas of those objects. Since it is always possible that the ideas may have causes other than the actual external objects, the existence of the objects is always doubtful. Now, Descartes's dream hypothesis is introduced as an alternative cause of our ideas; perhaps it is my dreaming that is the cause of the idea that I have a piece of paper in my hand and not an actual piece of paper. Therefore, the dream example not only plays different roles in the two thinkers' arguments, but also makes sense in two different epistemological frameworks. Hence, the mere appearance of the word "dream" will not suffice to connect the arguments in this way.[52]

The last point of similarity is that both al-Ġazālī and Descartes allude to God when refuting their respective sceptical arguments; for instance, Kukkonen writes that the Sceptical Argument "results in an impasse from which only the recognition of God as the ultimate guarantor of all truth will deliver the inquiring mind."[53] As mentioned, however, at the end of the first chapter, al-Ġazālī talks very briefly about how he overcame the sceptical crisis. Allow me to quote the passage again:

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52   As mentioned, I am trying not to base my arguments here on my own reading of Descartes. However, it is worth mentioning that in my reading, there are two independent sceptical arguments in the First Meditation, one based on the dream hypothesis, which I elsewhere call the "Veil of Ideas" argument, and one (partly) based on the deceiving God hypothesis, which I call the "Author of my Origin" argument. What I have argued for above applies only to the "Veil of Ideas" argument, as it is only this one that is based on Descartes's representationalism. The "Author of my Origin" argument, which argues that there might be a God who deceives me, or that there might not be a God at all, is even more removed from al-Ġazālī's argument.

53   In fairness to Kukkonen, however, he refers to this difference in "Meditating on the Meditations," but does not push it far enough.

> At length God Most High cured me of that sickness. My soul regained its health and equilibrium and once again I accepted the self-evident data of reason and relied on them with safety and certainty. But *that was not achieved by constructing a proof or putting together an argument. On the contrary, it was the effect of a light which God Most High cast into my breast* (*Deliverer* 67; 23; emphasis mine).

Al-Ġazālī is quite explicit that his "cure" for the sickness of scepticism was not by way of argumentation, but rather it was the light of God, most probably through some kind of (mystical or religious) experience, that showed him that necessities could be trusted. This is in total contrast to the way Descartes deals with the sceptical challenge, using God's existence and in particular His attribute of benevolence as a theoretical premise in his overall anti-sceptical manoeuver. Descartes mobilises his anti-sceptical argument in the *Second Meditation*, when he uses his *cogito* reasoning to show that there is at least one proposition that I cannot possibly doubt; namely, that as long as I think, I exist. Then, in the *Third Meditation*, he offers his arguments for the existence of God based on our having an idea of God and also the fact that we exist, and then argues that God, being benevolent, neither deceives us nor allows us to be deceived:

> I recognize that it is impossible that God should ever deceive me. For in every case of trickery and deception some imperfection is to be found; and although the ability to deceive appears to be an indication of cleverness or power, the will to deceive is undoubtedly evidence of malice or weakness, and so cannot apply to God (AT, 7:53, CSM, 2:37).

Descartes argues based on the metaphysical conclusion that God exists and is benevolent, coming to the conclusion that we possess knowledge, and hence God plays a theoretical role in the anti-sceptical argument. This whole theoretical apparatus is absent in al-Ġazālī's account, which is merely a report from a firm believer that God helped him to rid himself of his ignorance, and neither God nor any of His attributes plays any *theoretical* role in his argumentation.[54] I conclude that the two thinkers' sceptical arguments and their responses thereto are essentially different.

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54   For a different argument for the same conclusion, see Hadisi, "Ghazālī's Transformative Answer to Skepticism."

5   Concluding Remarks

Having rejected the ideal of certainty in contemporary epistemology and leaving behind the project of *Posterior Analytics*, the Sceptical Argument hardly strikes us as a genuine worry. Contemporary epistemologists seldom tie knowledge and certainty together, and there are few who take knowledge to be infallible or indubitable. These facts, however, do not undermine the importance of al-Ġazālī's achievement in discovering such a serious *aporia* for the Peripatetic epistemic theory. If one shares his assumptions—namely, his criterion for certain knowledge and the place of demonstrative proof in achieving it—then his Sceptical Argument is a real threat.

In fact, one can charge al-Ġazālī and the subsequent thinkers with not giving enough weight to the problem so pressing in their own system; that is, the problem that the mere possibility of there being a higher judge undermines the primaries' indubitability, and the only way to refute such scepticism is either to relax the indubitability criterion or to prove that there cannot be such a higher judge. Both options, however, are unavailable to al-Ġazālī. He never gives up on the ideal of indubitability and takes the rejection of the possibility of there being a higher judge as impossible and question-begging, since in doing so one unavoidably uses demonstration and hence primaries, which are themselves under attack. It is true that in the remaining parts of the book, al-Ġazālī goes on to show that there are cognitions—the Sufis' method and their prophetic power—over and above such knowledge, but he never undercuts demonstrative knowledge *tout court.*

It should be noted, however, that my arguments for the essential difference between al-Ġazālī's and Descartes's sceptical arguments are not meant to show that there is no relation whatsoever between them. One such relation can be found in Stephen Menn's seminal 2003 paper "The *Discourse on the Method* and the Tradition of Intellectual Autobiography."[55] In this work, he makes the case for a genre of intellectual autobiography beginning with Galen, most notably in *Errors of the Soul* and *The Best Kind of Teaching*, which continues in subsequent centuries in works by thinkers such as Ibn al-Haytam, al-Ġazālī, and Tommaso Campanella and culminates in Descartes. In this narrative, the similarities between al-Ġazālī's autobiographical considerations in *Deliverer* and Descartes's comparable points in *Discourse on the Method* go back to this common source. One can also add that the sceptical arguments they offer play only methodological roles for them, in the sense that they are presented only to be refuted in due course in order to achieve some other aims.

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55   Menn, "The *Discourse on the Method* and the Tradition of Intellectual Autobiography."

The whole point of the arguments in section 4, however, is that these similarities, undeniable as they are, do not amount to any *systematic* matches. Their respective sceptical arguments belong to essentially different philosophical traditions—or systems, if one prefers—and have different and mutually exclusive presuppositions and premises.

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Scepticism and Certainty in Salomon Maimon's Theory of Invention

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Abstract

This article examines the sceptical dimension of Salomon Maimon's theory of invention. It suggests the following: (i) Most of Maimon's methods are intended to increase the degree of certainty that we can attribute to propositions, but not to achieve apodictic certainty. (ii) Maimon's various forms of scepticism, for example, doubt and the antinomies, should be considered as belonging to a scale of doubt wherein degrees of certainty and probability can increase and decrease. (iii) His methods of invention offer various means for increasing the degree of certainty, such as finding more connections to other propositions and analysing whether a condition expressed in a proposition is true or whether it is only a pseudo-condition. (iv) The method of transforming problematic propositions into true propositions indicates that Maimon's sceptical stance sometimes made way for rational dogmatic thought, since this transformation is in the opposite direction of what is usually advocated by sceptics.

Keywords

1 Introduction[1]

Scholarship on Maimon's theory of invention is far from voluminous. It mainly consists of my previous work, which, as Peter Thielke notes, lacks a

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1 This article partly results from a talk I gave in June 2019 in the framework of the lecture series entitled "Skepticism and Tolerance: Moses Mendelssohn, Salomon Maimon, and Jewish

consideration of Maimon's sceptical concerns.[2] This article proposes to address this scholarly lacuna by exploring how Maimon's aspiration to arrive at certainty, together with his scepticism towards any knowledge that is not grounded in the principle of contradiction, influenced his thoughts on invention. These two poles in Maimon's thought, seeking certainty while holding a very strict definition of what can be considered apodictic certainty, do not oppose one another but are instead interconnected. His view that we should doubt any knowledge that cannot be shown to be objectively necessary does not prevent him from aspiring to achieve such knowledge, and, at the same time, the difficulty of achieving apodictic certainty allows us to allocate our intellectual efforts towards the production of new certain knowledge, as well as to propose new justifications as to why given knowledge should be attributed a higher degree of certainty.

Maimon wrote about invention on several occasions throughout his life, including in his first published book and in unpublished papers found posthumously.[3] As has already been mentioned elsewhere, he defined invention on several occasions and in different ways. One of the most general and important definitions of invention states that it is the act of "bringing *unknown truths out of known* truths following *secure methods* [*sichere Methoden*]."[4] Other definitions explain inventing as presenting a new object *a priori* and constructing syllogisms, either through analysis or synthesis.[5] In this article, I mostly refer to Maimon's definition of invention as the act of finding new

2   Idit Chikurel, *Salomon Maimon's Theory of Invention: Scientific Genius, Analysis and Euclidean Geometry* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2020); Peter Thielke, "*Salomon Maimon's Theory of Invention. Scientific Genius, Analysis and Euclidian Geometry* by Idit Chikurel (review)," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 59 (2021): 691.

3   Salomon Maimon, *Essay on Transcendental Philosophy*, trans. Nick Midgley, Henry Somers-Hall, Alistair Welchman, and Merten Reglitz (London: Continuum, 2010), 88, 280–82, 370; Maimon, "Erfindungsmethoden," in Maimon, *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 7, ed. Valerio Verra (Hildesheim: Olms, 1976), 139–46.

4   Salomon Maimon, "Das Genie und der methodische Erfinder (aus: *Berlinische Monatsschrift*. 1795. ʙᴅ xxvi. S. 362–384)," in Maimon, *Gesammelte Werke*, Vol. 6, ed. Valerio Verra (Hildesheim: Olms, 1971), 363. From now on, all the English translations of Maimon's works are my own. See also Chikurel, *Salomon Maimon's Theory of Invention*, 21.

5   For the sake of brevity, my use of the term "invention" also includes the sense of "discovery" unless otherwise specified, since the difference between invention and discovery is subjective: the former is defined as presenting a new object *a priori* while the latter is defined as ascribing a new attribute to a given object *a priori*. See Chikurel, *Salomon Maimon's Theory of Invention*, 147.

propositions and their connections to other known truths, as the construction of syllogisms, and as what Maimon calls *logical analysis*.[6] I concentrate on the ways in which Maimon's thought on invention is intertwined with his stance towards certainty and scepticism. I suggest that his methods of invention were intended not only to find new propositions, but also to increase the degree of certainty that we can attribute to a proposition by finding as many connections to other known propositions as possible. This is because the more connections a given proposition has, the more likely it is to be true. In his search for new certain knowledge rather than apodictic knowledge, Maimon was motivated by his sceptical stance. However, this is not to say that he completely neglected the search for apodictic knowledge, as I show in my discussion of the method suggesting that one assumes a problematic proposition to be true. To explain how the discovery and invention of new knowledge is connected to Maimon's notions of certainty and scepticism, I suggest that we conceive his sceptical stance in all its forms (e.g., doubt and the antinomies) as a scale of doubt that also expresses various degrees of certainty that can be attributed to a proposition. The scale ranges from impossibility to objective necessity, and apart from the certainty of propositions it also expresses the probability of an event occurring. I claim that Maimon's desire to find new propositions or new connections between given propositions is guided by his wish to increase the degree of certainty that we can attribute a proposition. His theory of invention does not focus on achieving the safe ground of objectively necessary knowledge, but rather on inventing propositions using what he calls "secure methods" to ensure that we can attribute some degree of certainty to them. In order to demonstrate what it means to use such methods, I discuss the specific elements of each method that serve this aim, or in some cases, that fail to fulfil this goal. Last but not least, I argue that when Maimon proposes to transform

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6   Salomon Maimon, "Ueber den Gebrauch der Philosophie zur Erweiterung der Erkenntnis," in Maimon, *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 6, 22; Maimon, "Das Genie und der methodische Erfinder," 376.

     The role of analysis is much more significant than that of synthesis in both theory and practice: Maimon explicitly states that "the entire *art of invention*, as will be shown later on, is based on *analysis*" and proposes more methods of analysis than of synthesis. See Maimon, "Ueber den Gebrauch der Philosophie zur Erweiterung der Erkenntnis," 21; Maimon, "Das Genie und der methodische Erfinder," 375. This is not to say that synthesis is irrelevant to invention, as one of Maimon's definitions of synthesis is identical to one of his definitions of invention as "introducing a new object *a priori*." See Maimon, "Versuch einer neuen Logik oder Theorie des Denkens, Nebst angeängten Briefen des Philaletes an Aenesidemus (1st ed. 1794)," in Maimon, *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 5, ed. Valerio Verra (Hildesheim: Olms, 1970), 50; Maimon, "Das Genie und der methodische Erfinder," 363; Maimon, "Ueber den Gebrauch der Philosophie zur Erweiterung der Erkenntnis," 10.

problematic propositions into true propositions by arriving at the identity of a thing with itself, he reveals that at times, his search for certain knowledge is overcome by his desire to find new apodictic knowledge. Since, for Maimon, a sceptical thinker conceives propositions grounded in the principle of identity as apodictic, this method is in line with his philosophical approach of rational dogmatism and empirical scepticism. Nevertheless, this method transforms problematic propositions into truths, which is the opposite of what is advocated by sceptical thinkers; namely, transforming what are perceived as truths into problematic propositions.

My analysis of Maimon's work on invention is based on the two articles presenting the outlines of his theory of invention, both of which appeared in 1795: "Ueber den Gebrauch der Philosophie zur Erweiterung der Erkenntniß" [On the Use of Philosophy for Expanding Knowledge] and "Das Genie und der methodische Erfinder" [The Genius and the Methodical Inventor]. Moreover, I refer to his posthumously published "Erfindungsmethoden" [Methods of Invention]. Maimon's motive for writing a theory of invention and for presenting methodical means for the expansion of knowledge is to leave as little room as possible for means that are opaque to reason, such as chance. Instead, he argues, we should aspire to be able to account for each step we take in the process of advancing knowledge.[7] In light of this, my discussion of the influence of Maimon's sceptical stance on his thoughts regarding invention is conducted under the premise that his scepticism is not one that aims at an intellectual "standstill" (or tranquillity of the intellect), but rather one that aims to make progress in our knowledge, even if this progress is in the form of very small and careful steps for which we can account and with the understanding that at most, we should aim for knowledge to which we can attribute higher degrees of certainty rather than shooting for the moon of objective necessity.

2   Scepticism, Probability, and Degrees of Certainty

The central element in Maimon's theory of invention most influenced by his sceptical stance is his concentration on finding knowledge that is certain, but not objectively necessary. This is because his notion of objectively necessary knowledge is strict and includes only knowledge grounded in the principle of contradiction (and that of identity). The sceptical stance does not allow us to regard any knowledge that is grounded on additional principles or means, such as intuition, as objectively necessary. Rather, such knowledge is only

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7   Maimon, "Ueber den Gebrauch der Philosophie zur Erweiterung der Erkenntnis," 2.

subjectively necessary. In accordance with this sceptical outline, most of the methods that Maimon presents are meant to raise the degree of certainty that we can attribute to propositions, but not to show that these propositions can be attributed with apodictic certainty.[8] The one method that claims to do the latter will be discussed separately at the end of this article.

Maimon describes himself as the first rational dogmatist and empirical sceptic.[9] A rational dogmatist and empirical sceptic asserts not only that the forms of our cognition are *a priori*, but also that some objects are produced by thought *a priori*.[10] An example of such absolutely *a priori* objects created by thought are numbers defined as ratios, which Maimon considered to be pure concepts of the understanding and apodictic knowledge.[11] This is the part of the rational dogmatist, and as such, Maimon's theory of invention attempts

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8   According to Maimon, apodictic certainty is attributed to knowledge of objects that are determined by the understanding alone and not to knowledge of objects given in intuition (not even pure intuition). Objective necessity is attributed to concepts and propositions that are grounded on the principles of identity and contradiction alone. The latter definition is narrower and more specific than the first, yet we can assume that the definition of apodictic certainty refers to the principles of contradiction and identity, since other principles, such as the principle of sufficient reason and the principle of determinability, assume the use of objects given in intuition. For instance, one of the requirements of the principle of determinability is to present an object in the forms of intuition. Other rules of thought that are claimed to produce apodictic certain knowledge suggested by Maimon include the idea that numbers defined as ratios are pure concepts of the understanding that determine real objects. Since I have previously shown that this suggestion is unconvincing, I do not include it among the rules that generate apodictic certainty. In what follows, in the context of objective necessity I mention only the principle of contradiction and not that of identity, for the sake of brevity and in accordance to Maimon's own emphasis on contradiction rather than identity in this context. See Maimon, *Essay on Transcendental Philosophy*, 59; Salomon Maimon, "Philosophisches Wörterbuch oder Beleuchtung der Wichtigsten Gegenstände der Philosophie in alphabetischer Ordnung," in Maimon *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 3, ed. Valerio Verra (Hildesheim: Olms, 1970), 111; Idit Chikurel, "Analysis and Necessity in Arithmetic in Light of Maimon's Concept of Number as Ratio," *Kant-Studien* 114 (2023): 33–67; Maimon, "Versuch einer neuen Logik," 310.

9   Maimon's assertion that he is the first to hold this philosophical position goes hand in hand with the importance he ascribes to the "self-thinker." According to Gideon Freudenthal, Maimon often praises the *Selbstdenker*, and there are two possible influences that could have caused him to adopt this term: the ideal of the Enlightenment phrased by Kant ("sapere aude!") and a medieval talmudic phrase to which Maimonides refers in reference to the ability to study mysticism on one's own ("the wise and able to understand by himself"). The appealing to both modern and medieval traditions is characteristic of Maimon's thought, since he partakes in a variety of traditions. See Freudenthal, "A Philosopher between Two Cultures," in *Salomon Maimon: Rational Dogmatist, Empirical Skeptic: Critical Assessments*, ed. Gideon Freudenthal (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 2003), 13–15.

10   Maimon, *Essay on Transcendental Philosophy*, 436–37.

11   Maimon, *Essay on Transcendental Philosophy*, 190.

to show how to invent new *a priori* objects and new propositions. The second part of this complex stance, empirical scepticism, is the stance doubting any knowledge that is not grounded in the principles of identity and contradiction; that is, any knowledge that is not objectively necessary. Other forms of thought, such as the category of cause and effect, are only subjectively necessary.[12] In Maimon's theory of invention, this stance is expressed in his aim to seek new certain knowledge, but not objectively necessary knowledge.[13] Both parts of Maimon's stance as a rational dogmatist and empirical sceptic are based on his distinction between objective and subjective necessity and his conception of what apodictic certain knowledge is. Objectively necessary knowledge is grounded in the principle of contradiction and is thought to be necessary not only by human beings, but by any thinking being in general.[14] Consequently, knowledge given by means of sensibility is not objectively necessary. Subjective necessity is ascribed to knowledge when the connection between the subject and the predicate appears to be necessary, although we do not know the grounds for claiming its objective necessity. Namely, it is grounded not only on the principle of contradiction, but also on other grounds, such as intuition. Maimon states that we can ascribe apodictic certainty only to judgments in which the connection between the subject and the predicate has an inner ground and we can gain insight into the subject's essence, so that we can define the connection between it and the predicate. Thus, we can ascribe apodictic certainty only to propositions that are produced by the understanding, creating both the rule and the invented object.[15] It is difficult to determine whether Maimon's sceptical stance stems from his strict definition of objective necessity, or whether it is perhaps the doubtful mind that conceptualises such a strict definition of what can be considered apodictic knowledge. In any case, the two go hand in hand.[16] Maimon is not merely a sceptic, and his scepticism

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12   Maimon, *Essay on Transcendental Philosophy*, 436–37.

13   Maimon, "Ueber den Gebrauch der Philosophie zur Erweiterung der Erkenntnis," 2; Maimon, "Das Genie und der methodische Erfinder," 363.

14   Maimon, *Essay on Transcendental Philosophy*, 151–53.

15   Maimon, *Essay on Transcendental Philosophy*, 60–62.

16   Peter Thielke and Meir Buzaglo suggest that Maimon's strict scepticism is a result of his strict rationalism. However, we can propose that the opposite is the case, wherein we first doubt everything for which we cannot account, and in the case of propositions this means that we must be able to show why the parts of propositions are necessarily connected. See Thielke, "Rationalism, Empiricism, and Skepticism: The Curious Case of Maimon's 'Coalition-System,'" in *The Palgrave Handbook of German Idealism*, ed. Matthew C. Altman (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 224–25, 227, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-137-33475-6_12; Buzaglo, *Solomon Maimon: Monism, Skepticism and Mathematics* (Pittsburgh: Pittsburgh University Press, 2002), 9.

is not an intellectual state so much as it is a method used when attempting to expand our knowledge. This idea implicitly appears in his philosophical dictionary, where he presents the option of being a sceptic while still being able to determine whether something is true providing we have the grounds to do so: he compares "the sceptic" [*der Skeptiker*], who remains with his inner convictions and does not dare to take any steps forward, with "the doubter" [*der Zweifelsüchtiger*], who does not trust his own inner convictions and holds that he cannot determine whether a proposition is true or not.[17] Although it is not explicitly stated, Maimon's description of the doubter implies that he is willing to expand his knowledge if it can be proven that a given proposition can be reduced to the principles of contradiction and identity. In other words, invention is about taking steps towards expanding our knowledge, and the doubter is able to invent (based on his strict notions of what can be considered as truths or as certain propositions), whereas the sceptic—or should we say the Pyrrhonian sceptic—cannot. Thus, the rational dogmatic aspect of his philosophical view claims that we can invent and discover new propositions and objects, whereas the sceptical stance is expressed in narrowing down the aim and means of invention: we aim to find subjectively rather than objectively necessary knowledge and we focus only on making progress regarding things that are already given, leaving out speculative thought.

Maimon's sceptical stance takes several forms, such as antinomies (physical, mathematical, and of thought) or doubt; for example, in the form of the questions *quid juris*? and *quid facti*?[18] There are different interpretations of the structure of his scepticism. For instance, Oded Schechter suggests that there are two ways to interpret Maimon's scepticism: in relation to the application of the principle of determinability and in relation to the problems of *quid juris*? and *quid facti*?[19] Franks, however, differentiates between "regular" doubt, which refers only to whether experience is actual, and doubt in the form of antinomies, which also refers to the question of possibility.[20] To this, I wish to

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17   Maimon, "Philosophisches Wörterbuch," 221.

18   For a discussion of Maimon's antinomy of thought, see Jan Bransen, *The Antinomy of Thought: Maimonian Skepticism and the Relation between Thoughts and Objects* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1991). Maimon's account of the *rota Aristotelis* and the mathematical and physical antinomies are discussed by Gideon Freudenthal: see Freudenthal, *Definition and Construction: Salomon Maimon's Philosophy of Geometry* (Berlin: Preprint 317 of the Max Planck Institute for the History of Science, 2006), 71–86.

19   Oded Schechter, "The Logic of Speculative Philosophy and Skepticism in Maimon's Philosophy: *Satz der Bestimmbarkeit* and the Role of Synthesis," in Freudenthal *Salomon Maimon*, 48–51.

20   Paul W. Franks, *All or Nothing: Systematicity, Transcendental Arguments, and Skepticism in German Idealism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), 189.

add another interpretation, one that helps us connect between doubting and thinking antinomies. I suggest that we consider Maimon's scepticism illustrated on a scale of doubt with varying degrees of certainty, wherein the antinomies are a special case of doubt: on the lowest part of the scale is the impossibility of a proposition and a zero probability of an event occurring, whereas the highest point stands for objective necessity and a probability of one. Objective necessity, which in the context of empirical knowledge means that the probability of an event occurring is one, can only be attributed to propositions in which the connection between subject and predicate is proven to be necessary; namely that the predicate is contained within the concept. The impossibility of a proposition can be demonstrated using means such as *reductio ad absurdum*, and in the case of events, we can show that the probability equals zero. Doubt is expressed all along the scale—for example, by expressing the probability being smaller than one or approximating zero—since both objective necessity and impossibility require determining with apodictic certainty whether a proposition is true or false. Pyrrhonian suspension of judgment as a result of antinomies is expressed by the probability 0.5, assuming that the two opposing arguments at hand are equally strong. This scale serves two purposes: first, it offers a framework for thinking of different sceptical methods, and second, it clarifies what it means to have "secure methods" of invention, since thinking of knowledge as being "more secure" means showing that a proposition can be attributed a higher degree of certainty, or, in the case of empirical events, a higher probability that the event will occur.

The elements justifying my proposal of a scale of doubt are found in Maimon's philosophical dictionary, where he speaks of doubt, belief, and probability. The idea that the antinomies are a specific case of doubt appears in his description of doubt [*Zweifel*]: doubt is defined as the suspension of judgment, wherein negative doubt arises when we do not know the grounds of contradicting judgments, and positive doubt arises when two opposing judgments have equally strong grounds, such as in the antinomies of pure reason.[21] My use of the notion of probability is based on Maimon's differentiation between belief [*Glaube*] and superstition [*Aberglaube*]: in belief, the probability of two phenomena appearing one after the other is high, whereas in superstition, it is very low or null, since the connection between the two phenomena is completely arbitrary. Maimon defines superstition as a subjective connection of perceptions in the faculty of imagination, which is regarded as if it were a real connection of the understanding; that is, as if it were an objective connection. In belief, the probability is based on induction: the more complete

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21   Maimon, "Philosophisches Wörterbuch," 217–18.

the induction, the higher the probability and the closer we are arriving at the complete truth. This is how our belief becomes a strong conviction.[22] Maimon presents an example of how induction increases the degree of probability that we can assign to propositions that describe phenomena: the proposition "the magnet attracts iron" is a belief, since, as Maimon states, so far we have always perceived the phenomenon appearing in this manner. We assume that there is an inner ground connecting the properties of the magnet and the iron and that once we have gained insight into how these objects and their properties are connected, we will understand why this connection is objectively necessary. However, Maimon writes, "superstition has no probability [*Wahrscheinlichkeit*]," since the connection between the different objects is randomly formed by the faculty of imagination.[23] Here, Maimon should have stated that the probability is very low, but not zero, since this connection is not proven to be impossible and therefore there is still a slight chance that the two phenomena will occur one after the other, even if this happens arbitrarily and not as a result of any particular practice, such as kabbalistic practice.[24] To illustrate how superstition works, Maimon gives the example of someone wishing that an ill friend will get better and the friend believing in the curative powers of the warm wish. If it so happens that this friend does get better, then the degree of this subjective induction rises to the degree of certainty. This, Maimon concludes, is why people believe in prophets and magicians, since they regard an arbitrary connection between phenomena as if it were a necessary connection.[25] The requirement for us to have an insight into how two

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22   Maimon, "Philosophisches Wörterbuch," 1.

23   Maimon, "Philosophisches Wörterbuch," 1–2.

24   Showing that an empirical or mathematical proposition is objectively necessary is not impossible but rather very challenging to our finite understanding, since it requires the use of the faculty of imagination for obtaining knowledge of objects and their properties and the transition to knowledge that is purely conceptual is a difficult one. This observation that it is not impossible is important since we cannot claim that something is impossible without demonstrating the impossibility using means such as *reductio ad absurdum*.

25   Maimon, "Philosophisches Wörterbuch," 3.

Maimon himself was once considered a prophet when he rightly predicted the coming death of a young sickly-looking woman. He explains his prediction as being based on observation, having read the symptoms of her poor health. However, the community attributed him special prophetic powers. See Salomon Maimon, "Moritz, R.P.: Salomon Maimons Lebensgeschichte. 1792/93," in Maimon, *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 1, ed. Valerio Verra (Hildesheim: Olms, 1965), 288–89.

It is interesting to note that when writing on parapsychological knowledge, Maimon attempted to show the opposite: that what seems to be irrational phenomena are in fact governed by methods. According to Bergman, in "On the Faculty of Foreseeing" ["Über

parts of a judgment are connected in order for the proposition to be considered a truth becomes clear in Maimon's entry "probability" [*Wahrscheinlichkeit*], appearing in the philosophical dictionary. There, he repeats Hume's example of the judgement "the sun will rise tomorrow," stating that this proposition is only probable, but not a truth, since we do not have insight into the relation between the sun and its movement from day to night.[26] Accordingly, we can define a proposition as a subjective truth if its probability is approximating to one, and as an objective truth when we can show that the concept contains the predicate. This use of induction and probability is true for empirical propositions that describe events. In non-empirical propositions, such as the mathematical ones appearing in Maimon's articles on invention, it is more accurate to say that a proposition is subjectively true, but not objectively true, when we prove that one part of it is necessarily connected to the second part with the help of construction in intuition. The requirement for claiming that a proposition is an objective truth is similar to what is required of empirical propositions; namely, to show that the proposition is grounded on the principle of contradiction alone. Maimon's criterion for considering propositions as objective does not refer to objectivity in the sense of existence in the world, but rather to whether the proposition is grounded on the principle of contradiction alone; that is, on a logical principle. This is because "objective" refers to what is thought the same by any thinking being as such, not only thinking beings who have forms of intuition (space and time) similar to ours. By "subjective," Maimon does not refer to personal feelings, opinions, or perceptions, but rather to humanity itself (or any other thinking being who shares our forms of intuition). "Subjectively necessary knowledge" is any knowledge that we consider necessary because we have presented a proof, yet due to our employment of the forms of intuition in the process, this knowledge cannot be considered objectively necessary. Thus, for instance, we consider theorems in Euclid's *Elements* to be necessary because we can present how they are demonstrated. However, since we arrive at this knowledge using our forms of intuition, we cannot claim that it is objectively necessary knowledge. Only if we demonstrate a mathematical or empirical theorem using the principle

das Vorhersehungsvermögen"; 1791], Maimon claims that it is possible that supernatural phenomena are based on natural laws, but since these laws are still unknown to us, we therefore regard these phenomena as supernatural. As a result, we must examine all phenomena and search for their unknown guiding principles through methodical work. Maimon ceased working on the topic when the magazine *Deutsche Monatsschrift* published its last issue in 1793. See Samuel Hugo Bergman, *The Philosophy of Solomon Maimon*, trans. Noah J. Jacobs (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1967), 218–21; 293.

26   Maimon, "Philosophisches Wörterbuch," 117.

of contradiction alone (i.e., prove that it is true for all thinking beings) can we assert that it truly describes an existing phenomenon or relations between objects.[27]

Increasing the degree of certainty that we can attribute to a proposition is an important guideline for Maimon's theory of invention and can be achieved by connecting a given proposition to as many other propositions as possible through logical means (e.g., deduction). According to Maimon, when we examine a proposition, what matters is not its content *per se*, but rather its logical connections to other known truths. He considers all truths to be connected to each other, and therefore, in his view, striving to connect truths in various ways is not only a general rule of invention, but also the purpose of human intellectual activity. Although he does not mention degrees of certainty *per se*, my interpretation that we should aim to increase the degree of certainty that we can attribute to a proposition according to the number of propositions connected to it is in line with his work. In his introduction to *Givʿat ha-Moreh*, Maimon describes arriving at perfection as the attainment not of truths, but rather of the connections between truths, using the faculty of understanding. He asserts that it is more important to learn how one truth can be inferred from another than to learn the content of these truths. As an example, he mentions that there is no advantage in asserting that the earth is round over asserting that it is flat, when these propositions are considered by themselves. The only advantage that the proposition "the earth is round" has over the opposite proposition is that it has many connections to other propositions (such as the general laws of motion) and that we arrive at these connections through the faculty of understanding. It is possible to assert that "the earth is flat," yet the lack of connections between this proposition and other propositions means that it is not a product of the understanding.[28] Hence, what is important to examine are the logical connections between propositions and the number of these connections. My interpretation, suggesting that we can determine degrees of certainty in relation to the number of connections that a

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27   If two propositions are attributed two different degrees of certainty or probability (P_1 being more certain than P_2), then in the Maimonian framework we can only claim that P_1 is more certain (or has a higher probability) than P_2 and that it is more likely that P_1 describes the world better than P_2. However, we cannot claim that P_1 is "objectively truer" than P_2, because we have not shown in P_1 that the predicate is contained in the subject. Were we to show that P_1 and P_2 are both objective truths by demonstrating that they are grounded on the principle of contradiction alone, then we could claim that the two propositions are true in the same degree of certainty (which is 1, or apodictic).

28   Salomon Maimon, *Givʿat ha-Moreh*, ed. Samuel Hugo Bergman and Nathan Rotenstreich (Jerusalem: Israeli Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1966), 4–5.

proposition has to other propositions, draws from arguments presented before and after Maimon that make similar connections between certainty, probability, and the number of connections one proposition has to others. Philosophers such as Leibniz and Bolzano advocated the idea that the probability that an event will occur is dependent on the number of connections it has to other propositions, thus attempting to connect real objects and events with conceptual thought. Maimon's suggestion should be considered as an occurrence belonging to this long tradition of thinking of the relations between *de re* and *de dicto* in the context of certainty and probability.[29]

As I show in the following sections, Maimon's methods of invention are not so much focused on finding new propositions as they are on looking for the means to find new connections between propositions using demonstration. On some occasions, Maimon specifically mentions means such as the logical principles appearing in Lambert's *New Organon* (e.g., syllogism Barbara) and regressive analysis.[30] Regressive analysis is described by Maimon as the study of the dependency between two propositions or two concepts by employing middle terms or middle concepts.[31] Due to this conception of knowledge as being composed of interconnected propositions, a significant part of Maimon's work on invention is dedicated to finding propositions and middle terms to be used in demonstrations highlighting necessary connections between propositions. This rational approach to the structure of knowledge led him to define even the elusive concept of *genius* by means of syllogisms.

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29   Leibniz considers probability as determining degrees of certainty according to a given body of knowledge. If the propositions are true, it is impossible for the event not to happen. In this, he connects probability *de re*, which refers to objects and physical possibility, with probability *de dicto*, which is about propositions and epistemic possibility. Bernard Bolzano, who refers to Maimon's book on logic in *Theory of Science*, also defines the probability of a proposition (i.e., its degree of validity) in light of its connections to other propositions. In both Leibniz's and Bolzano's descriptions, if we are able to demonstrate a proposition from given propositions, then we achieve what Leibniz terms "complete certainty," or, as Bolzano states, we can determine that a proposition M (given in relation to propositions A, B, C, D, …) is true. See Ian Hacking, *The Emergence of Probability: A Philosophical Study of Early Ideas about Probability, Induction and Statistical Inference* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 124, 127, 146; Bernard Bolzano, *Theory of Science*, trans. Paul Rusnock and Rolf George (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), vol. II, §161.

30   Maimon, "Erfindungsmethoden," 140.

31   Maimon, "Das Genie und der methodische Erfinder," 376; Maimon, "Ueber den Gebrauch der Philosophie zur Erweiterung der Erkenntnis," 22.

3   Certainty, Genius, and Methodical Invention

The influence of Maimon's scepticism towards any knowledge that is not grounded in the principle of contradiction is evident in his description of how the genius and the methodical inventor invent: they both invent by constructing syllogisms. However, his description of their difference, wherein the methodical inventor can account for each step taken while the genius constructs syllogisms unconsciously, lacks sceptical prudence. This is because Maimon does not present any justifications for the claim that the genius constructs syllogisms. Because the process takes place unconsciously, it cannot be analysed in its different stages, and hence we are facing a "black box" whose content or inner organisation we should be hesitant to determine.

As already reviewed elsewhere, when Maimon asks "How can we invent new certain knowledge?" he inquires into the characteristics not only of invention, but also of the inventors themselves. He thus discusses the similarities and differences between two types of inventors, the genius and the methodical inventor, while concentrating on the scientific genius and the methodical inventor rather than on the artistic genius.[32] The feature common to the genius and the methodical inventor is that both construct syllogisms, whereas they differ in whether they apply the rules of the inventive faculty consciously (the methodical inventor) or unconsciously (the genius). The fact that Maimon considers invention as constructing syllogisms and by this wishes to diminish the role of means that are opaque to reason, such as chance, he sets the foundations for finding new certain knowledge.[33] Indeed, sceptical concerns may arise with regard to whether the conclusions of syllogisms are true or false, but at the very least, the process itself is deductive and therefore the produced knowledge can be attributed with a higher degree of certainty than that which is found by "mere chance," "inspiration," or any other means that we cannot present methodically. We can follow the work of a methodical inventor, since he sets before us all the stages of his invention. The work of a genius, however, is for the most part untraceable and therefore cannot be justified. In the case of syllogisms, if we are given the genius's conclusion but not the premises leading to it, we cannot follow the deduction he has made by ourselves and therefore we need to put our trust in his deductive skills. This part of Maimon's theory of invention is not without fault, since the description of how the genius invents using syllogisms is not convincing. However, Maimon's work on methodical invention does allow us to account for the steps taken to construct syllogisms

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32   Chikurel, *Salomon Maimon's Theory of Invention*, 6–11.

33   Maimon, "Das Genie und der methodische Erfinder," 366–67.

and arrive at conclusions. Here, certainty and scepticism go together, since propositions that are put into question and are later found to be certain (to some degree, even if not apodictic) are less prone to "sceptical attacks" than propositions that are completely unfounded.

Since the genius constructs syllogisms unconsciously, Maimon undertakes the task of improving the work of the methodical inventor, in which we can account for every step taken and therefore also apply his methods to new cases.[34] To arrive at higher degrees of certainty that we can attribute to a proposition, we can examine how new conclusions and the demonstrations leading to them can be found, revealing how these conclusions are connected to other known propositions. Maimon chooses mathematics as the field of knowledge in which he develops the practical part of his theory of invention—that is, his methods of invention—because it is an *a priori* science in which both form and matter are determined by constructing the objects.[35] This is in contradistinction to philosophy, which is an *a priori* science wherein only the form is determined, but not matter, since the objects are given, and therefore we can only invent formal inventions. Moreover, Maimon believes that in philosophy, we progress in circles so that newer ideas are not necessarily better than ancient ones, while in mathematics, we only move forward, since what has already been invented serves as a source for new inventions.[36] The natural sciences are *a posteriori* and therefore we can only discover truth and not invent, and as the acquired knowledge is *a posteriori*, it is less certain than the new knowledge acquired in mathematics.[37] Only in mathematics, pure and applied, can we invent new real objects and apply more "evidence, order and certainty, rigour in proofs" than in any other science.[38] Maimon's wish to conceive a theory of invention that produces knowledge that can be regarded as certain is

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34 Maimon, "Das Genie und der methodische Erfinder," 364–65, 371; Maimon, "Ueber den Gebrauch der Philosophie zur Erweiterung der Erkenntnis," 15.

35 Further evidence of Maimon's preference for constructing philosophical arguments based on mathematical examples is found in his commentary on Aristotle's *Categories*, which was published in 1794. There he states that his sceptical way of philosophising encourages him to look for a science wherein the conditions of possibility are examined on real *a priori* objects, not empirical objects. He then writes: "What can it be other than an object of mathematics," thus expressing a clear inclination towards reflecting on mathematical objects rather than empirical ones. See Salomon Maimon, *Die Kathegorien des Aristoteles, mit Anmerkungen erläutert und als Propädeutik zu einer neuen Theorie des Denkens dargestellt von Salomon Maimon* (Berlin: Ernst Felisch, 1794), 133.

36 Salomon Maimon, *Bacons von Verulam Neues Organon* (Berlin: Gottfried Carl Nauclk, 1793), xc–xci.

37 Maimon, *Essay on Transcendental Philosophy*, 2–3.

38 Maimon, "Das Genie und der methodische Erfinder," 372.

overt in the statement that he avoids the need to answer the question "How is invention possible?" by beginning his investigation with actual inventions. This is because what is actual is *ipso facto* possible, and therefore we can begin our discussion by showing how invention can create certain knowledge rather than justifying why invention is possible to begin with—a question that is raised by the sceptical approach.[39] As a consequence of the need to establish our thought on invention in actual inventions, Maimon concentrates on composing methods of invention to be applied to geometry, wherein the objects are given in intuition and are actual. By turning to the actual, he aims to establish his work on invention on as solid a foundation as possible, as much as his sceptical stance allows him to do so. Indeed, knowledge grounded in intuition is not apodictic, yet it is a much better option than speaking of inventing non-actual objects, such as fictions. I now turn to examine how this "promise of mathematics" can be fulfilled; that is, how we can achieve higher degrees of certainty by applying Maimon's methods of invention.

4   Producing Certain Knowledge through Methods of Analysis

At the core of Maimon's work on invention stand the methods he prescribes for invention in Euclidean geometry. He presents ten methods, described as methods of either analysis or synthesis, and names seven of them "kinds of analysis."[40] These methods have already been discussed.[41] However, we are still missing an account of how they raise the degree of certainty of propositions is missing. Moreover, Maimon does not specify how each method increases the degree of certainty that we can attribute to a given proposition, nor how it assists us in finding new certain inventions. Since these methods embody the meaning behind Maimon's term "secure methods" and behind his statement that methodical invention arrives at new knowledge "step by step,"[42] I now turn to examine how the mathematical practices proposed by Maimon generate a higher degree of certainty of propositions. My examination is conducted not according to the order of Maimon's presentation of the methods of invention, but rather thematically.

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39   Maimon, "Ueber den Gebrauch der Philosophie zur Erweiterung der Erkenntnis," 2, 4.

40   Maimon, "Ueber den Gebrauch der Philosophie zur Erweiterung der Erkenntnis," 24; Maimon, "Das Genie und der methodische Erfinder," 378.

41   Chikurel, *Salomon Maimon's Theory of Invention*, 80–146.

42   Maimon, "Das Genie und der methodische Erfinder," 373.

   Maimon's first, third, and fifth kinds of analysis are centred around increasing certainty using an analysis of either the conditions of propositions (or problems) or their cases. The first kind of analysis, called the "analysis of the conditions of a problem or proposition," suggests (i) examining whether a condition is true or a pseudo-condition, (ii) detecting the conditions that allow the solution to be possible, and (iii) determining the conditions of the problem. These conditions change according to the person facing the problem: the person who is attempting to solve a problem would interpret a given condition using the simplest interpretation possible in order to arrive at a solution. However, as Maimon asserts, the person presenting the problem would interpret the given conditions in the strictest manner, which would include all possible cases of and solutions to that problem.[43] By examining all possible cases, we ensure that the solution is complete and general, so that there is no case in which the solution is impossible. A true condition is a necessary condition, whereas a pseudo-condition is mistakenly considered to be a condition, yet the problem can be solved without taking this condition into consideration. To illustrate this, Maimon presents *Elements* I.1, "On a given line *AB* to construct an equilateral triangle" as an example where the true conditions are "triangle" and "equilateral," while the given straight line *AB* can be chosen arbitrarily. Therefore, its size and position are pseudo-conditions.[44] The degree of certainty that we can attribute to a proposition increases when we find the true and pseudo-conditions of the problem, since we have a better understanding of how the given propositions and the conclusion are connected. A good example of identifying a true condition is found in Proclus's alternative proof of *Elements* I.17: "In any triangle two angles taken together in any manner are less than two right angles." While Euclid's proof involves extending one side of the triangle to a point outside of it, Proclus demonstrates the same conclusion without extending one of the sides, but by instead constructing a line inside the triangle, explicitly stating that it is not necessary to extend the side of a triangle in order to consider the exterior angle of the given triangle. What is necessary is that any two of the interior angles equal less than two right angles.[45] Furthermore, both Euclid and Proclus use Postulate 2, *Elements* I.13, and *Elements* I.16 in their proofs, suggesting that they may be necessary for

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43   Maimon, "Ueber den Gebrauch der Philosophie zur Erweiterung der Erkenntnis," 24–6; Maimon, "Das Genie und der methodische Erfinder," 378.

44   Maimon, "Ueber den Gebrauch der Philosophie zur Erweiterung der Erkenntnis," 24.

45   Euclid, *The Thirteen Books of Euclid's Elements*, trans. Thomas Little Heath, 2nd rev. and expanded ed. (New York: Dover Publications, 1956), vol. 1, 281–82; Proclus, *A Commentary on the First Book of Euclid's Elements*, trans. Glenn R. Morrow (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), 242–43.

the proof, or, at least, that they are still not shown to be redundant. In fact, the inclusion of these three propositions in two different proofs of the same theorem strengthens their connection to the theorem. This is not the case for Euclid's proposition "Let *BC* be produced to *D*," which is shown to be unnecessary for the demonstration of *Elements* I.17.

At first, it may seem odd to speak of Euclid's propositions as being subjected to degrees of certainty rather than as objectively necessary, since in Maimon's time, the *Elements*'s propositions were considered to be objectively necessary truths. However, it is at this point that Maimon's scepticism towards any knowledge that is not grounded in the principle of contradiction proves to be of great value: by considering these propositions as only subjectively necessary and as being subjected to various degrees of certainty, the option of a non-Euclidean geometry becomes plausible. In the alternative geometries conceived after Maimon's passing, the distinction between what is necessary for any geometry and what can be replaced becomes clearer. For instance, any triangle as such must have three sides (as this condition appears in the definition of a triangle), but the sum of the interior angles is not necessarily equal to two right angles (in elliptic geometry, the sum is greater than 180°, while in hyperbolic geometry, the sum is less than 180°). The invention of these alternative geometries originates in questioning whether the parallel postulate is necessary. On this account, they serve as another example of how the distinction between necessary and pseudo-conditions can be fruitful, as well as beneficial for shaping a more accurate conception of what can be considered fundamental to geometry (i.e., there are planes, but not necessarily Euclidean ones).

In the third kind of analysis, the "analysis of the cases of a problem or a proposition," Maimon suggests solving all particular cases in order for the problem or proposition to be general.[46] Each new case of a problem is caused by a change in one of the conditions of the problem and requires a new construction in the given object. The analysis of all the possible cases and their conditions raises the degree of certainty of the given proposition or problem because the probability of finding a new case of the problem, one that would lead to a different conclusion than the one given, is lower than the probability of this occurring before the analysis was conducted. In other words, the likelihood that the general conclusion is false decreases and the degree of certainty we can attribute to it increases. For instance, Euclid's proof of *Elements* I.35 ("Parallelograms which are on the same base and in the same parallels are equal to one another") presents two parallelograms that share a base, but do

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46   Maimon, "Ueber den Gebrauch der Philosophie zur Erweiterung der Erkenntnis," 28–29; Maimon, "Das Genie und der methodische Erfinder," 379.

not share a segment or meet on the opposite sides.[47] Proclus, however, suggests two additional cases in which the parallelograms meet or share a segment in the sides opposite to their bases.[48] Each of these two new cases requires a new condition and a new construction of the parallelograms, since the relations between these two objects have changed, so that in each case, the parallelograms either share a segment, do not share a segment, or meet at one point. By considering all possible cases of proving the proposition, the proposition *Elements* I.35 becomes more general and, at the same time, the degree of certainty that we can attribute to it is higher, as we have proven all of its possible cases to be true.

A similar line of thought is followed in the fifth method, the "analysis of the cases of the solution," in what Maimon refers to as producing "the complete solution." A solution to a problem is complete only when we present all possible constructions of it. Maimon mentions that in Euclid's proof of *Element* I.1 he can construct an equilateral triangle not only above the given line, but also under it.[49] Here, the additional solution does not add a new condition, but only a construction, and therefore it is different from the third method, where not only the construction changes, but also the condition. By finding the complete solution, i.e., all possible constructions that comply with the given conditions, the degree of certainty rises. This is because the chances of finding another still unknown construction that on the one hand complies with said conditions and on the other is found to be impossible to construct are low. Furthermore, this method emphasises that the direction of the construction is irrelevant to whether or not the proposition is true. However, since this method does not strengthen the connections between the sought solution and other propositions, its effect on the degree of certainty is only minor and not as significant as when we apply the third method, which provides new proofs and not merely constructions.

In the second, fourth, sixth, and seventh kinds of analysis, the explicit aim is to find connections between propositions. The idea that truths are connected to each other in various ways and that invention is the analysis of these connections is embodied in Maimon's sixth method, the "analysis of the various ways in which a problem can be solved or a proposition proven." Finding new proofs and solutions allows us to gain insight into the connections between propositions, and thus our knowledge of these connections becomes

47   Euclid, *The Thirteen Books of Euclid's Elements*, vol. 1, 326.

48   Proclus, *A Commentary on the First Book of Euclid's Elements*, 314–15.

49   Maimon, "Ueber den Gebrauch der Philosophie zur Erweiterung der Erkenntnis," 31.

more and more complete.[50] As previously mentioned, we can increase the degree of certainty that we attribute to a proposition by connecting it to other known propositions. Accordingly, by proving a theorem in several ways and increasing the number of propositions connected to it, we can increase the degree of certainty. Maimon does not present an example of this method, most likely because alternative proofs are a common mathematical practice. For instance, when Proclus presents an alternative proof of *Elements* I.5, he offers a detailed discussion of Pappus's proof of the same theorem and credits Thales with the discovery of the theorem. Moreover, each proof demands a different construction: in Euclid's proof, two sides of the triangle are extended; in Proclus's demonstration, lines are drawn only inside the given triangle, while in Pappus's proof, no construction of additional lines is required.[51] The importance of inventing new alternative proofs and solutions to Euclid's *Elements* lies not only in expanding geometric knowledge, but also in advancing and even creating other mathematical fields. Such an example is discussed by Leo Corry, who shows how alternative proofs of *Elements* II.5 in the medieval tradition, such as the ones offered by Al-Khwārizmī, ibn Qurra, Gersonides, and Barlaam, were used for advancing both arithmetic and algebraic knowledge.[52]

In the second kind of analysis, the "analysis of a complex problem or complex proposition into simple ones," we apply the analysis of conditions to find out whether and how we can divide a complex proposition into simpler ones in order to prove each part separately.[53] This method is also used for detecting interactions between the divided propositions or problems and thus advances our understanding of the connections between the parts of the complex proposition. According to Maimon, *Elements* I.1 can be divided into three simple problems: (i) to find two lines that are equal to a given line and therefore to each other, (ii) to connect the two found lines with the given line at both of its endpoints, and (iii) to connect the two found lines with each other at their other endpoints so that an equilateral triangle is constructed.[54] Since the second simple problem is dependent on the first, just as the third is dependent on the second, this division emphasises that the three simple problems are

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50   Maimon, "Ueber den Gebrauch der Philosophie zur Erweiterung der Erkenntnis," 31; Maimon, "Das Genie und der methodische Erfinder," 380–81.

51   Proclus, *A Commentary on the First Book of Euclid's Elements*, 192–95.

52   Leo Corry, "Geometry and Arithmetic in the Medieval Traditions of Euclid's *Elements*: A View from Book II," *Archive for History of Exact Sciences* 67 (2013): 637–705.

53   Maimon, "Ueber den Gebrauch der Philosophie zur Erweiterung der Erkenntnis," 26–28; Maimon, "Das Genie und der methodische Erfinder," 378–79.

54   Maimon, "Ueber den Gebrauch der Philosophie zur Erweiterung der Erkenntnis," 27–28.

interconnected.[55] Their interconnection is evident in Maimon's use of the term "found" in the second and third problems, suggesting that these propositions are not true for any lines, but rather for determined ones that were constructed earlier. By applying this method, we do not reach higher certainty in a direct manner, but rather indirectly, through deepening our understanding of a given proposition or problem. By breaking it into propositions, we can give a better account of the connections between the parts of the original proposition than we can when this operation is not conducted. It also allows us to spot problematic claims, as is evident from Maimon's third simple problem stating that the two found lines should meet at one point. While Maimon assumes that this point exists, about a century later, Wilhelm Killing raised the question as to whether or not the two circles actually meet (which is also the meeting point of the two lines).[56] Although Maimon himself did not identify the need to show that the two lines, or circles, do indeed meet, his method of breaking down a complex problem into simple ones did make such a question possible. That is, the method allows us to more easily detect problematic claims made in the course of a solution or proof, and once we have corrected the problematic part by either presenting a justification or suggesting an alternative solution, we can eventually achieve a higher degree of certainty.

The fourth kind of analysis is called the "analysis of the object." According to Maimon, a given theorem often refers to one object, whereas its proof refers to another. Therefore, a transformation of the given object is required so that we can apply known propositions to it that will lead us to the sought object and conclusion. This transformation, which consists of geometric construction, is the analysis of the object.[57] Maimon illustrates this method using the first part of *Elements* I.5: "In isosceles triangles the angles at the base are equal to one another."[58] In order to show that the angles at the base of the

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55   For a detailed analysis of how the three problems are connected, see Chikurel *Salomon Maimon's Theory of Invention*, 94–97.

56   Euclid, *The Thirteen Books of Euclid's Elements*, vol. 1, 242.

57   Maimon, "Ueber den Gebrauch der Philosophie zur Erweiterung der Erkenntnis," 29–30; Maimon, "Das Genie und der methodische Erfinder," 379–80.
         There are two more kinds of analysis of the objects, which are not methods of invention. They are logical forms, wherein the predicate is not educed from the concept, but rather the object, either immediately or indirectly through demonstration. These two kinds, like the method of analysis of the object, are grounded not only in the principle of contradiction, but also in intuition. See Chikurel, *Salomon Maimon's Theory of Invention*, 59–67.

58   *Elements* I.5 has an additional part: "In isosceles triangles the angles at the base are equal to one another, and, if the equal straight lines be produced further, the angles under the base will be equal to one another." Maimon does not refer to the second part of the

given triangle are equal to each other, we need to turn to *Elements* I.4, which proves the equality of angles. Because *Elements* I.4 refers to equal angles in two different triangles while *Elements* I.5 refers to angles in the same triangle, we must transform the given object in *Elements* I.5 so that the two objects of the two propositions can be connected.[59] In other words, the transformation of the given object through construction is carried out for the purpose of connecting known proven propositions, and this connection in turn is made for the purpose of arriving at the new conclusion. Although Maimon does not refer to the question of certainty himself, it is clear from his work that by connecting the conclusion with propositions that are themselves proven (and thus connected to other propositions), the degree of certainty we can attribute to the new conclusion is higher than it is in a case where *Elements* I.5 shares fewer connections with other propositions.

Maimon sees the six kinds of analysis presented above as helpful for finding propositions that can serve as premises in the seventh method, "logical analysis." This method has two forms: regressive analysis in propositions (arriving from proposition *A* to proposition *E* via propositions *B*, *C*, and *D*) and constructing syllogisms by using middle terms.[60] Furthermore, Maimon describes logical analysis as "[the] study of mutual connection or dependency of two propositions or two concepts by means of middle terms or middle concepts," adding that it is a necessary, yet not sufficient, criterion for invention.[61] This statement emphasises that in methods in which construction plays a significant part, such as the fourth kind of analysis, the aim is not so much to find new knowledge given in intuition as it is to find new connections between propositions. Namely, construction is only a means for finding out how known propositions are connected to the sought conclusion. This means that in order to achieve a higher degree of certainty, our efforts should concentrate on inventing new inferences (connections between propositions), not on merely finding new propositions. This insight can serve as a further explanation for Maimon's choice of geometry as a field of knowledge in which to apply his theory of invention, since in Euclidean geometry, most new geometric knowledge is acquired using inferences rather than propositions that are not an outcome of inference, as is often the case with laws of nature (such as the law of

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      proposition, most probably because the first part can be proven in itself and because the second part is never mentioned in *Elements* after its first appearance. See Euclid, *The Thirteen Books of Euclid's Elements*, vol. 1, 251.

59   Maimon, "Ueber den Gebrauch der Philosophie zur Erweiterung der Erkenntnis," 30–31.

60   Maimon, "Ueber den Gebrauch der Philosophie zur Erweiterung der Erkenntnis," 21–22, 32; Maimon, "Das Genie und der methodische Erfinder," 376–77.

61   Maimon, "Ueber den Gebrauch der Philosophie zur Erweiterung der Erkenntnis," 22.

gravitation, which is the outcome of induction based on observation in experience). The method of logical analysis highlights the significance that Maimon assigns to logic in invention, and at the same time makes it clear that this method alone is insufficient for invention.

5   Methods of Synthesis

In addition to the seven kinds of analysis, Maimon presents three methods of synthesis. I first discuss two methods that share the general aim of finding new propositions and their connections to known propositions. The third method is discussed in the next section, since it sets the more ambitious goal of arriving at objective necessity. With the first method, the method of generalisation, we compose a proposition about a term that is more general than a term in a given proposition. Maimon demonstrates this method with the example of *Elements* I.16: "In any triangle, if one of the sides be produced, the exterior angle is greater than either of the interior and opposite angles."[62] While Euclid's proposition is true for triangles, Clavius composes a similar proposition that is true not only for triangles, but also for quadrilateral figures. To this, Maimon adds a more general proposition, which refers to any straight-lined figure. According to him, the significance of this method lies in the fact that general propositions can be very useful as premises in syllogisms.[63] As has already been shown, Maimon's own example is false, since there is at least one case where it is not true (e.g., an isosceles trapezium).[64] Nevertheless, the method itself is fruitful. This is because finding a more general term to which the proposition applies expands our knowledge and, even more so, helps us to connect several propositions and objects. What is true for the general proposition is true for the particular propositions subsumed under it. Maimon's method is better articulated by Carlo Cellucci, who defines the method of generalisation as a method of discovery not in the context of Maimon's work, but rather in the context of Greek mathematical analysis: "passing from the consideration of a given set to that of a larger set, containing the given set as a subset." This definition helps us to see that in fact, what Clavius suggests (i.e., *Elements* I.16 applied to quadrilateral figures) is not generalisation, but rather an expansion

62   Euclid, *The Thirteen Books of Euclid's Elements*, vol. 1, 279.

63   Maimon, "Ueber den Gebrauch der Philosophie zur Erweiterung der Erkenntnis," 32–33.

64   For the shortcomings of Maimon's example, see Chikurel, *Salomon Maimon's Theory of Invention*, 138.

of the group of objects to which the propositions can be applied.[65] The reason for this is that the subset of triangles does not belong to the larger set of quadrilateral figures, though it does belong to the set of straight-lined figures. Clavius's new proposition adds another subset besides triangles. It is easy to understand the confusion around treating quadrilaterals as a generalised term for triangles if we consider the objects themselves, since any quadrilateral can be divided into triangles. But we should not confuse the extension of the objects in space with the concepts themselves. Indeed, it is certainly important to show how the objects in space are interconnected, but the emphasis in this method in particular, and in Maimon's work on invention in general, is to find out how concepts and propositions are interconnected, which in turn allows us to attribute a higher degree of certainty to given knowledge.

The second method of synthesis is conversion, which consists of looking for the converse proposition of a given proposition. Maimon assigns a second use for conversion as a method that helps us to determine whether a proposition is derived or original. He argues that all original mathematical propositions are convertible, whereas derived propositions can sometimes be convertible, but not always. Therefore, if a proposition cannot be converted, then this suggests that it might be derived, which in turn suggests that we can try to apply the method of generalisation to it.[66] Here, the connection between the given and sought propositions is clear, as one is the converse of the other. However, considering converse propositions in the context of degrees of certainty as determined by the number of connections between propositions reveals a difficulty. In cases where a proposition is proved using its converse, there are more connected propositions in the converse proposition than there are in the given proposition. For instance, Euclid's proof of *Elements* I.19 ("In any triangle the greater angle is subtended by the greater side") entails the converse, *Elements* I.18 ("In any triangle the greater side subtends the greater angle"). Thanks to its use of *Elements* I.18, *Elements* I.19 is indirectly connected to *Elements* I.3 and *Elements* I.16, which are employed in the demonstration of *Elements* I.18.[67] Thus, the number of connections to other propositions is higher in *Elements* I.19 than in *Elements* I.18. Another example in the opposite direction is *Elements* I.5, which is the converse of *Elements* I.6.[68] While the

65   Carlo Cellucci, *Rethinking Logic: Logic in Relation to Mathematics, Evolution, and Method* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2013), 346.

66   Maimon, "Ueber den Gebrauch der Philosophie zur Erweiterung der Erkenntnis," 33–34; Maimon, "Das Genie und der methodische Erfinder," 382.

67   Euclid, *The Thirteen Books of Euclid's Elements*, vol. 1, 283–84.

68   *Elements* I.6: "If in a triangle two angles be equal to one another, the sides which subtend the equal angles will also be equal to one another." See Euclid, *The Thirteen Books of Euclid's Elements*, vol. 1, 255.

first is demonstrated through *Elements* I.3, *Elements* I.4, and two additional postulates, the latter is demonstrated via *reductio ad absurdum* and requires no other propositions. The question arises as to whether we should attribute a similar degree of certainty to converse propositions with a different number of connections to other propositions. Another aspect of the difficulty is that converse propositions, such as *Elements* I.5 and *Elements* I.6, claim that there is a connection between two properties of the triangle, and therefore the question arises whether, due to this similar content, we should assign these propositions the same degree of certainty. Indeed, this difficulty can be resolved by stating that Maimon's guideline for determining the certainty of a proposition according to the number of its connections to other propositions is inaccurate. However, a better solution to this difficulty is to not consider a proposition and its converse as logical conversion, where we interchange a subject and its attribute without changing the truth value ("*A* is *B*" and "*B* is *A*"). Rather, it is a geometric conversion, where we interchange a given proposition with the sought proposition and, more accurately, we interchange predicates that belong to the same subject.[69] In the example of *Elements* I.5 and *Elements* I.6, we cannot simply interchange the terms comprising the propositions, because they are equivalent, but not the same. Whereas *Elements* I.5 is comprised of "isosceles triangles" and "the angles at the base," in *Elements* I.6 the terms are "two angles equal to one another" and "the sides which subtend the equal angles are equal to one another"; the latter explicitly assumes *Elements* I.5, since it refers to equal sides together with equal angles. In this case, since the propositions express different connections between properties, there is no expectation that the degree of certainty of both propositions should be similar. Were we to ground both propositions in the principle of contradiction alone, then they would both be considered apodictic, the relation of conversion would be also logical, and the difference in their level of certainty would vanish.

6   A Method for Achieving Apodictic Certainty

The last method of invention aims higher than reaching certainty—it aims at demonstrating objective necessity. In this method, Maimon suggests assuming a problematic proposition to be true and, with the help of a demonstration, arriving at the identity of a thing with itself. At times, he considers this method as a method of analysis due to the demonstration it entails and, while at others,

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69   For further discussion of the difference between logical and geometrical conversion in the context of Maimon's work on invention, see Chikurel, *Salomon Maimon's Theory of Invention*, 132–34.

he sees it as a method of synthesis because in a problematic proposition, the connection between subject and predicate is not necessary and is opaque to reason.[70] In either case, this method provides insight into Maimon's general approach to necessary knowledge and the nature of his scepticism, since it suggests transforming a problematic synthetic proposition into a necessary analytic one. By claiming that we can arrive from a problematic proposition at apodictic certainty, Maimon sets aside the sceptical stance, which, as he writes, suggests considering what seem to be truths (but are not grounded as such) as merely problematic propositions.[71] In this method, he supports the opposite direction of argumentation, suggesting that we transform problematic propositions into truths. What remains coherent with the sceptical stance is the claim that since a proposition is an identity judgment, we can consider it a necessary truth.[72]

Unfortunately, Maimon's method for transforming problematic synthetic propositions into necessary analytic ones is not without faults and cannot be practically applied to particular cases. According to him, we arrive at a conclusion which is an identity judgment expressing the identity of a thing with itself and therefore a necessary truth. As a result, the problematic premise with which we began our demonstration is also true. Since he is aware that a true conclusion can arise from false premises, he states that a conclusion arising from a false premise is only a logical-formal truth and not a real consequence of the premises. However, at the same time, he argues that when the conclusion is the identity of a thing with itself, it is not only a formal truth, but also a real consequence, and hence the problematic proposition is proven to be true.[73] The problem with Maimon's argument lies in the fact that he refers to a complete identity—that is, the identity of a thing with itself ("X is X")—when in fact, in Euclidean geometry, we arrive at equality, such as A equals B, but not at the identity of a thing with itself. Complete identity is an objective truth since any thinking being follows the principle of identity. Equality in Euclidean geometry, however, is only subjectively necessary since it is also grounded on intuition. Moreover, there is an unjustified leap from metaphysical to logical

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70   It is mentioned as a method of analysis in the two articles he published in 1795 and of synthesis in a paper published posthumously. See Maimon, "Das Genie und der methodische Erfinder," 377–78; Maimon, "Ueber den Gebrauch der Philosophie zur Erweiterung der Erkenntnis," 23; Maimon, "Erfindungsmethoden," 143–44.

71   Maimon, "Philosophisches Wörterbuch," 218.

72   Maimon describes the sceptical thinker as someone who only accepts propositions in the form of identity or that are grounded on the principle of contradiction alone as necessarily true. See Maimon, "Philosophisches Wörterbuch," 220.

73   Maimon, "Erfindungsmethoden," 144–45.

truths, since the given proposition is about two determined objects whereas a complete identity is the identity of a thing with itself, where the object can be either determined or undetermined.[74] The transition from metaphysical to logical truths has implications for the kind of necessity we attribute to a proposition, since for Maimon, metaphysical truths should not be considered objectively necessary, whereas logical truths are objectively necessary.

With all its shortcomings, this method leads to one important observation: Maimon does not advocate for scepticism in the form of "tranquillity of the mind," but rather a dynamic approach that seeks to expand our knowledge while avoiding the dangers of considering insufficiently justified propositions as objectively necessary truths. Whenever possible, he wishes to be able to substantiate some problematic propositions as truths. The attempt to show how some problematic mathematical propositions can be reduced to logical judgments goes hand in hand with his assertion that the foundation of invention is logical analysis, even if it alone is insufficient for invention and requires the assistance of other methods.[75] In cases where necessity cannot be proven, the methods of invention are employed to increase the degree of certainty of our knowledge.

7   Conclusion

Maimon's theory of invention is a good case study to examine how his philosophical position of rational dogmatism and empirical scepticism shapes his work, since we can clearly point out which parts of his arguments are guided by it. The first insight is that Maimon begins his intellectual journey towards a theory of invention with the aim of finding subjectively necessary knowledge, rather than objectively necessary knowledge. He seeks to achieve certainty, but not apodictic certainty. This is because it is very difficult to justify knowledge based merely on the principles of identity and contradiction, which is the only type of knowledge he considers objectively necessary. The ability to expand our knowledge on the one hand, and to ascertain that we can account for every step taken on the other, allows us to avoid such unjustified "giant leaps" as are often seen in the works of dogmatic rational thinkers. At the same time, Maimon does not adhere to scepticism that advocates for the suspension of judgment, which does not allow us to expand our knowledge. Instead, he believes that we can acquire new knowledge.

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74   Maimon, *Essay on Transcendental Philosophy*, 151.
75   Maimon, "Erfindungsmethoden," 139.

Second, reviewing Maimon's methods of invention through the lens of rational dogmatism and empirical scepticism highlights the importance that he gives to constructing syllogisms in particular and inferences in general. This is due to his guideline that the more connections a proposition has to other known propositions, the higher the degree of certainty that we can attribute to it. This puts the focus on how his methods of invention connect propositions and how other means, such as constructing objects and examining whether a condition is true or a pseudo-condition, assist in the operation of connecting propositions. In particular, the method of transforming problematic propositions into true propositions offers another observation: a rational dogmatist and empirical sceptic differs from a "regular" sceptic by attempting to turn problematic propositions into true ones instead of attempting to do the opposite, as a sceptic, who usually takes a proposition considered to be true and shows why it is problematic, would do. This goes hand in hand with Maimon's scepticism that does not advocate for an "intellectual standstill," but rather favours progress in knowledge, under the condition that it is well grounded according to the principles of contradiction and identity.

I suggest that we consider Maimon's various forms of scepticism, for example, doubt and the antinomies, as belonging to a scale of doubt wherein degrees of certainty and probability can increase and decrease. This scale has a double function: it organises the different aspects of Maimon's sceptical stance and offers a way to think about how increasing and decreasing degrees of certainty make the shift from one sceptical form to another. The most important one is the shift from doubting any knowledge that is not proven to be apodictic, but can be shown to be highly plausible and even subjectively necessary, to the top of the scale, where we achieve apodictic certainty and objective necessity by showing that a proposition is grounded on the principle of contradiction (or the principle of identity) alone. This shift is what Maimon describes with the method of transforming a problematic proposition into a true one. In other words, the scale illustrates that the way to advance our knowledge is to try to increase degrees of certainty and, whenever possible, to attempt to cross the threshold between certainty and apodictic certainty (or between subjective necessity and objective necessity).

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What Is Wrong with Philosophical Terminology?

Georg Simmel and Theodor W. Adorno on Epistemic Scepticism and Linguistic Criticism

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Abstract

In the nineteenth century, a debate took place about the relationship between philosophy and the sciences. At first, it was a matter of distinguishing philosophy from the humanities (classical studies, the philologies, history), and then from the natural sciences. One consequence of this debate was the historicisation of philosophical knowledge and the professionalisation of philosophy in research and teaching. The result was critical editions, textbooks, encyclopaedias, and the development of archives. In the twentieth century, there were various counter-movements, some of which were based on ideological motives, others on epistemological scepticism and linguistic criticism. Georg Simmel and Theodor W. Adorno belong to the second group. Their reflections on scepticism of science, critique of language use, and the redefinition of the task of philosophy between positivist science and ideology are elaborated in this study.

Keywords

scepticism – critique of language – philosophical and scientific terminology – philosophical concepts, categories, and terms – form of life – truth – paradox/paradoxicality – relativism – ideology

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Nur Begriffe können vollbringen, was der Begriff verhindert.
<div style="text-align:center">THEODOR W. ADORNO</div>

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1   Introduction[1]

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, there was a debate about the historicisation of philosophy, which mobilised a detailed critical analysis of the development and normativity of basic philosophical concepts alongside an articulated distrust of the idea of a philosophical system. The primary focus of this debate was an increasingly radicalising epistemic scepticism, which amounted to a critique of the academic and ideologically induced use of language.[2] This epistemological and linguistic critique was often, but not exclusively, represented by thinkers who are counted among German Jewry (whether by self-attribution or attribution by others).[3] In the case of the protagonists of this article—Georg Simmel and Theodor W. Adorno—this attribution is certainly controversial.[4] My paper

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1   This paper is the result of a research at the Maimonides Centre for Advanced Studies—Jewish Scepticism at Universität Hamburg (October 2021 to February 2022).

2   In this context, I am able to make reference to a number of my own preliminary works: Gerald Hartung, "Sprachphilosophie—Die Kulturalistische Tradition," in *Handbuch Sprachphilosophie*, ed. Nikola Kompa (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 2015), 29–38; Hartung, "Sprachkritik," in *Enzyklopädie jüdischer Geschichte und Kultur*, vol. 5, ed. Dan Diner (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 2014), 560–65.

3   Cf. Gerald Hartung, *Beyond the Babylonian Trauma: Theories of Language and Modern Culture in the German-Jewish Context* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018).

4   Cf. Andreas B. Kilcher and Otfried Fraisse, *Metzler Lexikon jüdischer Philosophen. Philosophisches Denken des Judentums von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart* (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 2003). This encyclopaedia does not include Georg Simmel, but contains an entry on Theodor W. Adorno. Opinions on Simmel remain divided among researchers. Cf., e.g., Hans Liebeschütz, *Von Georg Simmel zu Franz Rosenzweig* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1970), 3–4: "Simmel [...] made no public statements on the Jewish question, although he was not otherwise averse to expressing himself in the press; nor did he seek to discuss the subject in private conversation. The direction of his philosophising, however, which led to sociology, gave him the opportunity to speak, often slightly covertly, but at times also quite openly, about facts that were—and perhaps because they were—characteristic of the Jewish situation. [... The] tendencies of his work make Simmel an exceptionally clearly defined representative of an otherwise elusive phenomenon: there are frequent discussions of 'Jewish spirit' as a factor in history." In greater detail: 103–41: Simmel represents the possibility of "being Jewish without Judaism" (141).

can therefore be understood as making a contribution to an open research question.[5]

For our topic, a consideration of the critique of basic philosophical concepts and the emergence of terminological and conceptual historical work around 1900 may certainly be instructive. After all, it is here that research on epistemic scepticism and linguistic criticism opens up an area where basic questions about philosophy's self-perception as a discipline and form of thought or—as Adorno calls it—*critical behaviour* become the subject of discussion. Nothing less than the whole is under discussion: What is the task of philosophy?

2   Concepts, Categories, Terminology—a Nineteenth-Century Debate

There can be no doubt that one of the greatest achievements of Hegel's philosophy is that in his works on logic, he created a philosophical terminology that is designed to be both descriptive and conceptual, both dynamic and static, and both historical-descriptive and normative. In his 1830 *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundriss* [Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences in Basic Outline], Hegel attempted to provide the individual sciences—above all, mathematics, physics, chemistry, and biology—with a scientific terminology within which they would be able to pursue their research.[6] According to this premise, the sciences are responsible for the dynamics of conceptual development through their provision of

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5   Thus, in my opinion, it remains an open question for research whether my investigation has anything to add to the research topic of "Jewish scepticism." Indirectly, however, there is an undeniable benefit, insofar as the boundaries of a scepticism that can be declared to be specifically "Jewish" do not yet seem to me to be sufficiently defined. In addition to the "form of life," which enables attribution to Judaism through self-attribution, there is the broad field of external ascriptions, which should itself be the subject of continued critical reflection due to the experiences of the twentieth century and current antisemitic behavioural patterns in European societies. Discourse about the "forms of thought" that are declared to be specifically "Jewish" is also mostly tendentious. For the "case of Simmel," cf. the recent publication by Gerald Hartung, "Simmel als akademischer Lehrer," in *Simmel Handbuch: Leben—Werk—Wirkung*, ed. Jörn Bohr, Gerald Hartung, Heike Koenig, and Tim-Florian Steinbach (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 202), 421–23. For the background to many discussions, I make reference to Max Horkheimer, "Über die deutschen Juden" [1961], in *Zur Kritik der instrumentellen Vernunft. Aus den Vorträgen und Aufzeichnungen seit Kriegsende*, ed. Alfred Schmidt (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1986), 302–16; especially 312, where Horkheimer refers to the dialectical course of philosophy in Hegel, which always begins anew, and then adds: "The account sounds like a story from the Talmud, and the similarity seems more than a coincidence. Both are about the truth to which one cannot point, which cannot be affirmed, and yet exists. The contradiction lies in the Jewish tradition as well as in dialectical philosophy, where it has become explicit as a moment of thought aiming at the truth."

6   Cf. Dieter Henrich, "Anfang und Methode der Logik," in Heinrich, *Hegel im Kontext* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1981), 73–94; Martin Bondeli, "§ 14. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel," in

empirical data that finds reflection and classification in a set of basic concepts, although they cannot transcend this terminology's frame of reference.

Among the many reasons why Hegelian philosophy, with its claim to be a theory of science, became discredited in the years after 1840, it is not criticism of the systemic idea or the dialectical method that takes centre stage, but rather a simple disregard of Hegel's precepts. The sciences simply do not care about the claim of philosophy: they "go happily on their peculiar ways," as the philosopher Friedrich Adolf Trendelenburg noted as early as 1840.[7]

Within philosophy, an aspect of Hegel's thought emerges at a very early stage, which, although it can be ignored beyond the boundaries of the discipline, is of eminent relevance to philosophical work itself and its handling of concepts, categories, and terms.[8] This aspect concerns the relationship between the historical development of concepts and their normative claim to explanation; in short, the problem of genesis and validity.[9] From this *Denkraum*

Die Philosophie des 19. Jahrhunderts. Band 1/1: Deutschsprachiger Raum 1800–1830, ed. Gerald Hartung (Basel: Schwabe Verlag, 2020), 400–436.

7   Cf. Friedrich Adolf Trendelenburg, *Logische Untersuchungen* (Berlin, 1840), 1:vi: "The sciences happily try to go their own peculiar ways, but in part without taking closer account of methodology, as they are directed at their subject matter and not at the method. Here, logic would have the task of observing and comparing, of elevating the unconscious to consciousness and of understanding the different in terms of their common origin. Without carefully considering the method of the individual sciences, it will miss its goal, as it then has no specific object according to which it is able to find its way in its theories." From now on, all the English translations are my own. Cf. Gerald Hartung, "Theorie der Wissenschaften und Weltanschauung. Aspekte der Aristoteles-Rezeption im 19. Jahrhundert," *Zeitschrift für philosophische Forschung* 60 (2006): 290–309.

8   For an overview of the older and more recent research literature, cf. Klaus Christian Köhnke, *Entstehung und Aufstieg des Neukantianismus. Die deutsche Universitätsphilosophie zwischen Idealismus und Positivismus* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1993); Ulrich Johannes Schneider, *Philosophie und Universität. Historisierung der Vernunft im 19. Jahrhundert* (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1999); Helmut Holzhey and Wolfgang Röd, eds., *Die Philosophie des ausgehenden 19. Jahrhunderts und des 20. Jahrhunderts 2: Neukantianismus, Idealismus, Realismus, Phänomenologie* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2004); Dean Moyar, ed., *The Routledge Companion to Nineteenth Century Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 2010); Allen W. Wood and Songsuk Susan Hahn, eds., *The Cambridge History of Philosophy in the Nineteenth Century: 1790–1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Gerald Hartung, "§ 1. Das lange 19. Jahrhundert: Die institutionellen Bedingungen der Philosophie und die Formen ihrer Vermittlung," in Hartung, *Deutschsprachiger Raum 1800–1830*, 1–108.

9   Cf. Gerald Hartung, "§ 1. System und Geschichte der Philosophie," in *Die Philosophie des 19. Jahrhunderts. Band 1/2: Deutschsprachiger Raum 1830–1870* (Basel: Schwabe Verlag, forthcoming). Cf. Fredrick Charles Beiser, *The German Historicist Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

[thought-space][10] inhabited by many actors in the late nineteenth century, I would like to pick out three lines of thought as examples. First and foremost is Trendelenburg, who, in his time, was already known to be a critic of Hegel's method, although less attention is paid to the fact that he was indeed his successor in terms of his provision of a theoretical foundation for the historiography of philosophy. His work and impact were authoritative for a generation of historians of philosophy from the late nineteenth century.[11] Trendelenburg, as a thinker in continuities, embarks on a panoramic discussion ranging from antiquity to the modern age in his 1846 *Geschichte der Kategorienlehre* [History of the Doctrine of Categories]. The task here is to grasp the genesis and validity of basic philosophical concepts in context. From his perspective, the categories established by Kant are to be understood as root concepts of the understanding. What is missing in Kant, however, is a description of their genesis. The outcome of a history of category theory is that the dominant approaches of thought are one-sided. This one-sided nature can be found in the explanation of the origin of the categories. According to Trendelenburg, in contrast to a logical one-sidedness on Kant's part and a psychological reduction by Johann Friedrich Herbart, Hegel had at least recognised that the categories had undergone a historical development. However, he had constructed a system of categories rather than finding the categories on which the sciences had already done their work. Re-establishing the doctrine of categories, Trendelenburg believes them to be basic concepts of our thought that give support to all other concepts. They are components of judgemental thought, but not its products. As thought contains "within it the possibility of a community with things,"[12] categories can be more than products of a mere "mediating activity" and not just "imaginary quantities, no invented auxiliary lines, but as basic concepts which are both objective and subjective."[13] Concerning the question of category genesis, which provides the framework for a new form of the historiography of philosophy, Trendelenburg makes mention of the following: like all concepts, categories are also formed through observation; however, they are more than mere reproductions of external conditions, but are rather the result of mental productivity. In analogy to the formation of language, Trendelenburg shows how logical thought gradually forms out of a "chaotic

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10   Cf. Martin Mulsow and Marcelo Stamm, eds., *Konstellationsforschung* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2005), esp. 38–39.

11   Cf. Gerald Hartung and Klaus Christian Köhnke, eds., *Friedrich Adolf Trendelenburgs Wirkung* (Eutin: Eutiner Landesbibliothek, 2006); Frederick Charles Beiser, *Late German Idealism: Trendelenburg and Lotze* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

12   Trendelenburg, *Geschichte der Kategorienlehre* [1846] (Hildesheim: Olms, 1979), 365.

13   Trendelenburg, *Geschichte der Kategorienlehre*, 368.

mass of ideas," just as solid shapes can only be recognised gradually "in the floating sea of sounds."[14] In a real genesis, in analogy to the history of language, it becomes apparent how the basic concepts that recur in intuitions distinguish and implant themselves. In Trendelenburg's view, we find arguments in Aristotle stating that the real genesis of categories is linked to linguistic development. This assertion, according to which Aristotle followed "a grammatical guide"[15] in his theory of categories, earned Trendelenburg some criticism, from Eduard Zeller through Hermann Bonitz to Franz Brentano.

In his *Studien zur Geschichte der Begriffe* [Studies in the History of Concepts], Gustav Teichmüller sets out a broader remit for his work:

> The history of philosophy does not merely offer an orientation regarding the course of the development of our concepts, but, since philosophy only consists of concepts, can itself be regarded as a field of observation, a kind of experiment and an important control of research.[16]

Teichmüller's material is an analysis of Greek philosophy in the tradition of Eduard Zeller, but with a more modest systematic claim. Like his teacher Trendelenburg, Teichmüller, who describes himself as an Aristotelian, advocates a continuity thesis, which he underlines by means of conceptual analyses. An analysis of the principles of causality in Plato and Aristotle, for example, enables him to partially deny modern natural science's claim to deliver new knowledge. Against an "empty vanity" or even an emphasis on novelty, the historiography of philosophy has the function of correcting the present in its provocative demarcation from tradition.

In his 1878 *Geschichte und Kritik der Grundbegriffe der Gegenwart* [History and Critique of the Basic Concepts of the Present], Rudolf Eucken attempted to "understand concepts according to their historical formation and their historical context."[17] His goal was to analyse the effectiveness of philosophical concepts in the *Gesamtleben* [life as a whole] of the present. Eucken's thesis is that the current use of scientific concepts depends on their historical origin. His analysis of pairs of concepts—for example, subjective/objective, mechanical/organic, *a priori*/innate—leads to the conclusion that the present is shaped by three circles of ideas: antiquity, the seventeenth century,

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14   Trendelenburg, *Geschichte der Kategorienlehre*, 179.

15   Trendelenburg, *Geschichte der Kategorienlehre*, 180.

16   Gustav Teichmüller, *Studien zur Geschichte der Begriffe* [1874] (Hildesheim: Olms, 1966), v.

17   Rudolf Eucken, *Geschichte und Kritik der Grundbegriffe der Gegenwart* (Leipzig, 1878), v.

and Kantian philosophy.[18] For his present time, Eucken diagnoses a general tendency that he calls the "sinking of concepts," meaning an increased lack of reflection when dealing with concepts.[19] The programme of a history and critique of the concepts of the present pursues the goal of using the development of concepts as a guideline to reveal a "striving within the whole of history," the results of which—for example, exact science, cultural development, and the recognition of individuality—can be determined as values that last beyond any partisan dispute at the present time.

In 1879, Eucken further advanced his programme with a *Geschichte der Philosophischen Terminologie im Umriss dargestellt* [History of Philosophical Terminology Presented in Outline]. This project is on the threshold between positive historical and conceptual philosophical work. It draws its inspiration from the detailed works of Trendelenburg, Prantl, Bonitz, and Zeller. Their preliminary work is incorporated into an overall history of philosophical terminology that elaborates on the connection between the terminological basis on the one hand and the philosophically significant problems in their historical context on the other. Eucken is one of the first to systematically highlight the interaction between the development of concepts and the history of language. In this respect, his analysis of "German terminology" provides a first sketch of the translation work in the period around 1700 (Thomasius, Wolff, et al.) and, with regard to Kant, of his huge achievement of having provided an "independent understanding of the world in the German language."[20] "The terminology shows that the individual sciences have taken innumerable things from philosophy—they have all borrowed more from it than they have given it—and it also shows the influence of philosophy on life as a whole (*Gesamtleben*)."[21]

Two basic problems arise in this debate. On the one hand, there is the difference between history and normativity—also referred to by the phrase "genesis and validity"—and on the other, there is the discrepancy between general conceptual scope and concrete object. At the same time, it emphasises that the history of philosophy, especially the development of concepts, categories, and terminology, depends on external factors, which can be understood by reference to the history of language (Trendelenburg), science (Teichmüller), and culture (Eucken). Here, the first set of problems will only be discussed in

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18 Eucken, *Geschichte und Kritik der Grundbegriffe der Gegenwart*, 258.

19 Eucken, *Geschichte und Kritik der Grundbegriffe der Gegenwart*, 262.

20 Eucken, *Geschichte der philosophischen Terminologie im Umriss dargestellt* (Leipzig, 1879), 139.

21 Eucken, *Geschichte der philosophischen Terminologie im Umriss dargestellt*, 219.

passing.[22] The second point, however, leads to the centre of a philosophical critique of the handling of terminological questions in the sciences, which have differentiated themselves from the field of philosophy since the nineteenth century.

Around 1900, the debate on the historicisation of philosophy in the nineteenth century, which is only roughly sketched out here and which, in addition to the dismantling of the idea of a philosophical system, is also articulated in a critical analysis of the development and normativity of basic philosophical concepts, was transposed into methods of epistemic scepticism, which went hand in hand with a critique of the scientific and ideologically induced use of language. As a consequence of the debate, two options crystallise as to how the questions can be developed further. The first option states that the social, cultural, and political conditionality of individuality, among others, undermines the claim of the scientific objectivity of language. This is the option advocated by the philosopher Georg Simmel. The second option states that the material and social conditionality of our thought and speech makes an objective scientific terminology impossible. This is the option advocated by the philosopher Theodor W. Adorno's Critical Theory. There is also a third option, which lies between Simmel and Adorno, historically speaking, and is associated with the name of the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein. With Wittgenstein, epistemic scepticism and linguistic criticism lead to a mathematisation of language, which can function as an objective and neutral terminology. Simmel was not aware of this third option, inasmuch as he also did not address more recent logic (until Frege). Adorno had some—albeit rather clichéd—knowledge of this school of thought, as evidenced by his comments on Wittgenstein, and described it as "vulgar."[23]

3 Georg Simmel and the Paradoxicality of All Great Philosophical Concepts of the World

Georg Simmel's main philosophical work is his *Hauptprobleme der Philosophie* [Main Problems of Philosophy], whose central theses have not yet been

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22 Cf. Gerald Hartung, "What Are Logical Investigations? Aristotelian Research in Trendelenburg and Husserl," in *Aristotelian Studies in 19th Century Philosophy*, ed. Christof Rapp, Colin G. King, and Gerald Hartung (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018), 77–96; Hartung, "Genese und Geltung der Kategorien. Nicolai Hartmann und das Programm der Kategorienforschung," in *Nicolai Hartmann—Von der Systemphilosophie zur systematischen Philosophie*, ed. Gerald Hartung, Matthias Wunsch, and Claudius Strube (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012), 45–65.

23 Theodor W. Adorno, *Philosophische Terminologie: Zur Einleitung*, 2 vols. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1973–1974), 1:56.

raised.[24] With this book, he joined a field of research in the history of philosophy in the period around 1900. This field opened up after the collapse of German Idealism, which presented several options: *either* a dissolution of the systematic claim of Hegelian philosophy of the unity of system and history of philosophy into a history of ideal forms (categories, scientific terminology, forms of thought, etc.) in the work of Friedrich Adolf Trendelenburg and his pupils Rudolf Eucken and Herman Cohen, *or* its disintegration into a material history of society in terms of historical materialism.[25] A third option is a hybrid form that sees history as the interaction between material and ideational factors. The point of crystallisation in this variant is "problems" that oscillate between philosophical-scientific debate and cultural life.

The treatise *Hauptprobleme der Philosophie* consists of a brief introduction and four chapters.[26] The major questions are not touched upon systematically, but rather in passing. Simmel asks himself (and his readers) what philosophy is, what makes a philosopher, and in what way the question of truth—the core issue of philosophy—can still be asked. At this last point, his reflections on epistemic scepticism and linguistic criticism become tangible.[27]

3.1 *What Is Philosophy?*

In clear contrast to the usual form of presentation in the historiography of philosophy, which primarily categorises results, Simmel wished to try and deal

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24   Cf. Gunter Gebauer, "Hauptprobleme der Philosophie," in *Simmel-Handbuch: Begriffe, Hauptwerke, Aktualität*, ed. Hans-Peter Müller and Tilman Reitz (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2018), 704–17; Hartung, "Hauptprobleme der Philosophie (1910)," in Borh, Hartung, Koenig, and Steinbach, *Simmel Handbuch*, 293–309. Both handbooks represent the current state of research on Simmel's complete works, but in the first case from the perspective of sociological-cultural studies and in the second from a philosophical perspective.

25   Cf. Hartung, "Philosophical Historiography in the 19th Century: A Provisional Typology," in *From Hegel to Windelband: Historiography of Philosophy in the 19th Century*, ed. Gerald Hartung and Valentin Pluder (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015), 9–24.

26   Georg Simmel, *Hauptprobleme der Philosophie* [1910], in Simmel, *Gesamtausgabe in 24 Bänden. Band 14: Hauptprobleme der Philosophie. Philosophische Kultur*, ed. Rüdiger Kramme and Otthein Rammstedt (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1996), 7–157.

27   Here, reference must also be made to the instructive literature on Simmel's work: Donald Nathan Levine, "Georg Simmel: Toujours à suivre," in *Simmel, le parti-pris du tiers*, ed. Denis Thouard and Bénédicte Zimmermann (Paris: CNRS Éditions, 2017), 381–99; Annika Schlitte, *Die Macht des Geldes und die Symbolik der Kultur* (Munich: Fink, 2012); Nátalia Cantó i Milà, "Von der 'Psychologie' zur 'Philosophie' des Geldes," in *Georg Simmels Philosophie des Geldes. Aufsätze und Materialien*, ed. Otthein Rammstedt, 2nd ed. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2016), 191–214; Danilo Martuccelli, "Georg Simmel et la Modernité," in *Simmel philosophe*, ed. Christian Godin and Isabel Weiss (Milan: Associazione culturale Mimesis, 2016), 59–82; Denis Thouard, *Georg Simmel. Une orientation* (Strasbourg: Circé, 2021).

"more directly with the intellectual dynamics […], more with the intellectual process of procreation."[28] The first chapter, entitled *Vom Wesen der Philosophie* [Of the Essence of Philosophy], has a programmatic character throughout. In it, Simmel reveals his understanding of philosophy or of the practice of philosophising. At the beginning, he emphasises philosophy's claim to exclusivity in defining its method and delimiting its subject matter. What philosophy is can only be determined within philosophy. This reveals a special characteristic that makes philosophy distinguishable from other sciences: it itself is the first of its problems. This self-referentiality depends on the autarky of the activity of thought in formal terms; it moves in the circle of its own way of thinking; there is no access to its concept from the outside. However, self-reference contradicts the fact that it is not given to us, as human beings, to think without presuppositions. We always find something to which our thinking relates.[29]

Philosophy deals with entirely unphilosophical phenomena. This contradiction reveals the whole drama of sceptical thought, succinctly captured by Descartes and Spinoza, when we attempt to place ourselves outside the presuppositions of our thought. Even if the attempt must fail, it marks thought's transition into the activity of sceptical philosophising, and we are therefore faced with the first paradoxicality in thought. From the contrast between mere thinking, which is bound up with presuppositions (something to be thought about), and thinking that qualifies as philosophy, which detaches itself from external bonds and belongs to itself (self-referential, autonomous thought), Simmel gains a starting point for philosophy. He is not concerned with a material definition of thought by reserving certain objects, concepts, and realms of being for philosophy, but rather with a "mood floating alongside" thought, a "thinking belonging to itself,"[30] which can start at any point. Although a complete absence of presuppositions is not feasible, the whole effort of the thinking process goes into detaching oneself from bonds. Although this task can never be mastered, as Simmel points out, the very setting of the task gives us a foothold in the relativity of thought.

Here, we are confronted with a basic idea of Simmel's philosophy, which he addresses from 1900, in his *Philosophie des Geldes* [Philosophy of Money], to 1918, in his *Lebensanschauung* [View of Life]: the sceptical destruction of preconceived self-evident facts leads to the determination of a relativity of thought itself. However, Simmel does not want to shirk from this insight; rather, he demands that the relativity of thought in terms of its determinants

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28   Simmel, *Hauptprobleme der Philosophie*, 11.

29   Simmel, *Hauptprobleme der Philosophie*, 13.

30   Simmel, *Hauptprobleme der Philosophie*, 14.

and its ideal purposes be recognised, without reservation, not only as a form of thought, but also as a mode of being, with all its fundamental paradoxicalities.

Simmel also takes the task of an inner autonomy of the thinking process as a standard for the assessment of philosophy in its history. After all, we must assume that every philosophy in its original part is the definition of a problem by its own means. This results in a variety of the problems. Unlike in other sciences, in philosophy, original thinkers define what a problem is. In this respect, there is a diversity of philosophical justifications and objectives. From this, it unequivocally follows that a philosopher gives every general problem a specific colouring from the outset on the basis of his or her own particular way of stating it. It is the philosopher's specifically individual search for an answer that must already be reflected in his or her way of stating the problem.[31] In this way, Simmel drove epistemic scepticism all the way to the problem of relativism—and at the same time gave a hint that dealing with the problem must start from the individual.

3.2   *What Is a Philosopher?*

In Simmel's view, we should realise that the personal colouring of philosophical thought makes a general objective of knowledge impossible. We should also conclude, however, that the purpose of philosophising does not remotely lie in generalisable results, but rather in the behaviour of the philosopher him- or herself. Simmel presents the figure of the philosopher as a receptive and responsive organ for the wholeness of being, which distinguishes him or her from the general individual who is oriented towards the practice of life. Only the philosopher, Simmel emphasises, has a sense of the totality of things and of life itself.[32]

In turn, this wholeness to which the philosopher refers is given neither in the ontological nor in the phenomenological sense. Wholeness, due to its absence, is experienced as a deficiency and is articulated *ex negativo* in the mode of yearning. A philosopher is someone who experiences this yearning and who is driven by it to build a whole out of the fragments of reality (nature, history) in the first place. Once again, it is not the results that matter, but the philosophical attitude and outlook. This is an attitude that reveals itself in the failure of the task, as the philosophical production of a whole from the fragments of objectivity can never be completed. Simmel banishes the sceptical perspective in terms of the results of thinking and the accompanying danger

31   Simmel, *Hauptprobleme der Philosophie*, 15.
32   Simmel, *Hauptprobleme der Philosophie*, 16.

of relativism of forms of thought by making reference to a philosophical form of life.

Does this not lead to the risk of subjectivism? Simmel resolutely rejects this charge and develops his reflections through a recourse to the history of thought in European cultures. The key focus is a thesis of the objectification and modernisation of living conditions, which allows for gradually increasing degrees of freedom. The intellect successively gains in freedom as the number of objective things grows—to which it is initially compelled to give a uniform response. With the increase in objects of social interaction—things and persons—the respective objective reference of the social action recedes into the background. On the one hand, the logic of social interactions becomes detached from the respective object; on the other, the options available to the subject become greater. The uniformity of social action moves from the aspect of objective reference (the exchange of natural goods, of one's labour in personal terms) to the formal side (forms of exchange, of communication, etc.). Simmel suggests that as the number of different objects to which our social interactions relate expands, the need for all individuals to respond evenly in material terms approaches the limit value of zero.

What we call a worldview now no longer depends on the uniformity of the response of the intellect of various subjects, but rather on the different being of the respective personalities, who complement each other in terms of the choices and decisions they actually make, as every material difference confirms the formal uniformity of social actions and activities of thought. This stabilises the movement of goods, the legal system, the scientific community, and other cultural spheres in which materially unequal things are pursued in formally equal ways. For philosophy, too, the result is that different philosophical temperaments confirm philosophy's cultural form and can generally be integrated into a shared worldview. The point is this: the sceptical perspective on the foundations of culture, society, and science does not abandon the actors to relativity or even irrationality in thought and action, but makes precisely the integrative forces visible. Paradoxically, what irreconcilably separates them is what makes people's togetherness and being together understandable.

Simmel vehemently rejects the claim that the differences in strategies of philosophical thinking are reduced to a personal moment, as in this case, there would only be different views of life, but no worldview as a common denominator. In his view, this debate on subjectivism and relativism is characterised by a lack of clarity of thought. What is usually called the personal—temperament, fate, milieu—is, in his opinion, a general anthropological phenomenon, and it cannot explain what is actually personal, the creative moment. But even emphasising the radically personal—a point of uniqueness in the individual

in Max Stirner's sense—cannot serve as a sufficient reason for creation, for then the supra-personal effect of philosophical thoughts remains incomprehensible. Accordingly, Simmel concludes that there must be a third thing that is at the root of philosophy. What is meant is a layer of typical mentality.[33] As Simmel implicitly points out in contrast to Eucken, a type as a construct does not coincide with specific actual individuality, nor does it represent an objectivity beyond the individual and his or her life, which is a thesis against Dilthey's position.[34]

But Simmel's position has shaky foundations. He leaves distinguishing between surface phenomena and a deep and general bedrock when exposing philosophical problems to the philosopher's feeling. A comparison with the artist exposes Simmel's conviction that only a personality in which special mental energies flow has the disposition for the necessary discernment. The philosopher's truth is therefore close to talk of artistic truth: for the artist, as for the philosopher, Simmel emphasises, a productivity bursting forth from their personality generates a typical form of the object or thought. This admittedly singular formation, however, is supposed to have a validity beyond singularity, which cannot be derived from the object, but from the act of creation itself, insofar as "a peculiar psychological layer speaks in the creator, with which man as a type or a type of man begins to function in the individual phenomenon."[35] The religious genius of the prophets, in which the genius of humanity expresses itself, also comes close to this conceptualisation.

It is obvious that in this context, Simmel is unable to provide sufficient justification for when a singular individual speaks for him- or herself and when man as a type speaks through him or her. Whether a mere life or a philosophical life is articulated in one thought or another cannot be logically substantiated. This leaves only the path of an evidential proof of philosophical-artistic truth. Thus, Simmel also speaks of a "strange combination" of a worldview and life-view of one-sided decisiveness and unmistakable personality *and* of something generally human and necessary beyond the individual, grounded only in life itself, which characterises genuine philosophical achievement. However, this presupposes that a typical moment of mental individuality is effective, by which is meant an inwardly objective—that is, not arbitrary—aspect of a personality that obeys only its own law; namely, which, in principle, detaches itself from

33   Simmel, *Hauptprobleme der Philosophie*, 28.

34   Cf. Hartung, "Simmels *Philosophie des Geldes* im Kontext [Kontext, Vorwort]," in *Georg Simmels Philosophie des Geldes*, ed. Gerald Hartung and Tim-Florian Steinbach (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2020), 1–18.

35   Simmel, *Hauptprobleme der Philosophie*, 28–29.

external bonds.[36] At this point, Simmel formulates an early version of his concept of an "individual law" for the first time.[37]

According to his explicit understanding, like Nietzsche before him, Simmel merely draws the radical conclusions from Kant's philosophy, in that he outlines the concept of truth in philosophy by tracing the types of human mentality and detaches it from an appropriateness to the objectivity of things. In this way, the function of the philosopher's personality comes into focus and "one could summarise this conception of philosophy in the formula that philosophical thought objectifies the personal and personalises the objective."[38] In Simmel's view, we continue to read the writings of Plato, Descartes, and Kant time and again because a typical being is expressed in them. Great philosophers are great philosophers because they objectify mental being. Their one-sidedness in dealing with the main philosophical problems is a sign of both their success and their failure.

After all, in general—under the conditions of radical epistemic scepticism—it is the task of philosophy to shape a world that is given to us merely as a collection of fragments into a whole. In fact, however, the solution to this task only succeeds in exceptional cases, insofar as a philosopher takes his or her perspective on the world, his or her colouring of reality, for the whole. In this way, a philosopher does indeed seize the special nature of his or her mental type, thus transcending him- or herself as a mere individual, but at the same time, s/he misses the goal of providing an objective picture of the world.[39] Therefore, the exposed paradoxicality of the individual and the common experience, of the personal and the objective, arrives at the threshold of *aporia*. This means that a contradiction is articulated in the matter of thought, which is not actually generated by thinking, but precedes it. With this question, Simmel's conception of philosophy, his epistemic scepticism, whose model remains Kant, reaches its limits.

3.3 *The Question of Truth as a Paradox in Thought or Exposed* Aporia

How does a philosophical worldview come into being? In Simmel's view, it is a matter of shaping a multiplicity of perspectives into a mental whole. Here too, then, the paradoxical structure returns when a worldview is understood both

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36   Simmel, *Hauptprobleme der Philosophie*, 29.

37   Michael Landmann, "Einleitung des Herausgebers," in Georg Simmel, *Das Individuelle Gesetz: Philosophische Exkurse*, ed. Michael Landmann, new ed. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1987), 7–30.

38   Simmel, *Hauptprobleme der Philosophie*, 30.

39   Simmel, *Hauptprobleme der Philosophie*, 32.

as the expression of a mental type and as the response of an individual psyche to the challenges of their lived life. It is against this background that Simmel conceives his dual perspective on philosophical truth, which, like the other figures of the paradoxical world structure, he applies to his account of the entire history of thought. Here now, a particular variant of the paradoxicality of all relativistic being occurs, which states that a philosophical truth is contained in the contradiction between a philosophical doctrine asserted and perceived as a general truth *and* the impossibility that this general truth can apply to all individual cases. It is precisely the deepest thoughts of philosophy, which claim to apply to the totality of phenomena and seem to gain their depth from this application, that become inadequate and contradictory at the very moment their applicability to individual phenomena and situations is examined.

Simmel emphasises this sceptical finding and ventures the hypothesis that the deepest of contradictions may be revealed here, which runs through the whole history of thought, our human form of mentality, like a thread. In view of this assumption, the pantheistic motif, coupled with the conviction that the dichotomy and multiplicity of existence do not affect one's true being, appears as an understandable avoidance strategy within this fundamental and disturbing contradiction. The history of thought cannot be quietened with solutions, however: at many breaking points, it makes clear that even the innermost conviction of an all-embracing unity and identity of the essence of things cannot conceal the fact that the application of first principles to every detail of experience selectively fails. But principles of thought that are not applicable to all acts of thought do not deserve to be called principles. In this way, grand theories such as pantheism or rationalism require further explanation. And where explanations are insufficient, in Simmel's view, the paradoxicality of all the great philosophical world concepts emerges, which in turn means that these world concepts, such as being, God, history, and so forth, express a general assertion, to which, however, the particular, the actual being, that which is actually logically encompassed by them, does not wish to submit. Simmel carries his position of epistemic scepticism over into the dimension of philosophical language use, in that he denies the option of a consistent terminological solution for the problems of knowledge and life.

It is, however, an idiosyncratic strategy of Simmel's that in proving the failure of a theoretical proposal for the main problem of philosophy—meaning, in this case, an appropriate terminological version of the question of truth— he does not slide into radical epistemic scepticism, epistemic relativism, or even resignation, but rather derives its vital effectiveness from the failure of an action of thought itself. After all, despite the failure of general philosophical concepts to apply to the field of individual and situational experience, we are

still prepared, Simmel insists, to ascribe a truth value to them.[40] The reason for this is on a different level to that of a real correspondence between the intellect and objects, as claimed in Aristotelian and neo-Aristotelian philosophy, but on the level of a generality of a personal, mental, yet nevertheless typical response to the encounter with concrete and singular things. The aspects of commonality, uniformity, and transcendence are transformed into a concept of truth that integrates these aspects on the level of the philosopher's mental and intellectual integrity.

What Simmel formulates as a paradox in epistemic scepticism and linguistic criticism here simultaneously has a cosmic dimension, for the human being, and therefore the philosopher, merely marks out an exceptional position in a cosmic context. In Simmel's view, every detail, each isolated piece of existence, is a meeting point of conflicting things, of unity and multiplicity, activity and suffering, being and becoming. Each detail is absolute and relative at the same time; it belongs in a cosmic context and yet has borrowed its ontological, logical, ethical, and aesthetic definition from human apperception. In this way, the genuinely philosophical insight is that a general structure of metaphysical generalities appears "not to apply to the particularities whose generalities they nevertheless present themselves to be."[41] In other words, our paradoxicalities in thought point to an unfounded and inexplicable *aporia* in the relations of being themselves.

The question of the essence of philosophy and the meaning of philosophical activity can be answered as follows at the end of the first chapter of *Hauptprobleme der Philosophie*, even though Simmel declines to give a concise answer: philosophy fulfils itself as an expression of the yearning to transfer the fragmentary character of our lives into a coherent overall perspective, and to give it voice. Philosophical concepts of the world are the crystalline results of this endeavour. Although philosophy fails in the application of general concepts to individual situations in life, it justifies itself and its endeavour to find a concept of truth at the same moment. To philosophise is to articulate these paradoxes and to address their underlying *aporias*.[42]

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40   Simmel, *Hauptprobleme der Philosophie*, 41.

41   Simmel, *Hauptprobleme der Philosophie*, 42–43.

42   The following chapters elaborate further variants of the basic definition concerning the nature of philosophy. In the second chapter, this includes the paradoxicality of being and becoming (Simmel, *Hauptprobleme*, 44–79). In the third chapter (ibid., 80–102), entitled "Of Subject and Object," another elementary distinction is dealt with, on which the history of thought has provided a wide range of variations. The fourth chapter (ibid., 103–57) is dedicated to the "ideational demands."

Hauptprobleme der Philosophie is, in several respects, a major work by the philosopher Georg Simmel. Simmel formulates a conception of philosophy that brings together his work on epistemology, historiography, psychology, and sociology. The thesis is that behind the historical, social, and mental—taken together, cultural—phenomena, a metaphysical problematic can be made visible: the paradoxicality of general scientific concepts in terms of their claim to explain each individual empirical case. As this paradoxicality cannot be resolved theoretically, but is, as it were, an existential component of our lives, Simmel calls for a philosophical personality that is able to recognise, acknowledge, and live with such a situation. In various respects—being/becoming, subject/object, reality/ideality—he explicates the philosophical problem, the requirements of a philosophical way of life and of a philosophical-artistic concept of truth. Ultimately, Simmel's idiosyncratic contribution to philosophy as a grappling with problems boils down to his theorem of "individual law."[43]

4 Theodor W. Adorno and the Critique of Scientific Terminology

The transition from Simmel to Adorno, which is in the intermediate area between a critique of philosophy and its rehabilitation as theory, is not easy to make for two reasons. For one thing, Adorno always maintained that Simmel's understanding of philosophy was worlds apart from his own, and secondly, research literature has already trodden down this path. We therefore find ourselves in a situation of stable prejudices.[44] What is certain is that time and again, without further analysis of his philosophy, Adorno uses Simmel in order to give a name to the philosophical position of relativism.[45] This means, however, that he merely repeats an early method of criticising Simmel's work

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43 Those who live according to their individual law can at least cope with, if not change, the unreconciled state of the world and the absence of a new overall metaphysical picture. Cf. Magnus Schlette, "Lebensanschauung," in Bohr, Hartung, Koenig, and Steinbach, *Simmel Handbuch*, 65–74.

44 Cf. Richard Klein, Johann Kreuzer, and Stefan Müller-Doohm, eds., *Adorno Handbuch: Leben—Werk—Wirkung* (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 2011), which makes some unreflected references to Simmel's work. It would be worth considering anew whether—in a way yet to be determined—Adorno should not also be included in a history of Simmel's reception, at least his way of conceiving philosophy as an activity and form. This also did not happen in Bohr, Hartung, Koenig, and Steinbach, *Simmel Handbuch*.

45 According to Adorno—in *Philosophische Terminologie: Zur Einleitung*, 1:139–48—Simmel's relativism does oppose the asserted depth in the philosophical discourse of Romanticism and late Idealism, but it remains on the surface. Cliché of depth; petit bourgeois and cultural industry.

and circumvents the systematic content of the relativism debate.[46] Moreover, his advanced and sweeping critique of relativism, which "embodies bourgeois scepticism [...] as a doctrine,"[47] is almost impossible to reconcile with Simmel's philosophy.

On substantive issues, however, a different picture emerges. Adorno points to several common approaches: the attempt to profile the "essay as form" against the philosophical guild and its systemic constraints as well as its positivist tendencies;[48] the reference to the fact that Simmel did not associate himself with any school and did not form any fixed terminology;[49] and the repeated comment that philosophy should have the task of giving language to the suffering of the world, as Simmel first emphasised.[50] By contrast, there are also nuanced judgements about Simmel's way of philosophising that can be interpreted as departures: he is mentioned as the representative of a formal sociology that has brought remarkable insights into social problems, but still has considerable weakness.[51] According to Adorno, Simmel philosophises about the specific, while he himself claims to philosophise by starting from the specific;[52] he notes that Simmel's philosophy articulates the longing for a unification of philosophy by leaving thought to the objects, while his own approach emphasises the demand for a primacy of the object in the field of tension with the pole of subjectivity;[53] finally, since Simmel underestimates the discursivity of thought in this way, his concept of the experience of thought only approximates what Adorno conceptualises as "intellectual experience."[54]

Adorno's discussion of Simmel is particularly impressive in his brief passages introducing an article in a *Festschrift* in honour of Ernst Bloch, who is

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46   Cf. Martin Kusch, "Die Verteidigung des Relativismus [Ch. 1.III.]," in Hartung and Steinbach, *Georg Simmels Philosophie des Geldes*, 57–80.

47   Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialektik*, in Adorno, *Gesammelte Schriften in 20 Bänden. Band 6: Negative Dialektik. Jargon der Eigentlichkeit*, 8th ed. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2018), 47.

48   Adorno, "Der Essay als Form," in Adorno, *Gesammelte Schriften in 20 Bänden. Band 11: Noten zur Literatur* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1974), 9–33, esp. 9.

49   Adorno, *Philosophische Terminologie: Zur Einleitung*, 1:62.

50   Adorno, *Vorlesung über Negative Dialektik: Fragmente zu einer Vorlesung 1965/66*, ed. Rolf Tiedermann, vol. 16 of Adorno, *Nachgelassene Schriften. Abteiling IV: Vorlesungen* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2007), 158.

51   Adorno, *Einleitung in die Soziologie (1968)*, ed. Christoph Gödde, vol. 15 of Adorno, *Nachgelassene Schriften, Abteiling IV: Vorlesungen* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1993), 1113–17.

52   Adorno, *Vorlesung über Negative Dialektik*, 191.

53   Adorno, *Vorlesung über Negative Dialektik*, 204.

54   Adorno, *Vorlesung über Negative Dialektik*, 124.

addressed here, as elsewhere, as Simmel's pupil.[55] Here, he connects with Simmel, "despite all psychological idealism, that return of philosophy to concrete objects […] which remained canonical for anyone who was uncomfortable with the clatter of epistemological criticism and the history of ideas."[56] But, as Adorno adds, the response to Simmel's work had already proved fierce in his generation because he did not deliver the promised concretion. Instead, his philosophy is witty in an old-fashioned way, his categories are too simple, his reflections are self-sufficient, his lack of understanding of the tension between empiricism and thought is regrettable, his thoughts about mediation, his use of a dialectical way of thinking misses the claim to the real, and his basic concepts—for example, life and form—appear invariant and blind to the phenomenon.[57]

These are harsh words which foreshadow Adorno's early fascination with Simmel's essayistic way of thinking and his later disappointment. We can also guess that behind this rough demarcation, the remnants of an early common ground, an alliance with Simmel against a simplification of philosophy and its reduction to methodology, are expressed, at least indirectly: "In relation to the scientific method and its philosophical foundation as methodology, the essay, in its idea, draws the full conclusion from the critique of the system."[58] And it is precisely here that a clue is found that clearly highlights Simmel's and Adorno's complicity: they are against the penetration of scientism into philosophy (empirical criticism and logical empiricism), against a reductionist understanding of philosophy (method, but not truth), against philosophy's lack of sensitivity to the form of its presentation, but for a disclosure of the problem of relativism.[59]

4.1   *What Is Philosophy?*

It goes without saying here that it cannot be denied that Adorno's starting point for a rehabilitation of philosophy is largely different from Simmel's. This relates to the assessment of the situation in the history of theory, the question

55   Adorno, "Henkel, Krug und frühe Erfahrung," in *Ernst Bloch zu Ehren: Beiträge zu seinem Werk*, ed. Siegfried Unseld (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1965), 9–20; reprinted in Adorno, *Noten zur Literatur*, 556–66.

56   Adorno, "Henkel, Krug und frühe Erfahrung," 558.

57   Adorno demonstrates all this with reference to a paper entitled "Der Henkel" from Simmel's collection of texts entitled *Philosophische Kultur* (*Philosophical Culture*); see Adorno, "Henkel, Krug und frühe Erfahrung," 558–61.

58   Adorno, "Der Essay als Form," 16.

59   Simmel's and Adorno's parallel approaches are largely of no use when considering individual aspects such as modernity and individuality. Literature on this can be found in Klein, Kreuzer, and Müller-Doohm, *Adorno Handbuch*.

of a materialist position, and the relationship to Hegel's philosophy and to dialectics as a form of thought.[60] But even here, when we look at the individual questions, astonishing parallelisms emerge. One of these is the focus of this paper and concerns the question of philosophical terminology.

Adorno emphasises that philosophy has a special relationship with terminology—and this does not mean the fact that philosophies form a certain jargon—because it is both a subject and not a subject.[61] The dual character of philosophy as a subject and a non-subject repeatedly asserts itself, such as in the effects of the division of labour and professionalisation, the reification and solidification of terminology. Moreover, philosophy is not unaffected by a crisis of language as diagnosed by Hofmannsthal, Mauthner, and others.[62]

Against the backdrop of these sceptical objections, Adorno formulates some key points for philosophy's field of work. A philosopher is faced with the task of objectifying his or her experiences; that is, finding an appropriate expression in the language of the concept. The means of the concept is the only thing available to the philosopher as an expression of experience.[63] Yet to avoid saying something at this point that any academic can claim for him- or herself, Adorno adds that philosophising as an attempt to objectify subjective experience in the medium of the concept is nothing other than thinking in the emphatic sense. And to avoid being misunderstood, he emphasises that it cannot amount to a mere emphasis of subjectivity.[64]

This, however, for now, only amounts to identifying a problem. Adorno emphasises the fact that philosophy is in a dual and precarious relationship with the sciences on the one hand and with worldviews on the other. In relation to the sciences, the front is characterised by the risk of a slide into positivism and the formation of a reified terminology; in relation to worldviews, philosophy is under pressure to differentiate itself, in that it should not surrender to non-conceptual thought. Non-conceptual thought is identified as an aspect of the problem of relativism with significant consequences, since in his view, philosophical relativism and fascism go hand in hand.[65] Against this backdrop,

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60   In this respect, it is worth reading the introduction to *Negative Dialektik* carefully. Cf. Adorno, *Negative Dialektik*, 13–66.

61   Adorno, *Philosophische Terminologie: Zur Einleitung*, 1:9; cf. ibid., 2:9.

62   Adorno, 1:55. It is significant that Klein, Kreuzer, and Müller-Doohm, *Adorno Handbuch*, does not include an entry on "Terminology." Only passing reference is made to the subject of "linguistic criticism" in the otherwise excellent contribution by Ruth Sonderegger in that volume entitled "Essay und System," 427–30.

63   Adorno, *Philosophische Terminologie: Zur Einleitung*, 1:81.

64   Adorno, *Philosophische Terminologie: Zur Einleitung*, 1:83–85.

65   Adorno, *Philosophische Terminologie: Zur Einleitung*, 1:89 *et seqq.*

it is understandable that Adorno counts the liquidation of the worldview as one of philosophy's key tasks.[66] This task is in the tradition of the criticism of ideology in the early twentieth century. The efforts of worldviews to create bonds through "blood and soil" terminology, expressing supposed depth, the juggling of conventions and clichés, and the cult of the simple life is opposed by epistemic scepticism, which directs suspicion towards cultural systems and the use of entrenched terminology, and also by linguistic criticism.[67]

Adorno does not oppose the ideologically overdetermined realm of cognition and language with the demand to adopt a neutral position. On the contrary, he calls for committed thinking that does not consider neutrality to be harmless. Philosophy is identified as an intellectual pursuit that frees itself from all claims about the supposed positivity and neutrality of life. Philosophising is an attitude and a mental practice, which exposes itself to and endures the contradictions of life. This also includes a liberation from the interpretation of suffering.[68]

Yet how can it be possible to think conceptually and to offensively counter the risks of non-conceptuality, while at the same time protecting conceptuality from its tendency to reification? In this respect, Adorno remains strangely vague. He does refer to the fact that philosophical concepts differ from words and that the use of concepts must be distinguishable from the mere use of words, as philosophical concepts have an invariant core.[69] Around this core occurs a philosophical practice of negating and retaining—Hegel speaks of *Aufhebung* [sublation]— which is the only way in which the invariance of the conceptual core becomes evident. In this way, the basic characteristics

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66   Adorno, *Philosophische Terminologie: Zur Einleitung*, 1:123.

67   Adorno, *Philosophische Terminologie: Zur Einleitung*, 1:164. Cf. the impressive passage in the lecture *Philosophische Elemente einer Theorie der Gesellschaft* (*Philosophical Elements of a Theory of Society*): Adorno, *Philosophische Elemente einer Theorie der Gesellschaft (1964)*, ed. Tobias ten Brink and Marc Phillip Nogueira, vol. 12 of Adorno, *Nachgelassene Schriften, Abteilug IV: Vorlesungen* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2008), 212–13: "The insight of the ingenious Wilhelm von Humboldt, who is so often—and not without reason—branded a heretic today, that thought and language constitute each other, is still valid today, but in the negative sense that reified thought, reified consciousness, and reified language create each other, just as […] the critique of language must not be a merely formal critique of language, but, by recourse to the form of language, is always forced to confront this form of language with the expressed content, and finally—as I have at least attempted to do in the forthcoming *Jargon der Eigentlichkeit* (*Jargon of Actuality*)—to deduce the language itself, the falsity of language itself from the objective falsity of the matter."

68   Adorno, *Philosophische Terminologie: Zur Einleitung*, 1:173.

69   Adorno, *Philosophische Terminologie: Zur Einleitung*, 1:198. A longer note on research into the history of concepts (Rothacker, Ritter, Gadamer) would be possible here.

of dialectical philosophy appear. Adorno speaks of mediation within itself and not between moments of mediation. Mediation within itself is a process whose framework conditions are only constituted by itself. In this respect, the talk of the conceptual core is misleading, because the core is not exposed, but must—if understood correctly—be seen as the result of mediation within itself. Invariance is therefore not given, but only a semblance of an outcome of conceptual work. A moment of scepticism is inscribed in the process. As the content of intellectual experience, philosophical concepts are fallible. Any result of philosophical activity is subject to error.[70]

4.2   *Philosophy and Linguistic Form*

Time and again, Adorno emphasises the fact that linguistic form is not neutral for the practice of philosophising. Philosophy is that form of cognition to which language is essential; that is, in which language is essential to the subject matter.[71] Despite this, it is not a matter of giving voice to what is the case, but of engaging with the paradox of saying, with the means of the concept, that which cannot be said with these means. Philosophy is about expressing the non-conceptual; that is, about saying the unsayable. To anyone who takes philosophy to the limits of language in this way and pushes it beyond them, the last proposition of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* must seem like unreasonable quietism. Adorno speaks of the vulgarity of the famous proposition: "Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent" (*Tractatus* 7).[72]

In view of the Wittgensteinian option of pushing epistemic and linguistic scepticism to an extreme point in the face of worldly and scientific questions, we see in Adorno an astonishing plea for a *return to language*. This is all the more astonishing in view of the linguistic crisis around 1900, which Adorno addresses, and in view of the linguistic criticism movement from Nietzsche to Karl Kraus, to which he also refers.[73] In doing so, he additionally vehemently rejects all attempts at undermining a secular understanding of the use of language. Words are and remain concepts and are not, according to their idea

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70   Adorno, *Vorlesung über Negative Dialektik*, 132.

71   Adorno, *Philosophische Terminologie: Zur Einleitung*, 2:7.

72   Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus logico-philosophicus* 7 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1963), 7; cf. Adorno, *Philosophische Terminologie: Zur Einleitung*, 1:56, and *Vorlesung über Negative Dialektik*, 111–12.

73   Cf. Adorno, *Metaphysik: Begriffe und Probleme*, ed. Rolf Tiedermann, vol. 14 of Adorno, *Nachgelassene Schriften. Abteilung IV: Vorlesungen* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2006), 14; Adorno, *Ontologie und Dialektik (1960/61)*, ed. Rolf Tiedermann, vol. 7 of Adorno, *Nachgelassene Schriften. Abteilung IV: Vorlesungen* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2008), 62.

(see Plato's *Cratylus*), the names of the thing itself.[74] On the other hand, a relegation of language from philosophy through its mathematisation offers no way out, as the polemical reference to Wittgenstein makes clear. The paradoxical structure of language use remains. The argument for this is: the mimetic moment of thought—that is, the indication of the appropriateness of the word to the object that is being mentioned—can only be thought in language. Intellectual experience in particular needs its language, for "only as language is the similar able to recognise the similar"[75] The similarity relation does not imply an identity hypothesis, but a tense, contradictory relationship. Adorno's term for this is "dialectics." Dialectics is not a state, nor a mechanical interplay, as in vulgar Hegelianism, but a strategy. In terms of the task of giving a corresponding linguistic expression to an object, dialectics is a critical corrective of language use. "Dialectics is required to save the linguistic moment critically; that is, through the accuracy of expression. Language is as much a separator between thought and object as that which is capable of being mobilised against this separation."[76] Thus, language is the form of a contradiction that is articulated in life or social being as well as in thought; its articulation is language, whose means is the concept. The concept is the organon of philosophy, which stands between philosophy and the longing for an appropriate linguistic expression from which it cannot desist. Longing means the perpetual hope that the contradiction can be resolved. Once again, the suspicion that philosophy degenerates into mere posturing applies here. To counter this suspicion, Adorno adds the claim that the named contradictions between thought and object, between thought and linguistic expression, like the difference between essence and appearance, are not merely speculative, but real. This is the background for him to keep reminding us that philosophical reflection is to be located on a sociological level.[77]

4.3   *Philosophical Terminology*

The interweaving of philosophical and sociological analysis is evident in Adorno's reflections on the history of philosophical terminology.[78] In his view, the history of philosophy should be described along the lines of conceptual

74   Adorno, *Vorlesung über Negative Dialektik*, 220 *et seqq.*

75   Adorno, *Vorlesung über Negative Dialektik*, 222–23.

76   Adorno, *Vorlesung über Negative Dialektik*, 223.

77   Adorno, *Vorlesung über Negative Dialektik*, 146. Cf. Stephan Müller-Doohm, "The Critical Theory of Society as Reflexive Sociology," in *The Cambridge Companion to Adorno*, ed. Tom Huhn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 279–301.

78   This topic is a desideratum in Adorno research. Evidently, an established image of Adorno's philosophy and its alleged education is being challenged here. On this, Klein,

change. Adorno does not go into detail here, and leaves things at programmatic statements. Page references to certain authors from the classical period of philosophical historiography between Hegel and Windelband—for example, to Karl Prantl, Johann Eduard Erdmann, and Rudolf Eucken—give an impression of what might be meant by this programme.[79] In this respect, Adorno attaches importance to the observation, related to the ambivalence in philosophy's self-understanding as a (non-)discipline, that in the debates that had been taking place since the nineteenth century, a distrust of conceptual definitions had been repeatedly articulated since the systemic claim of philosophy had begun to be questioned. The epistemic sceptic and language critic Friedrich Nietzsche takes this perspective, and he is not alone.[80] Despite epistemic doubt and the language crisis around 1900, the history of philosophy continues to document a search movement in terminological questions that contrasts both with everyday language use and with a fixed technical language. In Adorno's view, philosophical language must function as a "canon of the use of concepts."[81]

The precarious situation of philosophical terminology has been known since Aristotle and is reflected in the terms of conceptual history. It is therefore no wonder that in the nineteenth century, Neo-Aristotelians pushed research on the history of terminology (Trendelenburg, Prantl, Teichmüller, Eucken, and others).[82] It all starts with Aristotle! Since then, it has been necessary to consider the intertwining of the history of philosophy with its terminology and terminological problems. Terms are titles for problems that are dealt with in philosophy. No form of philosophy is conceivable without terminology.[83] In the interweaving of conceptual history and the history of terminology, Adorno again distinguishes between the core and the shell of concepts. The history of terminology shows shifts in the problems (with an identical core) and a change of meanings.[84] To be able to describe the difference between core and shell,

Kreuzer, and Müller-Doohm *Adorno Handbuch*, with its idiosyncratic selection of keywords, disregarding the context of the works, provides some clues.

79   Hartung, "Philosophical Historiography in the 19th Century."

80   Adorno, *Philosophische Terminologie: Zur Einleitung*, 1:20 *et seqq.*; Adorno, *Einführung in die Dialektik (1958)*, ed. Christoph Ziermann, vol. 2 of Adorno, *Nachgelassene Schriften, Abteilung IV: Vorlesungen* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2015), 279 *et seqq.*

81   Adorno, *Einführung in die Dialektik (1958)*, 283.

82   Adorno, *Philosophische Terminologie: Zur Einleitung*, 1:35 *et seqq.*

83   Adorno, *Philosophische Terminologie: Zur Einleitung*, 2:12.

84   Here, a comparison with Nicolai Hartmann's analyses of conceptual history would be useful. On Hartmann, cf. the recent paper by Hartung, "The Gold of Knowledge—Nicolai Hartmann and Historiography of Philosophy," *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 29 (2021): 718–37.

Adorno prescribes a recourse to Husserl's phenomenology, but here understood as a semantic analysis of the terminology.[85]

Regrettably, matters are left at this reference, as what follows in Adorno's lectures entitled *Philosophische Terminologie* is a historically contextualising analysis, geared towards the sociology of knowledge, of the key scholarly terms of philosophy: idealism—realism, rationalism—empiricism, spiritualism—materialism.[86] His analyses of Kant's, Hegel's, and Husserl's models of thought, as developed in the lectures, are predominantly conventional and almost textbook-like in their organisation. Adorno's comments on the historiography of philosophy, on the other hand, are quite interesting, even if they are not implemented in the material. In view of the historical distance we have from the source texts of philosophy, he sees any historical-systematic reconstruction of philosophical terms as an attempt at translation, a kind of deciphering of the historical use of language,[87] of making present what is not present.[88]

In this context, Adorno also addresses in passing the challenges facing research on philosophical terminology in his time. On the one hand, the weight of language in philosophy is increasing and language has become problematic in general, which he sees as a consequence of the abuse of language—both in everyday life and in the sciences—during the Nazi era.[89] On the other, Adorno is also concerned with countering current anti-intellectualism, its penchant for non-conceptuality, and its jargon-like use of language by pointing out that philosophy is to be understood as a terminological structure. And beyond this, it is also about the claim of dialectical, critical thinking—that an insight into the reciprocity of subjectivity and objecthood is to be set against thinking in terms of an identity of subject and object. The assertion of a difference between the

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85   Adorno, *Philosophische Terminologie: Zur Einleitung*, 2:14; Adorno, *Einführung in die Dialektik*, 293: in the style of phenomenology as an attempt at an objective analysis of the meaning of concepts, which seeks to grasp this moment of objectivity in the subjective constitution, simply through looking, as something inherent in the concepts (and not as something to be added to them). Concerning the background of Adorno's engagement with Husserl's phenomenology, see Petra Gehring, "Metakritik der Erkenntnistheorie: Husserl," in Klein, Kreuzer, and Müller-Doohm, *Adorno Handbuch*, 354–64; Philip Hogh, *Kommunikation und Ausdruck: Sprachphilosophie nach Adorno* (Velbrück: Weilerswist, 2015), 101–217.

86   The source for this, as a bibliographical reference suggests, is probably Eucken, *Geschichte und Kritik der Grundbegriffe der Gegenwart.*

87   Adorno, *Philosophische Terminologie: Zur Einleitung*, 2:27.

88   Adorno, *Philosophische Terminologie: Zur Einleitung*, 2:119.

89   Adorno, *Philosophische Terminologie: Zur Einleitung*, 2:8. The context is addressed in detail in Victor Klemperer, *Die Sprache des Dritten Reiches: Beobachtungen und Reflexionen aus LTI*, 2nd ed. (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2020).

core and the shell of the terms leads Adorno to the point of demanding that the analysis of philosophical terminology give voice to what the terms "themselves say." Therefore the analysis should do justice to what the terms say.[90]

This last aspect makes it clear that for Adorno, research into philosophical terminology is not merely incidental.[91] It is really about the core business of Critical Theory: exposing matters taken for granted, arousing mistrust in supposed facts, and highlighting ambivalences.[92] This also includes the point that in philosophy, problems are raised, but not solved; rather, they are constantly reformulated. This paradoxicality, already exposed by Simmel, is also at the forefront of Adorno's work. Philosophical terms are nodes of thought; they are what remains when the history of philosophy plays itself out, "the hardened scar of an unsolved problem."[93] In terms of working through philosophical problems that are advanced in the history of philosophy and that keep philosophy itself in motion, thereby finding different approaches depending on the context, this view of the history of philosophy strengthens the thesis that it is above all else about "intellectual experience";[94] namely, a conception of metaphysics that is not based on answers, but on questions that keep being raised anew, time and again.[95]

Adorno attributes considerable importance to the contextualisation of philosophical questions in the history of philosophy. With an appreciative

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90   Adorno, *Philosophische Terminologie: Zur Einleitung*, 1:185.

91   Cf. Adorno, *Metaphysik: Begriffe und Probleme*, 25: Metaphysics is that form of philosophy whose subject matter is concepts; to understand philosophy, the history of terminology is crucial.

92   Adorno mentions—cf. *Philosophische Elemente einer Theorie der Gesellschaft* (*1964*), 123—that a theory must integrate the moments that are contrary to it; that is, it must also "theoretically comprehend" the separation between its general patterns of reflection and subjective experience. Cf. Gunnar Hindrichs, *Zur kritischen Theorie* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2020), esp. 12–45, whose thoughtful reflections, which point to the task of Critical Theory between the 1930s and the 1960s, in many respects correlate with my reflections.

93   Adorno, *Philosophische Terminologie: Zur Einleitung*, 2:11.

94   Adorno, *Philosophische Terminologie: Zur Einleitung*, 2:128; also cf. Adorno, *Vorlesung über Negative Dialektik*, eighth lecture, "Begriff der geistigen Erfahrung," 114–28; here 122. After a brief summary of his conception of cognition, Adorno adds: "Ladies and gentlemen: such a philosophy, which on the one hand does not presume to master infinite objects, but on the other hand does not make itself finite either—such a philosophy would be full, unreduced experience in the medium of conceptual reflection, or, as one may well call it, it would be intellectual experience."

95   Adorno, *Philosophische Terminologie: Zur Einleitung*, 2:166; cf. Hans Blumenberg, "Ernst Cassirers gedenkend bei Entgegennahme des Kuno-Fischer-Preises der Universität Heidelberg," in Blumenberg, *Wirklichkeiten in denen wir leben* (Stuttgart: Reclam,1981), esp. 164–70.

reference to Simmel's statement that to date, little of humanity's suffering has entered the history of philosophy,[96] he pleads for a different way of writing it.[97] In analyses of the history of philosophy, the objective must not be to make oneself comfortable in the description of different terminological practices and to merely uncover contradictions between models of thought,[98] but rather to show the non-identity of the identical; that is, to expose the suggestions of progress and solutions in the analysis of the philosophical vocabulary of certain philosophers and schools of philosophy, and to open up the realm of intellectual experience in the demonstration of the failure of positing identities—of subject and object, system and history, matter and meaning, and so on.[99] This strategy may well mean that we fail to do justice to a thinker and his model of thought. In visualising the past, the suspicion that we are doing injustice to it cannot be dispelled.[100]

5   Philosophy and Language—What Does a Philosophical Terminology Achieve?

In Adorno's works on the history of philosophy and the critique of philosophical terminology, the claim is repeatedly expressed (even if the implementation remains largely unclear) that critique in the field of theories is simultaneously a social practice. This claim indirectly connects Adorno's work with the generation of left-wing Hegelians. It is therefore no coincidence that he points to the decisive achievement of Marx in terms of the history of philosophy: he explicitly named the dialectical demand for an immanent critique of philosophical terminology[101] and linked it with the call to immediately roll up one's sleeves and change society through criticism.[102]

In the introduction to *Negative Dialektik* (1966), Adorno reminds us of the demand for change in the world, which has not been fulfilled. From this, he derives philosophy's ruthless criticism of its forms of thought and language via

96   Georg Simmel, *Aus dem nachgelassenen Tagebuche*, in Simmel, *Gesamtausgabe in 24 Bänden. Band 20: Postume Veröffentlichungen. Ungedrucktes. Schulpädagogikin*, ed. Torge Karlsruhen and Otthein Rammstedt (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2004), 272: "It is astonishing how little of the pains of humanity have passed into its philosophy."

97   Adorno, *Philosophische Terminologie: Zur Einleitung*, 2:178.

98   Adorno, *Philosophische Terminologie: Zur Einleitung*, 2:197.

99   Adorno, *Philosophische Terminologie: Zur Einleitung*, 2:208–10.

100   Adorno, *Philosophische Terminologie: Zur Einleitung*, 2:237.

101   Adorno, *Philosophische Terminologie: Zur Einleitung*, 2:265.

102   Adorno, *Philosophische Terminologie: Zur Einleitung*, 2:271.

philosophy itself.[103] For philosophy's self-image and its actors, the appeal to a practical orientation and a rigorous self-criticism correlates with the suspicion of its self-sufficiency as a discipline and its opening to a sociological perspective. "Whenever there has been philosophy worthy of the name of philosophy, it has not recognised that separation into 'proper' philosophy on the one hand and 'mere' social philosophy on the other."[104]

Adorno's differentiation from Simmel's work becomes clearly visible at these points. Although Simmel also speaks of a self-criticism of philosophy and a practical relevance of philosophising, these remain linked to a concept of individuality and the project of self-cultivation, which for Adorno becomes a chimaera. For Simmel, his analyses of history, society, and culture address the question of how individuation and socialisation can be possible at the same time in a successful way. This concerns what the external conditions are necessary in order to give an individual the chance to form his or her own "lifestyle" (as in *Philosophie des Geldes*, 1900) or to enforce the "individual law" (as in *Lebensanschauung*, 1918). Simmel states that the task of philosophy is to give voice to the contradictions of individual life in a socio-cultural context. In his view, it is particularly true of modern culture that the contradictions previously concealed by traditional forms of social life find their way to the surface. He refers to the modern sentiment about life according to which "the core and meaning of life is constantly slipping through our fingers, definitive satisfactions are becoming rarer and rarer, and all our effort and toil is not really worth it after all."[105]

Simmel's thoughts can only be inadequately captured by Adorno's formula of "psychological idealism."[106] After all, Simmel is concerned with a third option beyond idealism and materialism, and along with sociology, economics, linguistics, and history, psychology only offers a methodological approach for dealing with the basic philosophical problem that straddles every level of being (physical, organic, psychological, intellectual): the togetherness and contradiction of life and form. In Simmel's view, life designs forms out of itself, which develop according to their own rules and without regard to life. This process intensifies into the antinomy of the process of life and its fixed forms. This is why Simmel also speaks of the tragic character of this process, as that

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103   Adorno, *Negative Dialektik*, 15. Cf. Axel Honneth and Christoph Menke, eds., *Theodor W. Adorno, Negative Dialektik* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2006), esp. Honneth, "Einleitung: Zum Begriff der Philosophie," ibid., 11–28.

104   Adorno, *Ontologie und Dialektik*, 253.

105   Georg Simmel, *Das Geld in der modernen Kultur* (*1896*), in Simmel, *Gesamtausgabe in 24 Bänden. Band 5: Aufsätze und Abhandlungen 1894–1900*, ed. Heinz-Jürgen Dahme and David P. Frisby (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1991), 186.

106   Adorno, "Henkel, Krug und frühe Erfahrung," 558.

which opposes life with destructive effect comes from life itself. This confrontation, however, is not unchangeable, but itself stimulates the negation of the existing world of forms and the construction of new forms. Social and cultural history oscillates between phases of the growth and destruction of forms, of the harmony and disharmony of the poles of life.[107]

In Michael Landmann's view, Simmel is torn between a pessimistic view of the unresolvable paradoxes of life and an optimism, because in addition to its facticity, life has an ideal rising from its own root, a law valid only for itself in the individual case, an "individual law." The individual is threatened by a dissolution of boundaries and has an opportunity for self-commitment and self-realisation. Simmel is the "philosopher of individuality,"[108] who continues to hold on to the possibility that a mediation of subjectivity and objectivity is attainable in the individual fulfilment of life, since these are forms of articulating the opposition of life and form, either on the pole of subjectivity or objectivity, and successful mediation cannot be ruled out, at least in principle. For Simmel, culture is a tissue of forms—forms of feeling, forms of thought, forms of cognition, forms of language, and forms of socio-cultural coexistence, such as the "meal"—that are linked to the place of the individual. The way in which they are linked constitutes individuality as a provisional result in the process of individuation and socialisation. The individual, at least in its ideal representatives—Simmel wrote monographs on Goethe and Rembrandt—is the expression of a positivity of life whose representation enables a "seeing of total life"[109] and an understanding of individuality as a "structure whose form is completely connected to a reality."[110]

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107   Cf. Landmann, "Einleitung des Herausgebers," 12.

108   Michael Landmann, "Konturen seines Denkens," in *Ästhetik und Soziologie um die Jahrhundertwende: Georg Simmel*, ed. Hannes Böhringer and Karlfried Gründer (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1976), 7. Also cf. the obituary by Karl Joël published in *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 16 October 1918, in *Buch des Dankes an Georg Simmel: Briefe, Erinnerungen, Bibliographie. Zu seinem 100. Geburtstag am 01. März 1958*, ed. Kurt Gassen and Michael Landmann (Berlin: Duncker und Humblot, 1958), 166–67. Joël attributes a "cultural potency" to Simmel that was not bound to subject or school, seeing him as a "cosmopolitan intellect" who produced "cutting-edge world culture." With *Philosophie des Geldes*, in which money becomes a world symbol, an image of exchange, of infinite interrelation, Simmel became the "philosopher of relativism." Over the years, the epistemologist becomes a philosopher of life, the path leading from Kant to Schopenhauer, Goethe and Nietzsche, to the "philosophers of the desired life." From the border of scepticism to the border of mysticism, his thought developed without interruption.

109   Simmel, *Rembrandt: Ein kunstphilosophischer Versuch*, in Simmel, *Gesamtausgabe in 24 Bänden. Band 15: Goethe. Deutschlands innere Wandlung. Das Problem der historischen Zeit. Rembrandt*, ed. Uta Kösser, Hans-Martin Kruckis, and Otthein Rammstedt (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2003), 353.

110   Simmel, *Rembrandt: Ein kunstphilosophischer Versuch*, 370.

This option is closed off for Adorno. For him, too, the intraworldly is "infinitely relevant" in its many dimensions and with regard to concrete phenomena, but "no positivity of meaning" can be wrested from it.[111] On the final pages of *Minima Moralia* (1951), a transition is made from epistemological problems and problems of life to the problem of (in)appropriate linguistic expression. Language, Adorno emphasises, is social expression according to its objective substance. History takes place in the midst of language, with the consequence that words and forms of language are corrupted by use.[112]

In several places in his oeuvre, primarily in his lectures (edited from his estate), Adorno expressed himself on issues of the philosophy of language. Therefore, in 1960/61 in his lecture *Ontologie und Dialektik* [Ontology and Dialectics], he made reference to the fact that the entanglement of being and language going back to Aristotle, which was rehabilitated by the Neo-Aristotelians in the nineteenth century, has been irreparably dissolved. Language has acquired its own relevance, and through the destruction of the correspondence theory—effectively by Nietzsche—the analysis of language use takes on a special significance. At the same time, however, Adorno opposes giving false relevance to language through a jargon-like use of it (as is the case with Heidegger and those around him), or narrowing it to the function of signification in observational scenarios (as is demanded in positivism with the example of protocol statements).[113] In his view, Heidegger is only right at the point at which he declares the how of communication to be essential for truth, because he "therefore drew attention to the integral importance of language for philosophy."[114]

The last fragments of Adorno's *Vorlesung über Negative Dialektik* [Lecture on Negative Dialectics] (1965/66), which he introduces with the words "Back to language,"[115] are particularly impressive. Here, he once again outlines the basic structure of his philosophical approach. The keyword is *negative*

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111   Adorno, *Metaphysik: Begriffe und Probleme*, 160.

112   Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, in Adorno, *Gesammelte Schriften in 20 Bänden. Band 4: Minima Moralia. Reflexionen aus dem beschädigten Leben*, 14th ed. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2022), 293. Example of *Minima Moralia* as a work on concepts. It is the task of philosophy to represent the interdependence, both the diversity and the unity of concepts. Cf. Adorno, *Metaphysik: Begriffe und Probleme*, 14.

113   Adorno, *Ontologie und Dialektik*. Adorno wrote a study on the use of jargon in philosophy entitled *Jargon der Eigentlichkeit*, in Adorno, *Gesammelte Schriften in 20 Bänden. Band 6: Negative Dialektik. Jargon der Eigentlichkeit*, 413–526. There, he says (452) that in a language that is of any use, the moment of meaning and the objective aspect of words mediate each other.

114   Adorno, *Ontologie und Dialektik*, 150.

115   Adorno, *Vorlesung über Negative Dialektik*, 220–24.

dialectics. This refers to a process of thought that subjects what is conceptually grasped in thought to negation, and in doing so, evokes a dialectical movement. According to Adorno, the impetus for this thought process—a puzzling phenomenon in Hegelian logic—comes from the outside. Negative dialectics takes its "force" from what is not realised in the matter itself. It searches for an expression for this deficit and tries to give voice to the deficiency (as an unsatisfied desire and longing, as an unfulfilled wish, as an experience of resistance, and as suffering). The words that *Negative Dialektik* uses remain concepts, however, and do not achieve the goal of the longing for linguistic expression to become names for the matter itself. This deficiency in the correspondence between matter and linguistic expression correlates with a deficiency in the use of language; namely, the risk of relativity and arbitrariness in the choice of words and the representation of facts. Even the most accurate word fails to avoid this risk, as Adorno points out.

This dual constellation gives rise to a dual task of critique, which concerns the conceptual affirmation of a matter on the one hand and the claimed unambiguousness of the use of language on the other. In both respects, it is about a critical reflection of concepts against their linguistic authority—a project that, in Adorno's view, even Walter Benjamin did not consistently execute. Linguistic criticism means the search for the exact expression for a matter and the simultaneous realisation that there is no definitive fulfilment of this objective. This is what motivates dialectics: "Dialectics is required to save the linguistic moment critically; i.e., through the accuracy of expression. Language is as much a separator between thought and matter as it is something that is capable of being mobilised against this separation."[116]

Therefore, turning away from a conceptual language would be the wrong way to go, as it would amount to a betrayal of the ideal goals of human language—the identification of the matter in the word. Despite the impossibility of reaching this goal, the possibility of guiding the way to the destination should be maintained. This is the paradox of Adorno's philosophy of language, which is summarised in the following formula for the terminological problem: *Concepts alone can achieve what the concept prevents.*[117] Philosophising means working with concepts and creating a certain constellation of them, composing a context in which they are gathered for mutual correction. Ever since Hegel, the compositional pattern for conceptual work has been the

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116   Adorno, *Vorlesung über Negative Dialektik*, 223.
117   Adorno, *Vorlesung über Negative Dialektik*, 220.

procedure of determinate negation.[118] In the background, to protect the method from arbitrariness or to ward off the decline into mere attitude, is the hope of the name.[119]

After all, terminological work is also work on and in the history of philosophy. This exists as a tradition. Traditional forms of knowledge are immanent to cognition as the mediation of its objects. Nothing is radically new, everything is remembered (or forgotten and remembered again). Tradition is not a temporal continuum, but *qua* memory it is categorially part of cognition. Concepts carry the tradition and must be critically questioned. Thought in the emphatic sense is an "internalisation of history";[120] it must mobilise its immanent tradition (not from outside, arbitrarily) in order to have a starting point for the specific negation. In this sense, and not in the sense of simply taking over existing bodies of knowledge, the traditional moment in thought is a constituent part of intellectual experience.

Terminological work is above all work on texts. In the reading of the texts, philosophy participates in tradition, whereby tradition is only built up through critique, through the specific negation of the meaning supposedly conveyed in the texts. The philosophy of tradition becomes commensurable with the texts and their critique, inscribes itself in them, and continues to write them. The interpretation of texts must manage without hypostasising the concepts; it must articulate the resistance to a de-temporalisation of thought at all times. "The truth is the **unfurling**: secularisation of the relationship to sacred texts."[121] To unfurl means to open up horizons of meaning and ways of using concepts, to liquefy them in the medium of history—in other words, the opposite of closing them off, ending them, defining them. Here again, Adorno anticipates the accusation of arbitrariness and relativity in the relationship between object and concept. His argument is that truth has its place in language, and it therefore has a linguistic form. Only in language can the mimetic moment of thought be thought, which seeks to bring together the object and linguistic expression. "Only as language is the similar able to recognise the similar."[122]

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118   Cf. Adorno, *Negative Dialektik*, part 2: "Negative Dialektik: Begriff und Kategorien," 137–207. Cf. Tilo Wesche, "Negative Dialektik: Kritik an Hegel," in Klein, Kreuzer, and Müller-Doohm, *Adorno Handbuch*, 317–25.

119   Cf. Werner Hamacher, "Die Geste im Namen—Benjamin und Kafka," in Hamacher, *Entferntes Verstehen* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1998), 280–323.

120   Adorno, *Vorlesung über Negative Dialektik*, 221.

121   Adorno, *Vorlesung über Negative Dialektik*, 222. Cf. Adorno, *Metaphysik. Begriffe und Probleme*, 107: The paradoxicality of language use in philosophy: using language but not turning it into a fetish; language as mediation and part of reality.

122   Adorno, *Vorlesung über Negative Dialektik*, 223.

Adorno would not be Adorno, however, if he did not see in this advantage of language at the same time its highest risk. He addresses this issue in another area of his research on language use, where he discusses the language of poetry.

In the paper *Kulturkritik und Gesellschaft*, published in 1951, we famously encounter the overriding sentence that "to write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric."[123] This sentence stands in the wider context of a cultural and social critique, whose contours have been presented here. Adorno talks of the degradation and reification of the intellect in a total society whose counterpart is industrial mass culture. In it, in his view, the very utterance of the doom that every thought, word, and gesture can be capitalistically exploited threatens to degenerate into mere chatter.[124] There is no longer an outside: neither a social nor a linguistically formed outside of the culture that captures everything.[125] With the abandonment of traditional culture, the object, the social context, and the stringency of linguistic expression have been lost. Adorno alludes to the dynamics of advertising, of the new media of the time, above all, sound film, and declares culture as a whole, with its tendency towards objectification, to be ideology.[126] The assertion that a poem can no longer be considered an appropriate linguistic expression for man's historical situation entails multiple contradictions. On the one hand, even a poem can only make use of the language that has been corrupted in use and must therefore fail in its claim to express subjectivity. On the other, the poem represents a literary form of traditional culture in the present and must also fail in its claim to save tradition. The third moment is that the realisation that it would be impossible to write a poem today is also not self-sufficient. Expressing the sentence "frißt auch die

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123   Theodor W. Adorno, "Kulturkritik und Gesellschaft," in Adorno, *Gesammelte Schriften in 20 Bänden. Band 10: Kulturkritik und Gesellschaft 1. Prismen. Ohne Leitbild. Eingriffe. Stichworte* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1977), 30. Cf. Sven Kramer, "Lyrik und Gesellschaft," in Klein, Kreuzer, and Müller-Doohm, *Adorno Handbuch*, 200–210; especially 206–10.

124   Adorno, *Einführung in die Dialektik*, 279 *et seqq*. After Auschwitz, there is a danger of the foolish and the malignant. This means that there is a tendency to dismiss the question of fact itself in language.

125   Cf. Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklärung: Philosophische Fragmente*, new ed. (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1971), "Kulturindustrie: Aufklärung als Massenbetrug," 108–50. This text foreshadows aspects of Adorno's cultural criticism; for example, those concerning the language of advertising, the pop song, etc. The aspect of the "demythologisation of language," which reverts to magic (147), is already unfolded here.

126   Although not mentioned, this idea stands on the shoulders of Georg Lukács's 1923 treatise *Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein: Studien über marxistische Dialektik* (*History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics*): Lukács, *Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein: Studien über marxistische Dialektik* (Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1968), esp. 170–267.

Erkenntnis an" [also eats away at cognition],[127] which is driven beyond itself, because resignation promises no rest in self-sufficiency.

The history of the reception of this phrase has itself become a field of research in its own right.[128] In the context of this paper, however, we are only interested in Adorno's own reception of his famous phrase from the early 1950s. For Adorno, the sentence itself became a core of his radical scepticism, linguistic criticism, and the *aporia* of cultural life on which he elaborated. Roughly speaking, he is concerned with the fact that the means available to us with the help of which we lead our lives—the forms of experience, the categories of cognition, the linguistic forms of expression, the scientific concepts—are no longer suitable for us in three respects: they are not an adequate expression of our subjectivity, they are not in direct correspondence with objectivity, and they are not suitable for the successful mediation of subjectivity and objectivity. However, these means cannot be substituted either: we are bound to them and we cannot detach ourselves from them. Accordingly, only the path of a concentrated, critical, and reflected use of them remains. This is the background against which Adorno, in his *Vorlesung über Negative Dialektik*, self-critically asks himself whether this sentence is tenable at all. His answer is that he does not know:

> But the idea that, after Auschwitz, we cannot seriously say that a world in which this [sc. Auschwitz *and* Vietnam] was possible and threatens to repeat itself in another guise […], that we should be able to assert of such a condition of reality that it is meaningful: that seems to me to be a piece of cynical frivolity which, in terms of […] our pre-philosophical experience, simply cannot be justified.[129]

In his lecture 1965 *Metaphysik: Begriffe und Probleme* [Metaphysics: Concepts and Problems] a few months earlier, Adorno had made clear that there are historical events—he names Auschwitz, Vietnam, and the entire "world of torture"[130]—that do not pass us by without leaving a trace, but that penetrate our thought and cause "the concept of metaphysics to change to its innermost core."[131] This concerns thought as a whole, metaphysics in particular, and the

127   Adorno, "Kulturkritik und Gesellschaft," 30.

128   Cf. Johann Wolfgang, *Das Diktum Adornos: Adaptionen und Poetiken. Rekonstruktion einer Debatte* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2018).

129   Adorno, *Vorlesung über Negative Dialektik*, 35.

130   Adorno, *Metaphysik: Begriffe und Probleme*, 160.

131   Adorno, *Metaphysik: Begriffe und Probleme*, 160. Cf. Albrecht Wellmer, "Metaphysik im Augenblick ihres Sturzes," in Wellmer, *Endspiele: Die unversöhnliche Moderne. Essays und Vorträge* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1993), 204–23.

linguistic form of philosophy, as "it is impossible after Auschwitz to urge the positivity of a sense in being."[132] This complex of Adorno's thoughts comes together in a highly condensed form in *Negative Dialektik*, the last work to be published during his lifetime,. In the first of the twelve meditations on metaphysics, which has been given the title *Nach Auschwitz*, he says that there is a feeling that after Auschwitz, any assertion of a meaningful positivity of life is mere talk; this feeling has its objective moment after historical events that can be attributed to the world of torture. Adorno is not concerned with natural disasters, which were previously relegated to the discourse of theodicy and interpreted in a meaningful way in its terms, but with social disasters, with the fact that people can cause "actual hell"[133] on earth for other people. No interpretation can lead us out of this hell. What remains is real suffering and its linguistic expression:

> The perennial suffering has as much right to expression as the martyred man has to roar; therefore it may have been wrong to suggest that after Auschwitz no more poems could be written. What is not wrong, however, is the less cultural question of whether it is even possible to live after Auschwitz, and whether those who by chance escaped and, according to the law, should have died, can ever live.[134]

Adorno's train of thought concludes with this last and deepest *aporia*, which pervades individual and social life, the activity of philosophising, and the task of the philosopher, as well as the use of the languages of everyday life and the sciences. Epistemic scepticism and linguistic criticism have reached a limit that cannot be positively marked. Adorno is certainly right that this is precisely where the transformation of philosophical speech into mere banality can take place. To retreat from this *aporia* would be tantamount to resignation. To evade it through a relativism of ways of thought and living would be frivolous. But what then? Well, Adorno is concerned with bringing the attitude of epistemic scepticism and linguistic criticism to the limit of the unmentionable again and again. What might this look like? He gives various hints with exemplary investigations—on philosophy's relationship to its history, on the relationship between philosophy and the sciences, on the intellectual way of life, on the philosophical use of language, and so on—but he only gives an outline of the fields of activity. This, however, *makes sense* (if this way of speaking is permitted at all in view of Adorno), as beyond all the positivity of the (social,

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132   Adorno, *Metaphysik: Begriffe und Probleme*, 160.
133   Adorno, *Negative Dialektik*, 354.
134   Adorno, *Negative Dialektik*, 356.

historical, philosophical-scientific) bodies of knowledge, there remains only the practice of a critical mode of behaviour that oscillates between the poles of resignation and fulfilment with regard to truth and the truthful use of language in the mode of a "hope of those without hope."[135] The irrevocability of aporetic situations—which must again and again be exposed through the methods of epistemic scepticism and linguistic criticism, the irreconcilable dialectical tension of our lives—provides us with the reason to act as philosophers and to search for appropriate linguistic forms of articulation for our hopes.

6   Conclusion

Nothing more remains of philosophy in the shadow of Hegel, which, as Adorno notes, either missed the moment of its realisation or, in an increasingly radicalising form of scepticism in view of its tradition, its social function, and its terminological means, approached this very limit with astonishing consistency. We have seen how, from the nineteenth to the twentieth century, the transition from research on philosophical terms and their history is made to criticism of the language of philosophy and of the terminological practice of philosophy as a discipline.

In fact, the language scepticism of Simmel and Adorno stands in marked contrast to Erich Rothacker's work on terminological research (*Archiv für Begriffsgeschichte*; from 1955), the work of Hans-Georg Gadamer (*Begriffsgeschichte als Philosophie*, 1970), and the most significant project on terminological research undertaken by Joachim Ritter (*Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*; from 1971). This contrast is characterised by a fundamentally different understanding of the task of philosophy and the social role of the philosopher. It is also about political implications.[136] Both Simmel and Adorno place the principally affirmative relationship of the German *Begriffsforschung* to social and political reality—the affirmation of tradition—in a dialectical tension, and what appears static as a result of history is set in motion once again. In this way, the language of philosophy is subjected to constant scrutiny. Although there is no alternative to the terminological use of language in philosophy, no term fulfils its Hegelian promise: a comprehension of the whole of

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135   Adorno, *Negative Dialektik*, 370–71; cf. the (unpublished) master's dissertation by Jan David Schenk: "Fülle des Nichts"—Die (Un)möglichkeit der Metaphysik nach Adorno und Beckett (MA diss., University of Wuppertal, 2021).

136   As a side thought, the contours of an important research project that needs to be dealt with in an account of the history of twentieth-century philosophy in the German-speaking world become apparent here.

reality in its historical dimensions as a final and definitive affirmation of reality, which means absolute knowledge. In pointing out this lack again and again and at the same time not taking a relativistic standpoint, nothing else remains, but it is precisely "das, nichts anders zwingt zur Philosophie" [this nothing else that compels philosophy].[137]

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137   Adorno, *Negative Dialektik*, 357. Cf. Albrecht Wellmer, "Modell 3. Meditationen zur Metaphysik. Metaphysik im Augenblick ihres Sturzes," in Honneth and Menke, *Theodor W. Adorno, Negative Dialektik*, 189–205.

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