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# Luzzatto's *Socrates* and the History of Jewish Philosophy

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ABSTRACT

This essay addresses the question where Luzzatto's *Socrate* fits into the history of Jewish philosophy. For most of the paper, it argues that what characterizes Jewish philosophy within the general category of philosophy is not the language in which it is composed, the ethnic or religious identity of its thinkers, specific content or problems, or a style. Rather Jewish philosophy is a specific *tradition* according to a defined sense of the term. To illustrate this, the paper then describes two sub-traditions within Jewish philosophy, one due to Saadia, the other to Maimonides. Finally, the paper explores where Luzzatto might be situated within this conception of Jewish philosophy.

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In an essay by the same title, Leon Roth raised what for him was an 'existential' question «Is there a Jewish Philosophy?»<sup>1</sup>. By labelling it 'existential,' I mean that the question *mattered* for Roth, and not the least for the Jewish people at his time<sup>2</sup>. Nonetheless Roth argued that there is no Jewish philosophy just as there is no Jewish physics or Jewish mathematics; that at most there is *the* or *a* philosophy of Judaism, not in the sense of a philosophy that Judaism possesses but rather in the sense of a philosophy that examines the central claims of Judaism – and this despite the fact that it is not really «philosophy in the authentic historical sense of a *universal* curiosity and a *universal* questioning into the widest as-

pects of human experience»<sup>3</sup> or a study of «*fundamentals*, pervasive factors the removal or alteration of which would change the nature of things altogether»<sup>4</sup>. At most a philosophy of Judaism reflects on the parochial basics of Judaism, and whatever in it is truly philosophical is not truly Jewish but something foreign or imported or «derived from without, that is, from the non-Jewish culture of its time»<sup>5</sup>.

I will argue that there *is* something we can call 'Jewish philosophy', that it is *not* solely or exclusively philosophy about Judaism, and that philosophy need not be concerned only with the 'universal' or with 'fundamentals'. But there is one thing about which Roth was absolutely right. Many answer the question – What

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is Jewish Philosophy? – by describing Jewish philosophies, i.e., the books, theories, and doctrines of canonical Jewish philosophers, such as, Saadia, Maimonides, ha-Levi, Gersonides. Thus, the distinguished scholar of Jewish philosophy, Julius Guttmann, entitled his classic history, *Philosophies of Judaism*. But Jewish philosophy, like any philosophy, is more than a sequence of doctrines or books. Roth tells us that philosophy is a ‘reflective activity’, and I agree that philosophy is an activity, something one ‘does’. For some it is an intellectual exercise that solves theoretical puzzles. For others, these exercises are practices that constitute a way of life, practices that give central place to the intellect and reasoning but aim at a practical end, the achievement of happiness or a harmonious life in which one’s Judaism and intellect are coordinated<sup>6</sup>. In either case, philosophy is a constructive activity in which one engages, not only a subject matter or the end result of the pursuit. This was an ancient conception of philosophy and it was one, I believe, that has been shared by at least some Jewish philosophers.

Simone Luzzatto presents an interesting case study for any attempt to define or characterize Jewish philosophy. Although Luzzatto (ca. 1583-1663) is categorized as an early modern thinker, the Jewish philosophy with which he would have been primarily acquainted would have been medieval Jewish thought. To locate him in the history of Jewish phi-

losophy, it should therefore be asked how he saw himself in relation to that tradition. I will first offer a tentative characterization of (medieval) Jewish philosophy and then turn briefly to consider Luzzatto’s place among its ranks.

In approaching our question, it is important to distinguish the name or description ‘Jewish philosophy’ from the activity in which the figures we call ‘Jewish philosophers’ were engaged. The name of the subject ‘Jewish philosophy’ first emerged in Germany in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century and early 18<sup>th</sup> century when we find the first histories of philosophy – and the very idea that philosophy has a history. The earliest histories are in the doxographical tradition, portraying certain historical figures as paradigms of what was at the later time of the history considered to be philosophical wisdom. Other histories composed slightly later in the 18<sup>th</sup> c. took the form of developmental narratives that aimed to show the very opposite: that the past was at most of historical interest and of no contemporary philosophical value. It is in these histories that the category of “Hebraic”, “Mosaic”, “Scriptural” or “Prophetic” and finally “*Jüdische Philosophie*” (first coined by Brucker in the 1740’s) was introduced. Ironically, in some of these histories, the point of the modifier ‘Jewish’ (or its counterparts) seems to have been specifically to *exclude* the Jewish tradition (together with “Barbarian” philosophy) from the history of Philosophy that

traced its origins to Greece. Later in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, historians and philologists of *Wissenschaft des Judentums* appropriated the term 'Jewish philosophy' in order to claim a field of scholarship of their own in order to legitimate their academic respectability<sup>7</sup>. In sum, it is only relatively recently that engagement with ancient, medieval, and early modern philosophers became a historical discipline, creating the 'history of philosophy'. Jewish philosophy is a special case or by-product of this phenomenon. Unlike the physical world that exists independently of the scientific discipline 'Physics', the domain 'Jewish philosophy' was the creation of a scholarly enterprise, the 'History of Jewish Philosophy', an artifact *made* as much as *studied* by an academic discipline.

What was it, then, that those medieval and early modern thinkers and authors were doing that we scholars nowadays refer to as 'Jewish philosophy'? Well, the simple answer is: Philosophy! However, unlike Roth, I have no definition of philosophy. Instead I will sketch two conceptions of philosophy in which two seminal medieval Jewish philosophers were engaged, Saadia Gaon and Mosheh Maimonides. Yet you might still be puzzled: If it was simply philosophy they were doing, why label it *Jewish* Philosophy?

Before turning to my positive proposal, let me first tell you what Jewish philosophy is *not*. It is not philosophy composed or studied in a Jewish language,

say, Hebrew<sup>8</sup>. We do speak of medieval *Arabic* philosophy and medieval *Latin* philosophy, meaning medieval philosophy written in Arabic or in Latin, but we cannot describe the full gamut of medieval Jewish philosophy as medieval *Hebrew* philosophy<sup>9</sup>. Leaving aside Philo Judaeus of Alexandria in the 1st century who wrote in Greek, works written in the Islamicate empire (e.g., by Saadia, Maimonides, Yehudah ha-Levi, and many others) were all composed in Arabic or Judeo-Arabic (Arabic in Hebrew characters). Only after 1148 do medieval Jewish philosophers in Christian Europe compose and read works in Hebrew. And, of course, for modern Jewish philosophy after 1600, the relevant languages include German, French, English, and – for Luzzatto – Italian.

Nor is it obvious that everything philosophical written or read in Hebrew should necessarily count as Jewish philosophy. Many Aristotelian and Arabic philosophical texts were translated into Hebrew, and some only survive in their medieval Hebrew translations. Is this sufficient for them to count as Jewish philosophy? Or are they Greek or Arabic philosophy translated into Hebrew? To complicate matters, many medieval Jewish thinkers composed super-commentaries in Hebrew on commentaries originally written in Arabic but then translated into Hebrew (say, Gersonides' super-commentaries on Averroes' Arabic commentaries) on Greek classics by Aris-

tole. *If* these super-commentaries are part of medieval Jewish philosophy – and I have yet to see an argument why they shouldn't be – should the Hebrew-translated Arabic commentaries on which they are super-commentaries, or the original Greek texts translated into Hebrew, also cross the boundary? Maybe it would more accurate to say that there is no boundary. In any case, language alone cannot settle the question.

Second, the identity of its author cannot determine whether something is Jewish philosophy. You don't have to be Jewish to do Jewish philosophy and, by the same token, not just any kind of philosophy composed by a Jew, i.e., someone of Jewish descent or confession, need be Jewish philosophy<sup>10</sup>. Some medieval Jewish philosophical texts were composed after their author's conversion to Islam (e.g., Abu-l-Barakat al-Baghdadi) or Christianity (Profyat Duran, Yehoshua Lorki, Abner of Burgos [=Alfonso of Valladolid] who considered himself a Jewish philosopher even while he was a Christian bishop!). Likewise, whether one regards the medieval sectarian movement, the Karaites, as inside or outside Judaism, philosophy and theology written by Karaites is also generally considered part of the repertoire of medieval Jewish philosophy. And if one looks at modern figures, Henri Bergson, Ernest Nagel, and Saul Kripke are all Jewish (and identify as Jews) and they are all philosophers but their works are

not Jewish philosophy. Once again, we cannot define Jewish philosophy using the religion or ethnic identity of the philosopher who composed it.

Is Jewish philosophy something like English, French, or American philosophy – something like a school or style of philosophy? Just as Early Modern empiricist or materialistic philosophy (Hobbes, Locke, Hume) is sometimes labeled 'British empiricism' or just as Early modern rationalist philosophy (Descartes, Malebranche, Spinoza and Leibniz) is identified with France or the continent<sup>11</sup>, is there one philosophical orientation or movement or style that marks medieval Jewish philosophers or philosophy? Again, No. The standard histories of medieval Jewish philosophy identify Saadia as a Mut'azalite dialectical theologian (*mutakallim*); Abraham ibn Daud, Maimonides, and Gersonides as Aristotelians, or Neo-Platonized Aristotelians; Bahya ibn Paquda as a theologian (*mutakallim*) and Neo-platonist; Ibn Gabirol and Yehudah ha-Levi as Neo-platonists. No one school or orientation characterizes medieval Jewish philosophy or philosophers.

A final suggestion is Roth's own idea that Jewish Philosophy is the Philosophy of Judaism or, as we would say nowadays, the Philosophical Foundations of Judaism<sup>12</sup>. This idea is more promising but it immediately raises two thorny questions: What is Judaism? – and beware an essentialist answer – and how does such a con-

ception of Jewish philosophy differ from Jewish *theology*, i.e., the systematic study of the doctrines, practices, and culture of Judaism as a revealed religion? This latter question generally makes contemporary scholars of Judaism anxious because of an acquired allergy to theology, perhaps in reaction to its sophisticated development in Christianity with its creedal core. But it has not always been that way, especially if we take theology to be *natural* theology, human reasoning about the nature of God and divinity. Thus, one of the most influential texts on medieval Jewish thought was the Neoplatonic *Theology of Aristotle*, the Arabic annotated and expanded edition of central books of Plotinus' *Enneads*. We shall return to philosophical theology, or theological philosophy, in our discussion of Saadia, but rather than attempt to distinguish the two, let me simply stipulate for now what I mean by this conception of Jewish Philosophy. Understood as the Philosophy of Judaism, it takes Judaism, primarily manifest in its canonical texts, as the *datum* on which it analytically reflects – exploring its presuppositions, making distinctions, articulating its possible claims and concepts, exposing ambiguities and imprecise beliefs, laying out arguments and evaluating their truth and validity – no different from the philosophy, or what we nowadays call the philosophical foundations, of biology, physics, mathematics, or economics. Although Jewish philosophy of this kind

may have originated in polemical contexts, its content does not adopt a stance defending or advocating Judaism. And while the philosopher may be *committed* to the claims he is philosophizing about, this commitment need be no more than the stance the philosopher of biology or physics takes toward the biological or physical facts he philosophizes about. That is, neither philosopher challenges the data – of either biology or a religion – when he does not understand them, not because they are metaphysically privileged or out of defense but because they are the first-order knowledge that his second-order reflection is philosophizing about. As Maimonides says in the name of Themistius, the philosopher shapes his theory to fit the world rather than (like the Muslim *mutakallim* or theologian) makes the world fit his theory (*Guide of the Perplexed* I: 72). The aim of such a Jewish philosophy is to achieve a critical understanding of the foundational beliefs, logical structure, and presuppositions articulated in the data, not to promote them<sup>13</sup>.

Two caveats: First, I assume no preconceived essence of Judaism, «an invariable 'given', prior to and transcending changing philosophies»<sup>14</sup>. Historically, the interpretation of Judaism has itself changed as a result of its philosophical analysis. For example, Maimonides takes the most noble and sublime part of the study of *Torah* to be what he calls '*Talmud*', the classic rabbinic activity of



oral study of the Written *Torah*, but he then adds that *Talmud* culminates in the study of 'Pardes' (alluding to a famous Talmudic story) which is constituted by 'the Account of the Beginning', i.e., the rabbinic interpretation of the first chapters of Genesis (*Ma'aseh Bereshit*), and 'the Account of the Chariot', the rabbinic interpretation of Ezekiel's and Isaiah's prophetic visions of a divine chariot (*Ma'aseh Merkavah*) which, finally, he identifies with the study of Aristotelian physics and metaphysics<sup>15</sup>. Thus, he makes Aristotelian physics and metaphysics literally part of *Talmud*, hence, a religious obligation, and not just a part but the *apex*, the *most* noble part, thereby transforming our very conception of study of *Torah*. In a similar vein, Maimonides' seminal code of rabbinic law, the *Mishneh Torah*, opens with four chapters that provide a streamlined exposition of Aristotelian metaphysics, cosmology, and physics, and in his famous '*Thirteen Iqqarim*', or dogmas, Maimonides makes normative beliefs and knowledge, rather than pious performance of the practical commandments, constitutive of membership in the community of Israel. In all these cases, philosophy radically recasts our conception of Judaism.

My second caveat – and the real problem with identifying Jewish philosophy with the philosophy of the *religion* Judaism – is that Judaism, and its religion, has never been the exclusive subject matter of Jewish philosophy. No different

from ancient and medieval philosophy in general, medieval Jewish philosophy included the subjects we nowadays call metaphysics, epistemology, and ethics (including topics unrelated to classical Judaism, such as substance, matter and form, causation, the theory of intellects, the nature of motion) *and* natural philosophy including physics, biology, mineralogy, meteorology, geography, the science of dreams and the physiology of sensation. In addition, as with medieval philosophy in general, a central preoccupation of medieval Jewish philosophers was with logic. In sum, medieval Jewish philosophy was inseparable from logic and the sciences regardless of their connection to Judaism<sup>16</sup>. Hence, any restriction of Jewish philosophy to religious or theological topics will not cut the subject at the right joints.

With this background, let me now turn to an early example of Jewish philosophy, which will lead us to my positive proposal for how to characterize Jewish philosophy. Philosophy entered early medieval Judaism through two main avenues, both of them during the Islamicate period (roughly 750-1300) and both essentially involving Muslim thinkers. The first was through *Kalam* (literally: 'speech' or, like the Greek 'logos,' word, argument, or reason, nowadays translated as 'dialectical or rational theology'<sup>17</sup>) which developed initially to defend Islam against rationally based critiques by pagan philosophers and

Christians<sup>18</sup> but, increasingly under the dominant *Mu'tazala* in the ninth and tenth centuries, out of the impulse to use reason to systematize, conceptualize, and thereby understand the beliefs of Islam, assuming that, without understanding, the basic tenets of Islam would be held on imperfect grounds of authority and tradition. This conception of the role of reason in religious belief deeply influenced our first Jewish figure, Saadia.

The second avenue was via the *falasifa* (philosophers) and *falsafa* (philosophy), the Arabic terms reserved specifically for the movement that saw itself as continuing, commenting on, and expanding the philosophy of Aristotle in many cases interpreted through Neo-platonic lenses<sup>19</sup>. In this sense of the term, philosophy began in Islam with the herculean translation of the corpus of Greek philosophical and scientific works into Arabic (in the East) from the 8<sup>th</sup> through 10<sup>th</sup> centuries, and it led to original philosophical works by figures such as Al-Farabi, Avicenna (Ibn Sina), and Averroes (Ibn Rushd) – and, I would add, our second Jewish figure, Maimonides.

Both *kalam* and *falsafa* use natural reason to systematize bodies of belief and knowledge and thereby understand nature and metaphysics, including many traditional religious beliefs. In a broad sense of the term, both *falsafa* and *kalam* can be called schools of ‘philosophy’ – even though, as I mentioned earlier, *kalam* is often translated as ‘(dialecti-

cal) theology’. But the terms ‘theology’ and ‘philosophy’ were not mutually exclusionary for them (as they are for us) – notwithstanding the hostile attitude of the *falasifa*, the philosophers, to the *mutakallimun*, the theologians, whom the former depict as opportunistic defenders of their religion who will employ any means at their disposal to defend it, including distorting the empirical facts to fit their doctrines<sup>20</sup>. The main difference between them is that the *falasifa* saw themselves as (justifiably) importing a foreign Hellenistic perspective into Islam, and their allegiance was owed primarily to Aristotle, while *kalam* promoted a much more indigenous Islamic point of view, based on Arabic language (and grammar) and the *Qu'ran*, *hadith*, and their interpretation as a religion<sup>21</sup>.

With this background, let's turn to our first major Jewish thinker, Saadia ben Yoseph (born 882, Fayyum, Egypt; died 942, Sura, Iraq [Babylonia]) Gaon<sup>22</sup> whom modern scholars often refer to as ‘the first Jewish medieval philosopher’. In the broad sense (we just mentioned) this is correct: Saadia was a philosopher insofar as he used reason to justify and understand his revealed beliefs. But he was not a *falasif* because he did not see himself continuing or expanding the Aristotelian or Greek heritage (although he demonstrates familiarity with Platonic and Aristotelean ideas). Instead Saadia's conception of ‘philosophy’ was that of *Mu'tazalite kalam*<sup>23</sup>. Although he can



be apologetic and polemical, Saadia's deeper philosophical goal was to render revelation as rationally understandable as possible, to use reason to render revealed belief understood and thereby believed or known with certainty. He opens his theological summa, *The Book on Beliefs and Opinions* (932), with a description of his generation as people «sunk in a sea of doubt and covered by the waters of confusion». The aim of his treatise is to bring them to certainty, to make doubt vanish, and to turn «the believer who blindly relies on tradition» into «one basing his belief on speculation and understanding».

*Beliefs and Opinions* is organized along classic *kalam* lines, dealing first with universal questions of theology (creation and a proof of the existence of a divine creator, the unity of God and attributes, prophecy and revelation, command and prohibition and free will) followed by six chapters that address themes and problems more specific to Judaism: reward and punishment, the afterlife, and eschatology. In *kalam* fashion, for each topic Saadia lists competing theories but he does not merely survey the positions that he had to refute in his actual polemical practice; he considers every *possible* position on a given question, eliminating all but one, which not surprisingly turns out to be the doctrine of Judaism. This is a *kalam* conception of knowledge modeled on the purification of metal through the elimination of impurities.

As a system builder, Saadia sees human reason as a divinely-given instrument to enable humans to achieve both a true understanding of the world and a sound interpretation of Scripture. One must accept the *Torah* and believe its revealed truths on divine authority, but through reason one can transform mere acceptance on authority into understanding and thereby knowledge<sup>24</sup>. Thus, Saadia argues, using a design-like argument, that contemplation of the world reveals its created nature, hence, the existence of a creator. Reason, he also argues, can establish that the world was created *ex nihilo*. From the plurality and multiplicity in the world, reason demonstrates that its creator must be one. Following the *Mut'azala*, Saadia argues that God is benevolent and good – and in the same sense in which these moral evaluative terms apply to humans. And because these divine virtues are good in themselves, humans should also be benevolent, good, and grateful – the core moral traits identified by Saadia. In each case, Saadia uses reason, as a tool subordinate to revelation, to justify, confirm, and thereby render it understandable. But Saadia also recognizes limits to reason. In his seminal systematic explanation of the Mosaic commandments, he distinguishes two classes of laws: 'rational' commandments (*sikhliyot, aqli'at*) that can be given intelligible, utilitarian, or moral reasons and 'heard' or 'obeyed' laws (*shimi'ot, sam'iat*), that vary over

and are conventionally adopted by societies and are not rationally necessary or universal but can be given ad hoc reasons given that they are commanded.

We said that Saadia is often designated as ‘the first medieval Jewish philosopher’. Chronologically, he was not first<sup>25</sup>. Nonetheless, there is an important sense in which Saadia is truly the first figure in what I would call ‘Medieval Jewish Philosophy’. And now I want to say more about how we might understand that category heading. I argued earlier that we should not characterize Jewish philosophy by its language, by the (ethnic and religious) identities of its authors, by approach or school-ish method, by its subject matter, or as a branch or domain of philosophy. What Jewish philosophers do is nothing but philosophy – whatever that is but nothing specific to Judaism. However, what does make a set or series of individual philosophers into what we might call *a philosophy*, like *Jewish philosophy*, is their shared discourse, whom they address and cite, whom they support, criticize, or comment on, who influences whom or who is influenced by whom. Jewish philosophy, in Myles Burnyeat’s words, «is a tradition, a succession of thinkers whose thought is conditioned in one way or another by a knowledge of their predecessors in the line»<sup>26</sup>, whose ‘conditioning’ can include both constructive development of thoughts from earlier stages and critical reactions to them at later moments.

These relations of positive and negative ‘influence’ may be rational: a matter of either drawing out entailed or partially implied consequences or refuting earlier positions. However, there is also an important *causal* element built into the idea of influence and into the relation whereby figures at a later stage continue projects initiated earlier, often in ways that the initiators may not have foreseen or would have endorsed. This influence or continuity is one that it is often possible to identify only post facto. However, where a group of individual philosophers are causally inter-connected in this way, they inhabit a shared, sustained space of discourse – common ground, a common language, a conversation to which they respectively contribute. Borrowing language Tad Schmaltz has recently used to characterize ‘Cartesianism’, medieval Jewish philosophy was a social and intellectual network whose members self-identified with certain authoritative figures, like Saadia, Maimonides, or Halevi, or with texts like the *Torah* or Rabbinic literature, or with general views like the use of intellect to gain happiness, self-consciously seeing themselves continuing (positively or negatively) a project<sup>27</sup>. It is this shared space rather than common principles or basic beliefs, a space that allows indeed for disagreement and failures of mutual understanding, that constitutes a tradition.

What marks off medieval Jewish philosophy from the rest of philosophy or

from general medieval philosophy (and, to a degree, also from modern Jewish philosophy) is, in short, that it was a tradition of its own. But this idea of a tradition need not have thick walls around it, one can belong to multiple traditions, and the boundaries can be permeable. The tradition of early medieval Jewish philosophy is embedded in and grows out of the tradition of Islamic philosophy and its Greek sources, while later medieval Jewish philosophy crisscrosses the tradition(s) of Christian scholastic philosophy. It is not always clear how to distinguish when the Jewish philosophers are talking *to* Muslims or Christians or simply talking *about* them. Likewise, it may not always be clear when a Christian author, like Aquinas, is simply talking *about* R. Moses and when he is talking *to* him. In the latter case, I can imagine claiming Aquinas for Jewish philosophy.

In sum, we can refer to medieval Jewish philosophy as a distinctive tradition where we find sustained continuous conversation of this sort or a network focused on a common figure, texts, or project – even though what each of the members in the tradition is doing is simply philosophy! With no common methodology and with no linguistic, ethnic, national, or religious pre-conditions for citizenship, what makes it ‘Jewish’? No single feature but causal relations to many: Jewish texts or events that triggered philosophical questions, the identity, place, or language of a dominating

figure that somehow causally affects the philosophizing around him, or the authoritative status of a proof-text within the authorizing community. So, although being Jewish or written in Hebrew (or in Hebrew characters) or being about Judaism are not individually essential, neither necessary nor sufficient, conditions to count as Jewish philosophy, they often serve as defeasible diagnostic tools<sup>28</sup>. These causal impacts can also be remote and indirect. Thus a passing comment about meteorology in Maimonides’ *Guide of the Perplexed* while explaining the story of creation in Genesis led Samuel ibn Tibbon to translate Aristotle’s *Meteorology*; this was the first Hebrew translation of an Aristotelian work and a translation that played a central role in subsequent discussions of *Genesis*, providence, and prophecy, hence, arguably, itself an important text of medieval Jewish philosophy – even though it is a scientific work by Aristotle, not by a Jew, not originally in Hebrew, and not about Judaism<sup>29</sup>.

From the perspective of founding a tradition, Saadia was the first medieval Jewish philosopher – because he initiated a discourse and conversation to which others added and responded, in which he was addressed by later parties, beginning with Bahya ibn Paquda and Maimonides. I turn now to the second encounter between medieval rabbinic Judaism and philosophy which began when Jewish thinkers met *falsafa*, Arabic

Aristotelian philosophy. Unlike their exposure to *kalam*, which led to their appropriation of human reason to systematize and understand revealed truths, the encounter with *falsafa* was a confrontation between two competing authorities, Moses and Aristotle; between two canonical texts, the *Torah* and arabized Greek philosophy; between two different conceptions of human perfection – piety achieved through performance of the commandments versus actualization of the intellect achieved through knowledge of natural science and metaphysics; between two conceptions of God – a transcendent necessarily existent being or first cause of the eternal cosmos and a voluntaristic personal creator ex nihilo who intervenes in history and changes nature miraculously; and between two ways of life, each with its own curriculum or training leading to its own brand of happiness – a rabbinic education based on *halakhah* and the Aristotelian curriculum that ran from logic through the natural sciences to metaphysics. Our best witness to this encounter is Moses Maimonides (born 1138, Cordoba, Spain; died Fustat, Egypt 1204), arguably the greatest rabbinic thinker of the Middle Ages both in law and philosophy, and there are no better examples of the opportunities opened by this confrontation than his monumental halakhic code of law, the *Mishneh Torah*, and his philosophical magnum opus, *The Guide of the Perplexed*.

On the one hand, Maimonides' monumental halakhic compositions are a model of how to integrate philosophy with classical rabbinic law. Maimonides reconceives Judaism as a philosophical religion, shifting its almost exclusive focus on how to *act* to what one should *believe*. We have already mentioned his thirteen foundational principles, belief in which constitutes membership in the community of Israel *regardless of how one acts* and his opening exposition in the *Mishneh Torah* of Aristotelian metaphysics, cosmology, and natural science, whose study he makes a religious obligation. Throughout his code, Maimonides complements detailed legal discussions with philosophical rationales and conceptualization. This blending of philosophy and *halakhah* created a new Judaism whose worship of God consisted not just in praxis but in performance informed by scientific and philosophical reflection.

On the other hand, there is no better description of the possibilities for intense tension inherent in the encounter between *Torah* and *falsafa* than Maimonides' depiction of perplexity in the title of his *Guide of the Perplexed* as a mental tug of war between the 'external sense' of the *Torah* and the demands of the intellect articulated in Philosophy. Indeed, a central meta-philosophical challenge raised by the *Guide* is the very relation between Philosophy and the *Torah*, a challenge which, according to many, also shaped the way in which the

*Guide* is composed. Maimonides tells us that he conceals his own beliefs from the popular reader by dividing and scattering topics to create an appearance of *disorganization* and by employing deliberate contradictions. Instead he hints at his own true beliefs for philosophers using 'chapter headings' and parables. Maimonides' 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries disciples and commentators<sup>30</sup> and, in the past century, Leo Strauss picked up on this unique literary form of Maimonides' treatise. On their influential view, the *Guide* and, by analogy, earlier texts in the same genre – from the *Torah* through rabbinic writing to Plato – are all written on multiple levels of meaning: with an explicit exoteric meaning for the consumption of the community at large and a concealed, esoteric meaning addressed to a philosophical elite. The precise relation between these different levels of meaning is, however, a matter of endless controversy.

In the spirit of many medieval thinkers who, facing contradictions between competing authorities, tend to gloss their differences and harmonize the two rather than conclude that one is right and the other wrong – one view is that the *Guide* aims to harmonize, or synthesize, Revelation and Reason, the *Torah* with Aristotelian Philosophy<sup>31</sup>. Thus, Maimonides accepts both exoteric and esoteric meanings, and gives rational arguments in the latter that complement the revealed views of the former. A second

view claims that the secret of the *Guide*, hidden by its literary form, is that Reason and Revelation, or Aristotle and the *Torah*, are insurmountably *incompatible* and that Maimonides' own true beliefs side with Reason or Philosophy as opposed to the *Torah*. Thus, Maimonides really believes in eternity rather than creation and in the God of the philosophers, not of Scripture. The *Torah* is at best a kind of popular philosophy by means of which the philosopher can found and control a community, and Maimonides (like the author of the *Torah*) wrote the *Guide* in his secretive way to control the dissemination of philosophical truth and prevent it from reaching the wrong ears.

Yet, a third view holds that the secret of the *Guide* is that Aristotle is *identical* with the *Torah* according to its concealed, esoteric meaning. That is, the true but hidden meaning of the *Torah* is philosophical truth. The *Torah* describes God exoterically as a body, in anthropomorphic and corporeal terms, only in order to accommodate the general reader or multitude. But the true meaning of those descriptions is that God is an immaterial, transcendent, necessarily existing intellect. This last approach led both to a long tradition of Maimonidean philosophical scriptural exegesis and to a rich philosophical-scientific program that produced Hebrew translations of Aristotelian physical, logical, ethical, and metaphysical texts, commentaries by the Arabic *falasifa*, super-commentar-



ies by Jewish philosophers, and original compositions.

The first result, the genre of philosophical scriptural commentary, was one of the great contributions of medieval Jewish philosophy to the history of philosophy: exegesis as a way of doing philosophy<sup>32</sup>. But the second result was even more consequential: Maimonides set the agenda for all subsequent Jewish philosophy up to the present day. To return to our earlier idea of Jewish philosophy as a tradition or network, a causally-intraconnected discourse, a sequence of influencing and influenced figures, a space of conversation with which participants self-identify, Maimonideanism is a sub-tradition within the medieval Jewish philosophical tradition. Although the latter tradition contains many sub-traditions, the Maimonidean sub-tradition more than others is perhaps best described – and better so described than any of the others – as a research program initiated by the *Guide* to which later Maimonideans subscribed. The *Guide* generated not only a tradition of commentaries and treatises that stretches over at least three centuries interpreting his enigmatic, puzzle-like work, supporting his views by reference to Muslim or Greek authorities, and not infrequently criticizing or disagreeing with him<sup>33</sup>. In addition, as we said, the *Guide* inspired a program of translation and elaboration that applied Maimonidean principles to new texts and novel explananda. In a

letter to his Hebrew translator, Samuel ibn Tibbon, Maimonides directed him to his Arabic and Hellenistic sources – which in turn produced translations over the following centuries from Arabic into Hebrew that made the Aristotelian corpus and its commentaries accessible to Jews outside the Arabic-speaking world. Maimonides-style philosophical scriptural exegesis produced a slew of biblical commentaries working out the text for its philosophical insight. All of this produced a significant philosophical literature in Hebrew, by authors such as Gersonides (Levi ben Gershon), Chasdai Crescas, and Yoseph Albo, whose interests go beyond theology to logic, physics, astronomy, and the sciences, written either in the genre of commentaries or super-commentaries or in distinct treatises or encyclopedias.

In anticipation of Luzzatto, I want to mention an additional fourth approach to the *Guide* that has become especially prominent in the last sixty years, although it was an undercurrent during the Middle Ages whose mainstream was a dogmatic Aristotelian interpretation, as we just mentioned. This fourth way to read the *Guide* aims to work out how Maimonides might have read the *Torah* as a unique work with its own unique philosophy. On this reading, the *Torah* and Rabbinic literature are philosophical works, but not works of Aristotelian philosophy. Instead they emerged from what Maimonides sincerely believed was



a rich indigenous ancient Israelite philosophical world containing competing schools, schools roughly parallel to all those he knew from his contemporary Arabic philosophical literature – including Plato, Aristotle, the Stoics, Epicureans, Skeptics, and various Islamic schools of *kalam*<sup>34</sup>. The philosophical arguments found in the *Guide* for and against *falsafa* and the *kalam* are not borrowed to philosophically understand or legitimate the Law, nor are they a key to decipher Scripture. Rather they provide a *context* for original philosophical positions that Maimonides finds expressed, especially in parable form, in the *Torah*, the text he takes to be *the* exemplary philosophical work of all time. And if the *Torah* is itself a distinctive philosophy, that in turn implies that Moses, the prophets, and the rabbis were themselves philosophers, the native philosophical sages of ancient Israel and Judaism. On this view, medieval Jewish philosophers were simply continuing the philosophical tradition of their ancestors, in part by re-discovering it and in part by reconstructing it.

What is that distinctive philosophy that Maimonides finds in the *Torah* that he, in turn, elaborates in the *Guide*? The first three approaches we surveyed took Maimonides to be primarily concerned with a *meta*-philosophical problem: the problem of the relation between Philosophy and *Torah*. On this last approach, the *Guide* is primarily addressed to a classical *philosophical* problem: In what does hu-

man perfection and true happiness consist? Is it material or intellectual or something else? Are perfection and happiness realizable by humans or unachievable ideals? And how does one negotiate the competing, conflicting demands of being a complex, composite, hylomorphic human being – composed of both intellect and body, form and matter?

The answer to these questions is the distinctive philosophy of ancient Israel that Maimonides presents in the *Guide*. This view takes the *ideal* human perfection to be intellectual – the acquisition of all possible knowledge and constant, exclusive engagement in intellectual activity – but it also takes that ideal to be humanly *unrealizable* because of limitations on the intellect imposed by the human's body and bodily faculties, like the imagination. It is neither possible for a human to achieve all knowledge and, in particular, knowledge of cosmology, metaphysics, and God nor possible for an embodied human to engage exclusively and constantly in intellectual apprehension and contemplation as if she were disembodied. Thus, Maimonides takes a skeptical stance at least with respect to human scientific knowledge of metaphysics and God and then he attempts to shape a happy life out of the materials of the *Torah* re-conceived as skeptical exercises and practices of living, i.e., practical and intellectual activities that acknowledge the limitations of our knowledge of God<sup>35</sup>.

With these two examples of medieval Jewish philosophy in hand – Saadia and Maimonides – and with our characterization of Jewish philosophy as a specific tradition within philosophy, let's return now to Luzzatto. In particular, is *Socrate* a work of Jewish philosophy? We know very little about either Luzzatto's reasons for writing *Socrate* or his intended audience, but one's initial impression reading this remarkable text is that it is not at all a work of Jewish philosophy. Apart from a few references to the Hebrew Bible (and significantly fewer than we find in the *Discorso*), there is no explicit mention of any Jewish rabbinic text and no explicit reference to any foundational question about Judaism or the Jewish people. There is also no explicit engagement with anyone else in the Jewish philosophical tradition in *Socrate*, not even Philo whom we know from the *Discorso* was Luzzatto's hero. For example, there is no explicit mention of Saadia, Maimonides, Crescas, or Gersonides, although it is impossible to believe that Luzzatto did not read or know them, and, as a rabbinically trained scholar, had not indeed thought deeply about them – and no mention of Jewish philosophers who lived and flourished in Italy, from Hillel of Verona to Mosheh of Salerno to Sforzo<sup>36</sup>. Knowing Luzzatto's background, one's immediate impression given the complete absence of all these figures is that it is *as if* Luzzatto deliberately wanted to exclude the book from the Jewish

philosophical tradition. Furthermore, its impact on subsequent Jewish philosophy is close to nil – although note that I am only talking about *Socrate*, not the *Discorso* (which did enjoy much more of a reception among Jewish audiences).

However, on further consideration, the question seems to me more complicated and calls for more exploration: there may be a sub-text in *Socrate* addressing Leone Modena and other contemporary Jewish thinkers in hints or by implication, using perhaps certain cryptic phrases. Hence, it is possible that *Socrate* is an esoteric work of Jewish philosophy whose esoteric secret is that its philosophy – whatever it is, skepticism, naturalism, or whatever – *is* Jewish philosophy. That is, Luzzatto's aim in the *Socrate* may be to redefine Jewish philosophy. In any case, this avenue needs more exploration.

Although the skeptical reading of Maimonides (or skeptical themes in the *Guide*), the fourth approach I mentioned earlier, was not unknown to his medieval readers, its prominence is a contemporary development among students of Maimonides. Given Luzzatto's 'skepticism', which has yet to be fully articulated, could that have a connection to Maimonides? Did Luzzatto read Maimonides as a skeptic? Both use skeptical tropes, but different ones. Luzzatto's advocacy of the 'probable' as a guide to life, whether one interprets that as part of Sextus' life of appearances or as a more naturalistic,

pragmatic rule aiming for a kind of practical well-being in place of unachievable theoretical perfection, is very different from the kind of knowledge-less religious state that Maimonides cultivates. On the other hand, could *Socrate* be a critique of the Averroistic Maimonidean sub-tradition of the later thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, with its intense engagement in physical science, logic, and metaphysics, moved by the assumption that happiness consists in acquisition of scientific knowledge? Once again, in the absence of explicit references, names, and texts, it is difficult to identify Luzzatto's interlocutors.

On the other hand, it is also possible that the distinguishing feature of *Socrate* is precisely the fact that it is a philosophical work *by a Jew* that is *not Jewish philosophy*. We said earlier that Jewish philosophy need not be produced by a Jewish author or thinker. One might imagine, however, that any philosophy produced by an identified Jewish philosopher will inevitably be Jewish philosophy. *Socrate* may be proof that this is not necessarily the case. Nowadays we take it for granted that Jews can write and engage with 'general' philosophy, physics and the empirical sciences, metaphysics, ethics, logic, and political philosophy. Think of all the great 20<sup>th</sup> century philosophers who were identified Jews and who produced seminal works in all the areas of contemporary philosophy: Saul Kripke, Ernest Nagel, Hilary Putnam, Harry Frankfurt,

Thomas Nagel, and many more. Now, as I said, this phenomenon did happen in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries but even then, the philosophy was written in Hebrew. Hence, it was not fully integrated into the broader philosophical discourse (notwithstanding translations into Latin, including the *Guide* and various commentaries on Averroes). One of the very first works in philosophy by a Jewish author that could potentially be fully integrated into the philosophical mainstream of its time is *Socrate* precisely because of its non-Jewish but thoroughly philosophical character. Luzzatto, to be sure, was not first person to fit this bill. Philo was (at least in some of his compositions). But what Luzzatto demonstrated in Venice was in effect that a Jew can do philosophy without doing Jewish philosophy, or that being Jewish and being a philosopher is not equivalent to being a Jewish philosopher. In Luzzatto's case this was also a mark of the degree to which identified Jews were part of the humanistic culture of Venice, intellectuals, steeped in classic knowledge and able to engage in the classical tradition as fully as their non-Jewish peers. However, nowadays the possibility of this phenomenon is something we take for granted. For Luzzatto's time, this was a true achievement.

From this perspective, *Socrate* may have a distinctive place in the history of philosophical skepticism. Whatever you make of Luzzatto's overall project in the *Socrate*, it marks a point in the history of

skepticism when the tropes are taking on a life of their own independently of serving as a means toward achieving the end of *ataraxia* or other features of a distinctively skeptical way of life. Luzzatto not only uses the tropes, he uses them in new and imaginative ways, especially the arguments from relativity. Luzzatto's skeptic embodied in the figure of Socrates is also a new Socrates: not only a gadfly but a political threat to the polis, a challenge to authority, not only the authority of knowledge and reason, but political authority. Thus, the Socrates of *Socrate* is the skeptic as a political counter-figure. This was true in Antiquity of Plato's Socrates, but the Hellenistic skeptic was not a political rebel: his life of appearances requires one to be a good citizen. Thus, Luzzatto not only presents Socrates as a political figure like Plato's Socrates; insofar as Socrates is now a skeptic, the skeptic becomes a political counter-force. I do not know the history of this re-working of the figure of the skeptic, but it may be Luzzatto's original contribution to the history of philosophy<sup>37</sup>.

\_ NOTE

1 \_ L. ROTH, *Is there a Jewish philosophy?*, in R. Goldwater (ed.), *Jewish Philosophy and Philosophers*, Hillel Foundation, London 1962; repr. in L. ROTH, *Is There a Jewish Philosophy?: Rethinking Fundamentals*, Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, London 1999, pp. 1-14. All references will be to the reprinted version.

2 \_ Ivi, p. 11: «[A study of Jewish philosophy] is essential. We need a philosophy of Judaism today... in order to enable ourselves to escape the clutches of *bad* philosophy or *pseudo-philosophy*».

3 \_ Ivi, p. 7.

4 \_ Ivi, pp. 2-3.

5 \_ Ivi, pp. 5-6. See in particular Roth's deprecating evaluation of Philo and Maimonides on page 6.

6 \_ On philosophy as a way of life, see P. HADOT, *What is Ancient Philosophy?*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge 2002, and his collection of essays, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, Blackwell, Oxford 1995. On Maimonides' *Guide of the Perplexed* as a guide to a way of life, see J. STERN, *The Matter and Form of Maimonides' Guide*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge 2013.

7 \_ I am indebted to Dirk Westerkamp's rich and insightful *The Philonic Distinction: Germanic Enlightenment Historiography of Jewish Thought*, «History and Theory», 47 (2008), pp. 533-559, for the history of the origins of the term 'Jewish philosophy' and of the fields of Jewish Philosophy and the History of Jewish Philosophy. See also D. FRANK, *What is Jewish philosophy?*, in D. Frank and O. Leaman (eds.), *History of Jewish Philosophy*, Routledge, London 2004. On the emergence of the academic study of the history of philosophy in general, and on varieties of ways of doing the history of philosophy, see M. FREDE, *The History of Philosophy as a Discipline*, «Journal of Philosophy», 85 (1988) 11, pp. 666-672.

8 \_ J. Klatzkin, the author of the famed *Ozar ha-Munahim ha-Philosophiyim (Thesaurus Philosophicus Linguae Hebraicae)*, (repr. Feldheim, New York 1968) makes a claim to this effect.

9 \_ Note that some Islamic (Arabic?) philosophy, such as Avicenna's *Danishnamah-yi 'Ala'*, was composed in Persian.

10 \_ See, however, R. JOSPE, *What is Jewish Philosophy?*, Open University, Ramat Aviv, Israel 1988: «[...]A philosopher's Jewish identity is a necessary condition, but not a sufficient condition, for determining whether his philosophy is, indeed, a Jewish philosophy[...]. Jewish philosophy cannot be developed by a non-Jew. A non-Jew cannot write Jewish philosophy» (pp. 28-29). See also p. 6 where Jospe claims that Aristotle and Al-Farabi, for all their influence on Jewish philosophy, «have no share in [it] for the simple reason that they were not Jews». For similar views, see R. JOSPE, *Teaching Judah Halevi: Defining and Shattering Myths in Jewish Philosophy*, in ID. (ed.), *Paradigms in Jewish Philosophy*, Associated University Press, London 1997, pp. 112-128, and *Jewish Philosophy: Foundations and Extensions*, Vol. II: *On Philosophers and Their Thought*, University Press of America, Lanham 2008. Jospe gives no argument but even if one agrees that a Jewish philosopher (meaning someone who is both a Jew and a philosopher) must be Jewish, it does not follow that Jewish philosophy must be written by a Jew. That would be no different than requiring that feminist philosophy be written only by women. Notwithstanding the counterexamples I mention in the text, of course, the fact – contingent fact of course – is that (almost all?) Jewish philosophy has been written by Jews. But this fact, at least in the past, can be easily explained by historical, sociological reasons (access to languages, training, ethnic divisions). The same was true for at least a thousand years about rabbinics – and for the

simple reason that non-Jews (apart from Jewish converts to Christianity) did not have the education or training to do serious rabbinics. Today, however, with the proliferation of academic Jewish studies, we now have extremely well-trained *non-Jewish women*, not to say men, engaged in serious rabbinics. (And if one does not draw an arbitrary line between the academic study of rabbinic texts and non-academic or 'traditional' study of rabbinic texts, then both are part of one tradition that is arguably all part of the continuation of the tradition of 'Oral Torah'). I see no principled reason not to expect that the same will ultimately be true of Jewish philosophy, *mutatis mutandis*. For a recent sophisticated critique of an ethnic identity condition on whom to include within Jewish philosophy in the context of eighteenth and nineteenth century German-Jewish philosophy, see P.W. FRANKS, *Jewish Philosophy after Kant: The Legacy of Salomon Maimon*, in M.L. Morgan, P.E. Gordon (eds.), *Cambridge Companion to Modern Jewish Philosophy*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2007; ID., *Ontology and Ethics: Questioning First Philosophy in Heidegger and Levinas*, in S. Fleischacker (ed.), *Heidegger's Jewish Followers: Essays on Hannah Arendt, Leo Strauss, Hans Jonas, and Emmanuel Levinas*, Duquesne University Press, Pittsburgh PA 2008. I am indebted to Sol Goldberg for bringing these papers to my attention in his *Explicatio Juris: The Rule of Interpretation in Kantian (and) Jewish Traditions*.

11 \_ Similarly, by 'American philosophy,' we mean either Thoreau and Emerson, so-called American Transcendentalists, or Peirce, James, Dewey, pragmatists. And Continental Philosophy is, if not a school, then a style of 20<sup>th</sup> century



philosophers living on the European continent. Is 'Jewish philosophy' a euphemism for some school like this? Michael Fagenblat (p.c.) has suggested that we might indeed think of Jewish philosophy as the philosophy (or philosophies) of (the) Jews; the question is whether we are interested simply in knowing what philosophy or philosophies Jews have professed (a sociological question) or whether such a category marks out a philosophically interesting type.

12 \_ See L. ROTH, *op. cit.*, pp. 10-11; cf. J. GUTTMAN, *Philosophies of Judaism. The History of Jewish Philosophy From Biblical Times to Franz Rosenzweig*, Schocken, New York 1973, pp. 9-10; A. ALTMANN, *Judaism and World Philosophy*, in S. Radhakrishnan (ed.), *History of Philosophy Eastern and Western*, George Allen & Unwin, London 1953, vol. 1, p. 76; E. BERKOVITS, *What is Jewish Philosophy?*, «Tradition» 3 (Spring 1961) 2, pp. 120-122.

13 \_ An excellent example of a contemporary work on the philosophical foundations of Judaism of the sort I have in mind is M. HALBERTAL and A. MARGALIT, *Idolatry*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge 1998. See also M. STEINER, *Rabbi Yisrael Salanter as a Jewish Philosopher*, «The Torah u-Madda Journal», 9 (2000), pp. 42-57; M. HALBERTAL, *On Sacrifice*, University Press, Princeton 2012, and D. SHATZ, *Jewish Thought in Dialogue: Essays on Thinkers, Theologies and Moral Theories*, Academic Studies Press, Brighton, MA 2009; and now the various essays in S. Lebens, D. Rabinowitz, A. Segal (eds.), *Jewish Philosophy in an Analytic Age*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2019.

14 \_ R. JOSPE, *What is Jewish Philosophy?*, *op. cit.*, p. 112.

15 \_ See *Mishneh Torah*, 'Laws concerning the Foundations of the Law', chs. 1-4 and especially 4, X-XIII, and 'Laws concerning Study of the Torah', ch. 1, XI-XII.

16 \_ For example, Maimonides wrote a treatise on mathematics, Gersonides was an original creative astronomer, and many more were active in astrology, medicine, and logic. Of course, one might object that this simply shows that Jewish philosophers were *also* scientists. However, this historically anachronistic modern view misrepresents the way the medieval figures themselves viewed the sciences as integral to their philosophy.

17 \_ A practioner of kalam is a *mutakallim*, pl.: *mutakallimun*.

18 \_ See MAIMONIDES, *Guide of the Perplexed*, I: 71, 73-5.

19 \_ Some of these were in fact Neo-Platonic works of Plotinus and Proclus that were falsely attributed to Aristotle.

20 \_ Thus, one of the most important Neo-platonic philosophical texts was the 'Theology of Aristotle'. Maimonides' negative presentation of *kalam* was strongly influenced by Al-Farabi, who himself was persecuted by the *kalam*, but he is right to claim that *kalam* has a significant apologetic component.

21 \_ *Kalam* is 'dialectical' in that its logic or reasoning employs Stoic dilemmas rather than the Aristotelian syllogistic and its writing a dialogical style («if he says..., then he should be answered») that reflects dialectical techniques employed in polemical exchanges.

22 \_ 'Gaon' is the title given to the heads of the great Babylonian *yeshivot*, or talmudical academies.



23 \_ Thus, the twelfth-century Neo-platonically inclined Spanish bible commentator and grammarian, Abraham ibn Ezra, referred to Saadia as «chief among *speakers* (*medabbrim*) everywhere», i.e., chief among *mutakallimun*.

24 \_ This understanding of the role of reason is very similar to Augustine's (and others in the Augustinian tradition such as Anselm of Canterbury) for whom reason converts belief, an act of assent to a proposition, into understanding.

25 \_ Apart from Philo Judaeus of Alexandria in the 1<sup>st</sup> century (who had a deep influence on the Church fathers but none on medieval Jewish thinkers), the Neoplatonist Isaac Israeli (d.c. 932) and the *mutakallim* al-Muqammas (9<sup>th</sup> century) both preceded Saadia.

26 \_ M. BURNYEAT, Introduction of, *The Skeptical Tradition*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1983, p. 1. Burnyeat is characterizing the skeptical tradition. On the idea of influence, see also A. MARGALIT, *Wittgenstein's knight move: Hacker on Wittgenstein's influence on analytic philosophy*, in P.M.S. Hacker, H.-J. Glock, J. Hyman (eds.), *Wittgenstein and Analytic Philosophy: Essays for P.M.S. Hacker*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2009.

27 \_ T.M. SCHMALTZ, *Early Modern Cartesianisms: Dutch and French Constructions*, Oxford University Press, New York 2016.

28 \_ Another diagnostic is the use of proof-texts or verses from Scripture or rabbinic literature. Of course, verses from the Hebrew Bible are no proof that the philosophical work belongs to Jewish rather than Christian philosophy, but it is also important to note how the verses are used. Sometimes they are cited as authorities to justify a claim. At other times the verses are what needs

explication and interpretation. And sometimes, especially when the Jewish philosophical text is a 'translation' or paraphrase of a Greek or Arab text, the scriptural or rabbinic proof-texts are added neither as evidence nor as justification nor as the explanandum, but in order to 'Judaize' the original work. For examples of 'Judaization', see C.M. NERIA, *'It cannot be valued with the gold of Ophir' (Job 28:16): Rabbi Joseph b. Shem-Tov's Commentary on Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics [NE]: Sources and Analysis*, Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago 2015, on Yoseph ibn Shem Tov's commentary on Alguades' Hebrew translation of *NE* 179-182, 201-205, and 217.

29 \_ For this fascinating story, see A. RAVITZKY, *Aristotle's Meteorology and the Maimonidean Modes of Interpreting the Account of Creation*, «Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought», 9 (1990), *Shlomo Pines Jubilee Volume*, Part 2, pp. 225-50; reprinted in A. RAVITZKY, *Maimonidean Essays* (Heb.), Schocken Publishing House, Jerusalem 2006, pp. 139-156; English translation in «Aleph», 8 (2008), pp. 361-400.

30 \_ These include Samuel ibn Tibbon, Shem Tov Falaquera, Moses of Narbonne, Isaac Abravanel, Profyat Duran (Efodi), Yoseph ibn Kaspi.

31 \_ Cf. AL-FARABI, *Harmonization of the Opinions of the Two Sages: Plato the Divine and Aristotle*, in ID., *The Political Writings*, trans. C. Butterworth, Cornell University Press, Ithaca 2001.

32 \_ For examples, see the commentaries of Kimchi, Kaspi, Gersonides, Nachmanides, Abravanel –and, in a sister genre, the sermons of Nissim of Gerona and Yitzchaq Arama.

33 \_ Cf. Shlomo Pines' comment in the In-

troductio to his translation that Maimonides does not mention any previous Jewish philosophers since he had no recourse to a 'Jewish philosophical tradition' (XXXIII). Even if this is true, which is arguable, by initiating a tradition, Maimonides ipso facto belongs to it.

34 \_ This view should be distinguished from another position, found in authors as diverse as Yehudah ha-Levi and Falaquera, that the Jews discovered philosophy from whom it was later stolen by the Greeks or others. According to Maimonides, philosophy would seem to be a natural development of the use and perfection of the human intellect that would arise in any culture independently of any other. It was not stolen from the Jews but lost by them.

35 \_ This approach to the *Guide* was first raised in the last sixty years by S. PINES, *The Limitations of Human Knowledge According to Al-Farabi, Ibn Bajja, and Maimonides*, in I. Twersky (ed.), *Studies in Medieval Jewish History and Literature*, Vol. 1, Harvard University Press,

Cambridge, MA 1979), pp. 82-109, but there are hints of it in the writings of ibn Tibbon, ibn Falaquera, and Profyat Duran (Efodi). It has been pursued in turn by Zev Harvey and Josef Stern. See in particular Stern, *The Matter and Form of Maimonides' Guide*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge-London 2013.

36 \_ The index to the new translation of *Socrate* lists no explicit references to any of these figures, although footnotes suggest allusions to them.

37 \_ An earlier expanded version of the first two-thirds of this paper was published in English as *What a Jewish Philosophy Might Be (If It Exists): A View from the Middle Ages*, «Iyyun The Jerusalem Philosophical Quarterly», 66 (July 2017), pp. 227-257 and in German as *Was jüdische Philosophie sein könnte (wenn es sie gäbe) — Ein mediävistischer Blick*, «Zeitschrift für Kulturphilosophie», (2017) 2, pp. 7-30. I am indebted to Michela Torbidoni for inviting me to publish this version and for help preparing it for publication.

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