

# FAITH, REASON, POLITICS

Essays on the History of Jewish Thought

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Essays on the History  
of Jewish Thought

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Boston 2013

Bibliographic information will include references to the original publishers of the articles printed in the book.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data:

The bibliographic record for this title is available from the Library of Congress.

ISBN 978-1-936235-87-2 (cloth)

ISBN 978-1-61811-084-8 (electronic)

Book design by Adell Modovoy

Published in 2013 by Academic Studies Press

28 Montfern Avenue

Brighton, MA 02135

United States of America

[press@academicstudiespress.com](mailto:press@academicstudiespress.com)

[www.academicstudiespress.com](http://www.academicstudiespress.com)

For my parents Laurie and Bruce  
and for my sister Arielle



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## Preface

The recent rise in religious violence has turned the public's attention to the faith-reason debate once again. But the debate is often treated in generic terms, without paying attention either to differences between religious traditions or to the historical development of these traditions. In particular, the Jewish tradition with its emphasis on religious law yields insights into the political dimensions of the problem that differ greatly from Christian approaches.

This volume collects previously published essays that treat Jewish approaches to the faith-reason debate from the twelfth to twentieth centuries. While the thinkers that I analyze are united by a (more or less) common Jewish textual tradition and their being minorities within majority Christian and Islamic states, they adopt strikingly different conceptions of the nature of Judaism, the place of rational arguments in determining religious truth, and the proper relationship between religion, politics, and morality. By bringing these essays together, I seek to convey a sense of both the unity and diversity in Jewish approaches to faith, reason, and politics.

While for all of these thinkers, law is at the center of their understanding of Judaism, their conceptions of the purpose of revealed law and its relation to state authority differ greatly. Thus both the twelfth-century Moses Maimonides and the seventeenth-century Benedict Spinoza argue for the necessity of state religion, but conceive the nature of this state religion in radically different ways. In contrast, for the eighteenth and nineteenth-century thinkers, Moses Mendelssohn, Samson Raphael Hirsch, and Samuel David Luzzato, the notion of state religion is anathema (at least until the messianic era), though they still preserve a political function for religion as a means of promoting ethical behavior. And the twentieth-century conservative thinker Leo Strauss seeks to renew the pre-Enlightenment idea of state religion, though on an entirely different basis.

This collection can be read as a companion to my first book, *Faith and Freedom: Moses Mendelssohn's Theological-Political Thought* (Oxford

University Press, 2011). Many of the arguments that I present briefly in *Faith and Freedom* are treated more extensively in these essays, and in the final chapter I present my reasons for endorsing religious rationalism more forcefully and explicitly than I did in *Faith and Freedom*.

For the most part, the essays appear as they were originally published, though some contain significant updates and corrections/elucidations. I have also retitled the first essay “Two Paradigms of the Nexus Between Philosophy and Mysticism: Judah Halevi and Moses Maimonides” to more accurately reflect its content.

I thank the Tikvah Fund for supporting the publication of this book and the director of the Tikvah Project at Princeton, Leora Batnitzky, for providing a very congenial environment during my year at Princeton when I wrote one of these essays and worked on revising the others. I thank the members of the Skirball Department of Hebrew and Judaic studies at NYU for their support and my wife Ilana for her love and dedication. Finally, I thank my parents, Laurie and Bruce and my sister Arielle for their unfailing encouragement. I dedicate this book to them.

## I. Two Paradigms of the Nexus Between Philosophy and Mysticism: Judah Halevi and Moses Maimonides\*

In *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, Gershom Scholem draws a sharp distinction between Kabbalah and Jewish philosophy, noting five contrasts between them. First, philosophers use allegory, which involves assigning definite metaphysical referents to biblical terms. Kabbalists, however, interpret the Bible as a series of symbols, that is, poetic ways of representing truths that can neither be clearly understood nor precisely articulated using rational, discursive thought.<sup>1</sup> Second, whereas for philosophers the practice of Jewish law (Halakhah) has no intrinsic significance, for kabbalists Halakhah is of supreme importance as a theurgic instrument to effect changes in the Godhead that help preserve the cosmos.<sup>2</sup> Third, whereas philosophers denigrate rabbinic fantasies (Aggadot) as stumbling blocks to truth, kabbalists embrace Aggadah, seeing it as continuous with their mystical experience and containing esoteric wisdom.<sup>3</sup> Fourth, whereas philosophers devalue

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\* I thank Warren Zev Harvey and the editors of the volume in which this essay originally appeared, Tamar Rudavasky and Steven Nadler for their helpful suggestions. I am especially indebted to Diana Lobel for generously sharing her learning with me, supplying me with secondary literature, and helping me with the subtleties of philosophical Judeo-Arabic. I also thank Shari Lowin for her help with the Judeo-Arabic.

- 1 Gershom Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York: Schocken, 1995), 25–8; Gershom Scholem, *Explanations and Implications* (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1975), 226–9 [Hebrew]; Gershom Scholem, *On the Kabbalah and its Symbolism*, trans. R. Mannheim (New York: Schocken, 1969), 36. Also see Joseph Dan, ed., *The Early Kabbalah* (New York: Paulist Press, 1986), 9–12; Isaiah Tishby, *Paths of Faith and Heresy* (Ramat Gan: Makor, 1964), 11–14 [Hebrew]. On the concept of kabbalistic symbol, see Elliot Wolfson, *Language, Eros, Being: Kabbalistic Hermeneutics and Poetic Imagination* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), 26–40. Yehuda Liebes attempts to distinguish between kabbalistic myth and symbol. See Yehuda Liebes, *Studies in the Zohar*, trans. A. Schwartz, S. Nakache, and P. Peli (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1993), 179 n. 116; Yehuda Liebes, “Myth vs. Symbol in the Zohar and Lurianic Kabbalah,” in *Essential Papers on Kabbalah* (New York: New York University Press, 1995), 213. See Wolfson’s critique of Liebes in Wolfson, *Language, Eros, Being*, 36–45.
- 2 Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, 28–30; Alexander Altmann, *The Meaning of Jewish Existence*, ed. Alfred Ivry, trans. Edith Ehrlich and Leonard Ehrlich (Waltham: Brandeis University Press, 1991), 18–9; Daniel Matt, “The Mystic and the Mitzvot,” in *Jewish Spirituality*, vol. 1, ed. Arthur Green (New York: Crossroads, 1986), 370–400.
- 3 Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, 30–2.

prayer, kabbalists infuse it with meaning by assigning prayer theurgic functions.<sup>4</sup> Finally, while philosophers deny the reality of evil, seeing it as a mere privation of being, kabbalists affirm the ontological reality of evil.<sup>5</sup>

Recent scholars have rightly criticized Scholem's sharp dichotomy between mysticism and philosophy.<sup>6</sup> In the context of this chapter, however, it is neither possible nor desirable to undertake a systematic analysis of Scholem. Rather, I will outline two approaches to the relationship between philosophy and mysticism in medieval Jewish philosophy.

- 4 Ibid., 33–4; Gershom Scholem, "The Concept of Kavvanah in the Early Kabbalah," in *Studies in Jewish Thought*, ed. Alfred Jospe (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1981), 162–80; Efraim Gottlieb, *Studies in the Kabbalah Literature*, ed. Joseph Hacker (Tel-Aviv: Tel-Aviv University Press, 1986), 38–55.
- 5 Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, 34–7; Gershom Scholem, *On the Mystical Shape of the Godhead*, ed. Jonathan Chipman, trans. Joachim Neugroschel (New York: Schocken Books, 1991), 56–87; Isaiah Tishby, ed., *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, vols. I–III, trans. David Goldstein (London: Littman, 1989), 449–58.
- 6 Scholem's dichotomy has been understood as stemming from his interest in reversing what he perceived to be the unjust dismissal of Kabbalah by the nineteenth-century bourgeois originators of modern Jewish studies (*Wissenschaft des Judentums*). According to Scholem, these scholars tendentiously cast rationality as the essence of Judaism, which resulted in a desiccated version of Judaism that could only be remedied by a retrieval of the dynamic, mythical, and imaginative elements found in Kabbalah. See Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, 1–3; Gershom Scholem, *On the Possibility of Jewish Mysticism in our Times*, ed. A. Shapira, trans. J. Chipman (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1997), 53–71; Eliezer Schweid, *Judaism and Mysticism According to Gershom Scholem*, trans. D. Weiner (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1985), 145–65. Compare Idel's critique of Scholem's reading of nineteenth-century scholarship on kabbalah in Moshe Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press 1988), 13–4. For critique of Scholem's distinction between philosophical allegory and kabbalistic symbol, see Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives*, 200–22; Moshe Idel, *Absorbing Perfections* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002), 272–351; Schweid, *Judaism and Mysticism According to Gershom Scholem*, 126–8; Frank Talmage, "Apples of Gold: The Inner Meaning of Sacred Texts in Medieval Judaism," in *Jewish Spirituality*, vol. 1, ed. Arthur Green (New York: Crossroads Press, 1987), 343–4. For critique of Scholem's account of Kabbalistic theurgy, see Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives*, 156–99; Moshe Idel, *Studies in Ecstatic Kabbalah* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1988), viii; Wolfson, *Language, Eros, Being*, 36–7. Idel and Wolfson both question Scholem's distinction between the kabbalists' theurgic interpretation of Halakhah and the philosophers' instrumental interpretation of Halakhah, noting nontheurgic kabbalistic interpretations of Halakhah. See Moshe Idel, "Some Remarks on Ritual and Mysticism in Geronese Kabbalah," *Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy* 3 (1994): 127–30; Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives*, 39–49; Moshe Idel, *The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia*, trans. Jonathan Chipman (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1988), 137–45. Elliot Wolfson, *Abraham Abulafia: Kabbalist and Prophet* (Los Angeles: Cherub Press, 2000), 178–228; Elliot Wolfson, *Venturing Beyond Law and Morality in Kabbalistic Mysticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 188–90. Frank Talmage questions Scholem's contention that the authority of Halakhah is lessened for Jewish philosophers. See Talmage, "Apples of Gold," 337–44. For critique of Scholem's theurgical interpretation of kabbalistic prayer, see Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives*, 103–11. For critique of Scholem's account of the kabbalistic view of evil, see Tishby, *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, 449; Wolfson, *Venturing Beyond Law and Morality in Kabbalistic Mysticism*, 212–21.

Before I begin, a word on the term “mysticism.” Although the definition of mysticism is a matter of dispute,<sup>7</sup> I find Idel’s broad definition of mysticism as “contact with the Divine, differing from the common religious experience cultivated in a certain religion both in intensity and spiritual impact” to be useful, and this chapter will proceed on the basis of this expansive understanding of mysticism.<sup>8</sup>

### **Two Types of Mysticism**

In his study of vision and imagination in medieval Jewish mysticism, Elliot Wolfson distinguishes between two forms of mysticism. “Cognitive” mysticism (which I will call “revelatory” mysticism) affirms that spiritual knowledge “comes by way of revelation, intuition, or illumination.”<sup>9</sup> For the revelatory mystic, God is perceived “within the parameters of phenomenal human experience” in sensible images through the imagination. Imagination is superior to reason for imagination is “the divine element of the soul that enables one to gain access to the realm of incorporeality . . . through a process of understanding that transcends sensory data and rational understanding.”<sup>10</sup> In contrast, “introvertive” mysticism (which I will call “apophatic” mysticism) rejects the idea that images are adequate to mystical insight. The apophatic mystic believes that God is beyond all representation whether through the imagination or through the intellect and is most accurately conceived *via negativa*. Images are only appropriate as educational vehicles to inculcate recognition of God’s existence to those for whom mystical insight, “an intellectual vision devoid of percept or concept” is unavailable.<sup>11</sup>

The Bible abounds with accounts of revelatory visions of God such as Isaiah 6:

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7 Important discussions of how to define mysticism include: William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (London: Longmans, 1928), 379–82; Bertrand Russell, *Mysticism and Logic* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1951), 1–32; David Baumgardt, *Mystik und Wissenschaft* (Witten: Luther-Verlag, 1963), 7–21; Richard Jones, *Mysticism Examined: Philosophical Inquiries into Mysticism* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1993), 1; Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, 3–7.

8 Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives*, xviii.

9 Elliot Wolfson, *Through a Speculum that Shines* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 60.

10 Ibid., 63.

11 Ibid., 59.

In the year that King Uzziah died, I beheld my Lord seated on high on a lofty throne and the skirts of His robe filled the Temple. Seraphs stood in attendance on Him. Each of them had six wings: with two he covered his face, with two he covered his legs and with two he would fly. And one would call to the other, “Holy, holy, holy! The Lord of Hosts His presence fills all the earth.” The doorposts would shake at the sound of the one who called, and the House kept filling with smoke.<sup>12</sup>

These mystical visions likewise occur in the earliest texts of the Kabbalah. Consider the following text from *Shi'ur Qomah*:

How much is the measure of the stature of the Holy One, blessed be He, who is concealed from all creatures? . . . The circumference of His head (*igul rosho*) is three hundred thousand and thirty three and a third [parasangs] something which the mouth cannot speak nor the ear hear . . . The appearance of His face and the appearance of His cheeks are like the image of the spirit and the form of the soul, for no creature can recognize Him. His body is like beryl (*ketarshish*), His splendor is luminous and glows from within the darkness, and cloud and thick darkness surround Him . . . There is no measurement in our hands but only the names are revealed to us.<sup>13</sup>

This text presents a remarkably anthropomorphic revelatory vision of God. What is striking, however, is that although it presents a visual image of God, which includes precise measurements of God, it likewise recoils from this image remarking that “God is concealed from all creatures,” and that “there is no measurement in our hands.” This tension between visualization of God and the sense that visualization is impossible is implicit in the Bible itself where visions of God such as Isaiah 6

12 Isa. 6: 1–5.

13 Peter Schäfer, ed., *Synopse zur Hekhalot Literatur* (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1981), 294 (§948–949); partially cited in Wolfson, *Through a Speculum that Shines*, 90.

are counterbalanced by passages like Isaiah 40:18, “To whom will you liken God? What likeness [*demut*] will you compare Him to?”

Elliot Wolfson shows that the tension between the desire to visualize God and the sense that God cannot be visualized lies at the heart of Jewish mysticism. Indeed, he goes so far as to claim that, “in great measure the history of theosophical speculation and mystical practice in Judaism has been driven by a hermeneutical effort to resolve this fundamental tension.”<sup>14</sup> A number of questions therefore emerge from revelatory mysticism: Does mystical vision occur by means of the outer eye or by means of some other sense? If the latter, what is this sense and how does it operate? Does the mystic see something real or is what is visualized a construct of the mystic’s imagination? If it is a construct, is there any correlation between the object of vision and the image constructed in the mystic’s imagination? Does the mystic visualize God or some other created divine being? If the mystic sees a created divine being, what is the relationship between this being and God? How do mystical visions of God relate to rational approaches to knowing God?<sup>15</sup>

Turning to apophatic mysticism, scholars trace the impact of the *via negativa* on medieval Jewish mysticism to a number of sources. One of the most important of these sources is Neoplatonism. Plotinus, whose work was known to medieval Jewish and Muslim thinkers in a number of forms,<sup>16</sup> provides a classic formulation of negative theology:

The beyond-being does not refer to a some-thing since it does not posit any-thing nor does it “speak its name.” It merely indicates that it is not that. No attempt is made to circumscribe it. It would be absurd to circumscribe that immense nature. To wish to do so is to cut oneself off from its slightest trace.<sup>17</sup>

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14 Wolfson, *Through a Speculum that Shines*, 394.

15 Wolfson, *Through a Speculum that Shines*, outlines medieval Jewish attempts to conceptualize the nature of mystical visionary experience.

16 These sources include *Theology of Aristotle*, *Long Theology*, and *Risāla fil-ʿIlm al-Ilāhi* (mistakenly attributed to Fārābī). See Alfred Ivry, “Neoplatonic Currents in Maimonides’ Thought,” in *Perspectives on Maimonides: Philosophical and Historical Studies*, ed. Joel L. Kraemer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 117, n. 5.

17 Plotinus, *Enneads*, trans. Stephen MacKenna (London: Faber and Faber, 1917-1930), 5.5.6, 11-17, cited in Michael Sells, *Mystical Languages of Unsayings* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 15. For discussion, see Sells, *Mystical Languages of Unsayings*, 14-33.



Medieval Jewish philosophers such as Isaac Israeli, Solomon Ibn Gabirol, Bahya ibn Paquda, and Maimonides were important mediating sources transmitting Neoplatonic negative theology to kabbalists.<sup>18</sup> The apophatic view of God is represented by the concept of *ein-sof* (literally

- 18 See Daniel C. Matt, "Ayin: Concept of Nothingness in Jewish Mysticism," in *Essential Papers on Kabbalah*, ed. Lawrence Fine (New York: New York University Press, 1995), 73–5; Gershom Scholem "La lutte entre le dieu de Plotin et la bible dans la Kabbale ancien," in *Le nom de dieu et les symboles de dieu dans la mystique juive*, ed. and trans. M. Hayoun and G. Vajda (Paris: 1983), 25–6; Gershom Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, ed. R. Werblowsky, trans. A. Arkush (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 422–3; Alexander Altmann, "The Divine Attributes," *Judaism* 15 (1966): 46–54; On Maimonides' adoption of Neoplatonic negative theology, see Ivry, "Neoplatonic Currents in Maimonides' Thought," 127–8, 133; Alfred Ivry, "Maimonides and Neoplatonism: Challenge and Response," in *Neoplatonism and Jewish Thought*, ed. Lenn E. Goodman (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1992), 138. Aside from Neoplatonism other sources of negative theology that may have influenced Kabbalah include Pseudo-Dionysus as adapted by John Scotus Erigena, Isma'ili mysticism, and Mutazilite Kalam. For discussion, see Gershom Scholem, "Schöpfung aus Nichts und Selbstverschränkung Gottes," in *Über einige Grundbegriffe des Judentums*, ed. Gershom Scholem (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1970), 70–5; Scholem, "La lutte entre le dieu de Plotin et la Bible dans la Kabbale ancien," 25–6; Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, 422–4; Matt, "Ayin: The Concept of Nothingness in Jewish Mysticism," 67–73; Altmann, "The Divine Attributes," 41–5; Harry Wolfson, "The Muslim Attributes and the Christian Trinity," *Harvard Theological Review* 49 (1956): 1–18; Harry Wolfson, "The Philosophical Implications of the Problem of Divine Attributes in the Kalam," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 79 (1959): 73–80. According to Harry Wolfson, Philo is the first thinker to articulate negative theology, which he derives from biblical sources rendered philosophically. The Church fathers, the Gnostic Basilides, Plotinus, and Albinus adopt negative theology from Philo. On Philo's negative theology, see Harry Wolfson, *Philo: The Foundations of Religious Philosophy in Judaism*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1947), 94–164. On the negative theology of the Church fathers, see Harry Wolfson, "Negative Attributes in the Church Fathers and the Gnostic Basilides," in *Studies in the History of Philosophy and Religion*, vol. 1, ed. I. Twersky and G.H. Williams (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973), 131–9. On Basilides' negative theology, see Harry Wolfson, "Negative Attributes in the Church Fathers and the Gnostic Basilides," 139–42; Scholem, "Schöpfung aus Nichts und Selbstverschränkung Gottes," 68–9; Matt, "Ayin: The Concept of Nothingness in Jewish Mysticism," 69. On Albinus' negative theology, see Wolfson, *Philo: The Foundations of Religious Philosophy in Judaism*, 158–60; Harry Wolfson, "Albinus and Plotinus on the Divine Attributes," in *Studies in the History of Philosophy and Religion*, vol. 1, ed. I. Twersky and G.H. Williams (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973), 119–22. On Plotinus' negative theology, see Wolfson, "Albinus and Plotinus on the Divine Attributes," 124–30; Sells, *Mystical Languages of Unsaying*, 14–33; John Bussanich, "Plotinus's Metaphysics of the One," in *The Cambridge Companion to Plotinus*, ed. Lloyd Gerson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 38–42; Frederick Schroeder, "Plotinus and Language," in *The Cambridge Companion to Plotinus*, ed. Lloyd Gerson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 336–355. Wolfson's thesis that the impetus for Philo's negative theology derives from the Bible has been challenged. David Winston notes that Philo's doctrine involves "the convergence of his Jewish inheritance with his Greek philosophical antecedents" by which Winston refers to Middle Platonism and Neopythagorean traditions, but Winston concludes that Philo's "philosophical commitment . . . (pace Wolfson) was clearly the decisive element." See David Winston, "Philo's Conception of the Divine Nature," in *Neoplatonism and Jewish Thought*, ed. Lenn E. Goodman (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1992), especially 21–3.



“endless”), the aspect of *deus absconditus* first described by kabbalists in the thirteenth century.<sup>19</sup> Azriel of Gerona (1160–1238) expresses the convergence of philosophical negative theology with kabbalah in his statement that “the philosophers [*ḥakhmei ha-mehqar*] agree with us that our comprehension [of God] is solely *via negativa* [*ki ‘im ‘al derekh lo’*].”<sup>20</sup>

Alongside *ein-sof*, central to kabbalistic theosophy are the *sefirot*, the divine potencies that emanate from *ein-sof*. Although there are different kabbalistic understandings of the precise nature of the *sefirot*, they are clearly linked with the positive attributes of God found in biblical and rabbinic texts, and so represent *deus revelatus*.<sup>21</sup> A tension therefore emerges between *ein-sof*, which is described apophatically, and the *sefirot*, which are described kataphatically. How do these two accounts of the deity cohere? More philosophically, if kataphatic descriptions of God involve positing distinction and differentiation in the deity whereas apophatic descriptions assume a unique deity beyond all differentiation, how do we resolve this contradiction? Can one have any relationship with God conceived apophatically? What is the connection among philosophical ratiocination, apophasis, and mystical experience?<sup>22</sup>

We therefore have two sets of problems emerging from revelatory and apophatic mysticism, respectively. In what follows, I will sketch two influential approaches to these problems. For problems emerg-

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19 On the concept of *ein-sof* and the emergence of apophasis in Kabbalah see Scholem, “Schöpfung aus Nichts und Selbstverschränkung Gottes”; Gershom Scholem, *Kabbalah* (New York, Quadrangle Press, 1974), 88–96; Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, 28–35, 265–72, 420–44; Elliot Wolfson, “Negative Theology and Positive Assertion in Early Kabbalah,” *Daat* 32–33 (1994): v–xi; Matt, “Ayin: The Concept of Nothingness in Jewish Mysticism.” Idel has called into question the extent to which the early kabbalistic account of *ein-sof* reflects Neoplatonic negative theology, noting that many kabbalists hold negative theology to be an exoteric view while esoterically maintaining that *ein-sof* can be described as a luminous *anthropos* comprising ten supernal *sefirot*. Idel does concede, however, that this “esoteric” view was not put forward consistently and that at times kabbalists reverted to a more rigorous account of the unknowability of *ein-sof*, which reflects the Neoplatonic view. See Moshe Idel, “The Image of Adam above the Sefirot,” *Daat* 4 (1980): 41–55; Moshe Idel, “The Sefirot above the Sefirot,” *Tarbiz* 51 (1982) [Hebrew]; Moshe Idel, “Jewish Kabbalah and Platonism in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance,” in *Neoplatonism and Jewish Thought*, ed. Lenn E. Goodman (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1992), 339–44; Wolfson, “Negative Theology and Positive Assertion in Early Kabbalah,” xii–xxii.

20 Azriel of Gerona’s statement is cited in Wolfson, “Negative Theology and Positive Assertion in Early Kabbalah,” vii; Matt, “Ayin: The Concept of Nothingness in Jewish Mysticism,” 74. I have altered the translation slightly.

21 On various kabbalistic interpretations of the *sefirot* see Scholem, “On the Kabbalah and its Symbolism,” 96–116; Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives*, 136–53.

22 See E. Wolfson, “Negative Theology and Positive Assertion in Early Kabbalah,” xii.

ing from revelatory mysticism, I choose Judah Halevi (1085–1141), whereas for problems emerging from apophatic mysticism I choose Moses Maimonides (1135–1204).<sup>23</sup> Other thinkers could have been selected, but I have chosen to focus on Halevi and Maimonides for two reasons. First, each provides a perspicuous theoretical discussion of the problems mentioned, especially as regards the relationship between mystical experience and philosophical ratiocination, which forms the main subject of this chapter. Second, although Halevi and Maimonides are philosophers,<sup>24</sup> they also had mystical inclinations<sup>25</sup> and their approaches to the relationship between mysticism and philosophy proved very influential for later kabbalists and philosophers alike.<sup>26</sup>

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- 23 This is not to deny that there are apophatic themes in Halevi and revelatory themes in Maimonides, but I think that Halevi provides the fullest discussion of problems emerging from revelatory mysticism and Maimonides provides the fullest discussion of problems emerging from apophatic mysticism.
- 24 Halevi's being considered a philosopher has been called into question. See Leo Strauss, *Persecution and the Art of Writing* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1952), 98–104; Dov Schwartz, *Contradiction and Concealment in Medieval Jewish Thought* (Ramat-Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 2002) [Hebrew]. Although it is true that Halevi is sharply critical of philosophy, in categorizing Halevi as a philosopher I follow Elliot Wolfson who emphasizes the fact that Halevi's "terms and modes of discourse [are] derived from philosophy proper." See Elliot Wolfson, "Merkavah Traditions in Philosophical Garb: Judah Halevi Reconsidered," *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 57 (1990): 184 n. 15.
- 25 I will demonstrate this later.
- 26 For Halevi's influence on later kabbalists see Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, 24: "There is a direct connection between Jehudah Halevi, the most Jewish of Jewish philosophers and the Kabbalists"; *ibid.*, 173; Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, 222–4, 410–11; David Kaufmann, *Geschichte der Attributenlehre in der Jüdischen Religionsphilosophie der Mittelalters* (Gotha: Friedrich Andreas Perthes, 1877), 166–7 n. 120; E. Wolfson, *Through a Speculum that Shines*, 181, 184 n. 247, 294–96, 303. For a specific example of the Zohar's use of Halevi, see Warren Zev Harvey, "Judah Halevi's Synesthetic Theory of Prophecy and a Note on the Zohar," in *Rivkah Shatz-Uffenheimer Memorial Volume Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought*, vol. XII, ed. Rachel Elior and Joseph Dan (Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 1996), 153–5. Scholars have noted the influence of Maimonides' negative theology on Kabbalah. See most recently Wolfson, "Via Negativa in Maimonides and its Impact on Thirteenth Century Kabbalah" *Maimonidean Studies* 5 (2008), 368–412. On the Zohar's dependence on Maimonides see Gershom Scholem, *Kabbalah* (New York: Quadrangle Press, 1974), 156, 159, 224; Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, 173, 183–4, 240, 390–1 n. 77, 395 n. 141; W. Harvey, "Judah Halevi's Synesthetic Theory of Prophecy," 155. On kabbalists' appropriation of Maimonides' identification of God and nature, see Moshe Idel, "Deus sive Natura: The Metamorphosis of a Dictum from Maimonides to Spinoza," in *Maimonides and the Sciences*, ed. Robert Cohen and Hillel Levine (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 2000). There is a burgeoning literature on the influence of Maimonides' esotericism and his notion of conjunction with God on kabbalists. See Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, 138–9, 383 n. 76; Idel, *Studies in Ecstatic Kabbalah*, 1–38; Moshe Idel, "Maimonides and Kabbalah," in *Studies in Maimonides*, ed. Isadore Twersky (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990), 54–80; Idel, *Absorbing Perfections*, 438–47; Moshe Idel, "Maimonides' Guide of the Perplexed and the Kabbalah," *Jewish History* 18 (2004): 197–226; Wolfson, *Abraham Abulafia: Kabbalist and Prophet*, esp. 52–93, 152–85, 197–

### **Halevi's Revelatory Mysticism**

Halevi's only philosophical work, *Kuzari*, considers a range of challenges to Judaism, including Christianity, Islam, Karaism, and Kalām. However, as Leo Strauss points out, "one is entitled to consider *Kuzari* primarily as a defense of Judaism against philosophy."<sup>27</sup> The confrontation between the philosophical approach to truth and a mystical alternative grounded in a revelatory experience of the divine is the major theme of the work. I divide Halevi's defense of a mystical alternative to philosophy into three parts: (1) analysis of philosophy; (2) critique of philosophy; and (3) defense of revelatory mysticism.

#### *1. Analysis of philosophy*

According to Halevi, although philosophers pride themselves on their critical faculties, they too often take the project of philosophy for granted, simply assuming its value and capacity to attain truth. Philosophers think that human beings have a divine faculty, which they call "intellect ('aql)."<sup>28</sup> By using the proper philosophical method,

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204; Elliot Wolfson, "Beneath the Wings of the Great Eagle: Maimonides and Thirteenth Century Kabbalah," in *Moses Maimonides: His Religious, Scientific, and Philosophical Wirkungsgeschichte in Different Cultural Contexts*, ed. Görg Hasselhoff and Otfried Fraisse (Berlin: Ergon Verlag, 2004). Maimonides' centrality for subsequent Jewish philosophers is well established. Consider Julius Guttman's judgment that "Maimonides is not only the basis of all [Jewish] philosophical activity which follows him, but this activity is always connected with him anew- at times continuing where he left off and at times criticizing him. Therefore one can explicate the problems of medieval Jewish philosophy as a whole in light of Maimonides' system." See Julius Guttman, *Religion and Knowledge*, ed. S. Bergman and N. Rotenstreich, trans. Saul Esh (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1955), 86 [Hebrew]. Warren Zev Harvey renders a similar judgment. See Warren Zev Harvey, "Maimonides' Place in the History of Philosophy," in *Moses Maimonides: Communal Impact, Historic Legacy*, ed. Benny Kraut (New York: Center for Jewish Studies, Queens College, 2005), 27–32. On Halevi's influence on later Jewish philosophy see Dov Schwartz, "The *Kuzari* Renaissance in Jewish Philosophy," in *Studies in Medieval Jewish History and Literature*, vol. III (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000) [Hebrew]; Dov Schwartz, "Land of Concreteness and Dialogue: Buber as a Commentator on the *Kuzari*," in *Between Tradition and Innovation*, ed. Eliezer Don Yehiya (Ramat-Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 2005); Eliezer Schweid, "Halevi and Maimonides as Representatives of Romantic versus Rationalistic Conceptions of Judaism," in *Kabbalah und Romantik*, ed. Eveline Goodman-Thau, Gerd Mattenklott and Christoph Schulte (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1994); Adam Shear, *The Later History of a Medieval Hebrew Book: Studies in the Reception of Judah Halevi's Sefer ha Kuzari* (PhD Dissertation, University of Philadelphia); Adam Shear, "Judah Halevi's *Kuzari* in the Haskalah: The Reinterpretation and Reimagining of a Medieval Work," in *Renewing the Past, Reconfiguring Jewish Culture*, ed. Ross Brann and Adam Sutcliffe (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 2004); and more recently idem, *The Kuzari and the Shaping of Jewish Identity 1167-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008). For Halevi's influence on Rosenzweig in particular, see below note 119.

27 See Strauss, *Persecution and the Art of Writing*, 103.

28 See Judah Halevi, *Kuzari*, ed. Hartwig Hirschfeld (New York: Pardes Publishing House, 1964),

human beings can know objective truth through this faculty. Halevi asks us to consider the structural features of the philosophical mind-set. Philosophers prize theoretical knowledge above all else. Truth is reached through a dispassionate application of one's mind to the object contemplated. Philosophers try to exclude all nontheoretical interest from this study for they are concerned that such interest will lead to subjective distortion. Because they seek knowledge of a fixed truth, the object being studied is conceived as inert.<sup>29</sup> Hence philosophers focus on understanding *being*, and it is not incidental that the most fundamental of Aristotle's ten categories is substance.

According to Halevi, although God is the highest object of knowledge, philosophers are moved to seek knowledge of God from the same curiosity that moves them to inquire into any truth. So, for example, knowing God is on par with knowing the place of the earth in the planetary economy.<sup>30</sup> As such, knowledge of God is not momentous or dramatic. It is cold, safe knowledge, for which one would not risk one's life.<sup>31</sup> Philosophers train their intellectual gaze toward the object they seek to grasp. Being finite human beings, they must use discursive reason,<sup>32</sup> and as such, the process of philosophizing is time-bound. For this reason, Halevi describes philosophizing as akin to "narrating" (*ka-al-ḥadīth*).<sup>33</sup>

Following Aristotle, Halevi divides philosophy into theoretical philosophy and practical philosophy.<sup>34</sup> The aim of philosophers is to achieve perfection, which involves activity and at its best is constituted

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V.12, 265–6. I will cite from the Hirschfeld translation (which is badly out of date, but the only full English translation currently available) according to part number, section number, and page number. In preparing this chapter, I have consulted *Sefer ha-Kuzari: Maqor ve targum*, trans. Joseph Qafah (Kiryat Ono: Makhon Mishnat ha-Rambamm 1996) [Hebrew-Arabic edition], Judah Ibn Tibbon's medieval Hebrew translation, Yehuda Even-Shmuel's modern Hebrew translation, and Charles Touati's French translation.

29 See Halevi/Hirschfeld, *Kuzari*, V. 12, 265–6, where Halevi reports the philosophers' view that although reasoning operates in time the knowledge that it achieves is timeless.

30 See Halevi/Hirschfeld, *Kuzari*, IV. 13, 217–9; David Baneth, "Judah Halevi and al-Ghazzali," in *Studies in Jewish Thought*, ed. Alfred Jospe (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1981), 185.

31 See Halevi/Hirschfeld, *Kuzari*, IV. 17, 223–4, where Halevi claims that Abraham began knowing God as a philosopher through logic. It was only after God revealed Himself to Abraham and told Abraham to leave aside his "philosophizing" that Abraham was willing to suffer for God. Also see Halevi/Hirschfeld, *Kuzari*, IV. 5, 213–4.

32 See Halevi/Hirschfeld, *Kuzari*, IV. 3, 206–7.

33 See Halevi/Hirschfeld, *Kuzari*, IV. 6, 214; V. 12, 265–6.

34 See Halevi/Qafah, *Kuzari* V. 12, 265–6.

by doing theoretical philosophy.<sup>35</sup> In doing philosophy, one's aim is to achieve a state in which one's mind accurately mirrors external reality.<sup>36</sup> To better understand this, it is useful to set out Halevi's account of the philosophers' theory of knowledge, which he presents in part five, chapter twelve of *Kuzari*. Halevi's account is drawn from an early treatise of Avicenna entitled *Treatise on the Soul* (*Risala fi al-nafs*).<sup>37</sup>

Knowledge is attained through a complex interplay of different faculties. The philosophers distinguish between outer (*al-zāhira*) and inner (*al-bāṭina*) senses. The outer senses are the five senses. The inner senses include common sense (*al-mushtarika*), which is identified with retentive imagination, productive imagination (*al-qūwa al-mutakhayyila*), memory (*al-qūwwa al-mutadhakira al-ḥafīza*), and the faculty of estimation (*al-qūwa al-mutawahhima*).<sup>38</sup> Knowledge of the external world begins with our five senses. To transform sense perception into knowledge, sense perceptions must be analyzed. Here the common sense plays a central role: its function is to coordinate data originating from different senses. Through common sense the "common sensibles" are known, which include notions such as figure, number, size, motion, and rest.<sup>39</sup> The faculty of estimation instinctually judges whether the object perceived should be pursued or avoided. So, for example, the faculty of estimation signals that one should flee from a hungry lion.<sup>40</sup>

To attain knowledge of external objects, we must store percep-

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35 See Halevi/Hirschfeld, *Kuzari* I. 1, 37–39.

36 See Halevi/Hirschfeld, *Kuzari*, IV. 13, 217–9.

37 Samuel Landauer published the complete Avicennian text with a partial German translation. See Samuel Landauer, "Die Psychologie des Ibn Sina," *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 29 (1876): 335–418. There is also an English translation of this work. See Avicenna, *A Compendium on the Soul*, trans. Edward Abbott van Dyck (Verona: Stamperia di Nicola Paderno, 1906).

38 For a good discussion of the inner senses in ancient and medieval philosophy see Harry Wolfson, "The Internal Senses in Latin, Arabic, and Hebrew Philosophical Texts," in his *Studies in the History of Philosophy and Religion*, vol. 1, ed. I. Twersky and G. H. Williams (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973), especially 267–94. I divide Halevi's account of the inner senses somewhat differently than does Wolfson. Also see Wolfson's discussion of Maimonides' account of the internal senses in Harry Wolfson, "Negative Attributes in the Church Fathers and the Gnostic Basilides," in Wolfson, *Studies in the History of Philosophy and Religion*, vol. 1.

39 See Harry Wolfson, "Notes on Proofs of the Existence of God in Jewish Philosophy," in Wolfson, *Studies in the History of Philosophy and Religion*, vol. 1, 565.

40 For discussion of Avicenna's account of the faculty of estimation, see Diana Lobel, *A Sufi-Jewish Dialogue: Philosophy and Mysticism in Bahya ibn Paquda's Duties of the Heart* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 71–6.

tions so that we can compare perceptions recorded at different times with one another. The faculty of memory stores perceptions as well as the judgments of the faculty of estimation. While the outer senses passively receive sensations, the productive imagination is active, accessing perceptions stored in memory and combining them. Hence the productive imagination is also called the “combining faculty” (*qūwat al-tarkb*). If the productive imagination combines images and compares them according to the dictates of the intellect, then it generates true knowledge. The intellect includes self-evident, primary truths, which are known intuitively such as the law of noncontradiction or the axiom that the whole is greater than the part. It attains truth by telling the productive imagination how to combine perceptions received through the five senses and stored in memory so that the intellect can form syllogisms and demonstrative proofs. In this way, we derive philosophical knowledge of ontology, physics, cosmology, and metaphysics.<sup>41</sup>

Practical philosophy includes both moral and political philosophy. It is grounded in optimism about the human capacity to control/organize society and individual desires. At the center of practical philosophy is law. “Rational laws” (*al-sharā’i al-‘aqliyya*) (also called “political laws”—*al-sharā’i al-siyāsiyya*) include laws of justice, which are necessary for any society to function.<sup>42</sup> Religious laws instill “humility, worship of God, and moral virtue,” which help the individual “purify his heart” and so prepare him to contemplate God.<sup>43</sup> In light of this, it is not surprising that philosophers consider all law, including religious law, to be of instrumental value. The philosopher tells the Khazar king not to “worry about which religious law you adhere to”<sup>44</sup> for the king can “create his own religion” or “ground his religion in the rational laws of the philosophers.”<sup>45</sup>

41 Although Avicenna claims to be able to know the first cause a priori through the ontological proof, Wolfson points out that Halevi believes that philosophers can only establish God’s existence through the a posteriori cosmological proof. See Wolfson, “Notes on Proofs of the Existence of God in Jewish Philosophy,” 568–72. On Avicenna’s proofs for God’s existence, see Dimitri Gutas, *Avicenna and the Aristotelean Tradition* (Leiden: Brill, 1988), 261–5.

42 See Halevi/Hirschfeld, *Kuzari*, II. 48, 111–2.

43 Halevi/Hirschfeld, *Kuzari*, I. 1, 38–9.

44 Halevi/Hirschfeld, *Kuzari*, I. 1, 38–9.

45 Ibid. See Halevi/Hirschfeld, *Kuzari*, II. 49, 112 where the Khazar king notes that according to the philosophers it is irrelevant whether one approaches God through “Judaism, Christianity, something else, or whatever religion you create for yourself.”



## 2. Critique of philosophy

According to Halevi, philosophers commonly critique popular religious beliefs for being anthropomorphic and anthropopathic. They invoke metaphor as a way of explaining biblical texts that seem to ascribe all-too-human characteristics to God such as limbs and emotions.<sup>46</sup> While philosophers think that reason provides a way of grasping God in God's otherness, Halevi charges that philosophers themselves anthropomorphize God. The difference is that rather than conceiving God through the lens of the imagination, they conceive God through the lens of the intellect. The intellect is not, however, a clear glass through which one perceives truth—it is itself a filter that gives the percept a particular coloration.

The philosophers' God is "elevated above all desire (*munazzah 'an al-irādāt*)."<sup>47</sup> Will is denied of God, for having a will to do something would imply a lack in God.<sup>48</sup> Using intellect, philosophers seek fixed truth. This leads them to focus on God's being, and it is not incidental that they describe God as a substance whose existence is identical with His essence.<sup>49</sup> This is reflected in the philosophical interpretation of the Tetragrammaton, the most sublime biblical name of God, which philosophers take to refer to God's necessary existence.<sup>50</sup> Furthermore, God is the most perfect being whose perfection is constituted by God always knowing the most perfect object in the most perfect way. Because God

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46 For example, see Saadia Gaon's *The Book of Doctrines and Beliefs*, part VII, section 2. This appears in Saadia Gaon, *The Book of Beliefs and Opinions*, trans. Samuel Rosenblatt (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1948), on pages 265–7. I cite from the Rosenblatt translation according to part number, section number, and page number. In preparing this chapter, I have also consulted Joseph Qafah's Hebrew-Arabic edition, Saadia Gaon, *Kitāb al-amanāt wa-al i'tiqadāt*, ed. Joseph Qafah (Jerusalem: Sura, 1960).

47 Halevi/Hirschfeld, *Kuzari*, I. 1, 36.

48 Ibid.

49 See Halevi/Hirschfeld, *Kuzari*, IV. 25, 236. See al-Ghazālī, *The Incoherence of the Philosophers*, trans. and ed. Michael E. Marmura (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1997), second introduction, 5.

50 See Halevi/Hirschfeld, *Kuzari*, IV. 25, 236. The contrast between Halevi's treatment of the Tetragrammaton and Maimonides' is very instructive. For Maimonides, the Tetragrammaton signifies that, "there is no association between God, may He be exalted, and what is other than He." Maimonides also writes that the name may indicate necessary existence. As I will show later, for Halevi the Tetragrammaton is a personal name that signifies God's direct creation without intermediaries. For Maimonides' interpretation of the Tetragrammaton, see *Guide of the Perplexed*, I:61, 64, which appears in Moses Maimonides, *The Guide of the Perplexed*, vols. I and II, trans. Shlomo Pines (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), on pp. 147–8, 156–157. I have likewise consulted Joseph Qafah's Arabic/Hebrew edition, Samuel Ibn Tibbon's medieval Hebrew translation, and Michael Schwarz's recent Hebrew translation of the *Guide*.

is the most perfect being, God is always in the process of contemplating Himself, and what follows from His nature, that is, the cosmos. As true knowledge is eternal and unchanging, God cannot know particulars. For particulars change with time, and although God could know all future events eternally there would be a change in God's knowledge when an event went from being potential to being actual.<sup>51</sup>

Halevi notes that the philosophers' God is remarkably similar to the perfect philosopher. Like the perfect philosopher, God is dispassionate and focused on contemplating eternal truth. Like the philosopher, God's perfection rests in God's relation to Himself rather than in God's relation to others.<sup>52</sup> God's governance of the world flows incidentally from God's being and is not the primary aim of God's activity.<sup>53</sup> Halevi's critique calls to mind Spinoza's remark that "if a triangle could speak it would say that God is eminently triangular."<sup>54</sup>

Halevi claims that philosophers are skeptical by nature—they do not wish to believe anything not confirmed by sense perception and rational understanding.<sup>55</sup> Although for philosophers all knowledge begins with sense perception,<sup>56</sup> they do not believe that sense perception of God is possible.<sup>57</sup> Hence, philosophers hold that knowledge of God is deduced cosmologically from our understanding of nature.<sup>58</sup>

According to Halevi, the philosophers' understanding of nature is determined by their intellectual orientation. Nature is approached as an object to be grasped by the intellect. The way of the intellect is to seek rational order, so it is no accident that philosophers conceive of nature

51 See Halevi/Hirschfeld, *Kuzari*, I. 1, 36.

52 See *Kuzari*, Halevi/Hirschfeld, IV. 19, 224–5.

53 See *Kuzari*, Halevi/Hirschfeld, IV. 13, 217–9.

54 Letter 56, Spinoza 1995. This line of theological critique goes back to Xenophanes who famously quipped that if horses and oxen had hands and could draw pictures, their gods would look like horses and oxen.

55 Leo Strauss stresses the skeptical disposition of the philosopher by noting that the philosopher's speeches always begin with the philosopher stating what he does *not* believe in. See Strauss, *Persecution and the Art of Writing*, 112; Halevi/Hirschfeld, *Kuzari*, I. 1, 36; I. 3, 39.

56 See Halevi/Hirschfeld, *Kuzari*, V. 12, 265. The only exception is the "primary intelligibles," which are known "by nature" and include axioms such as that the whole is greater than its parts. See Halevi/Hirschfeld, *Kuzari*, V. 12, 263–8. Halevi's view of whether mathematical truths are known a priori or a posteriori is unclear to me.

57 See Halevi/Hirschfeld, *Kuzari*, IV. 3, 210; Halevi/Hirschfeld, *Kuzari*, V. 14, 272–3. On philosophers' distrust of mystical experience see Strauss, *Persecution and the Art of Writing*, 105.

58 In the entire dialogue, Halevi never mentions the ontological argument for God. See Wolfson, "Notes on Proofs of the Existence of God in Jewish Philosophy," 568–72.



as a totality whose constituent parts are eternal and which operates in a determined way.<sup>59</sup> In particular, they observe finite physical causes and effects in the universe, and seek to transform their ad hoc observations into universal, inexorable laws.<sup>60</sup> As they only perceive natural causes and effects, they (unjustly) declare the principle of *ex nihilo nihil fit* (nothing comes from nothing) to be inviolable, and so conclude that the world is eternal, and that miracles are impossible.<sup>61</sup> Although the world is eternal according to philosophers, they still need to explain the cause of the entire infinite series of causes. Once again they overreach intellectually for not only do they assume that the principle *ex nihilo nihil fit* applies absolutely to events within the world, they likewise assume that the entire series of events is subject to this principle. Given that the cosmos is eternal and that an actual infinite series of events is impossible, the philosophers require a self-caused starting point for the whole series. They therefore posit an eternal, necessarily existent God whom they call the “first cause” (*al-sabab al-awwal*).<sup>62</sup> As God is eternal, God’s nature must be defined by something eternal. Furthermore, as a perfectly ordered cosmos proceeds from God, God must be an ordering principle.<sup>63</sup> From the philosophers’ own experiences, however, it is intellect, which systematizes and intellect is the only faculty, which operates outside of time.<sup>64</sup> Hence they conclude that God must be an intellect and the world must proceed from God’s eternal thought. Given that the cosmos exists necessarily, God cannot have a will.

Despite the impressive rhetoric of philosophers,<sup>65</sup> Halevi thinks that they enjoy prestige that they do not deserve. Echoing a theme found in his older Muslim contemporary Abu Hamid al-Ghazālī, Halevi claims that because philosophers achieve a high degree of certainty in math-

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59 See Halevi/Hirschfeld, *Kuzari*, V. 10, 256–9.

60 See Halevi/Hirschfeld, *Kuzari*, IV. 3, 210–1. Al-Ghazālī makes a similar point. See al-Ghazālī, *Al-Ghazali’s Path to Sufism*, trans. and ed. R. J. McCarthy (Louisville: Fons Vitae, 2000), 74: “[The philosophers] conceived things to be in accord with their own experience and comprehension, while presuming the impossibility of what was unfamiliar to them.” For trenchant comparisons of Halevi and al-Ghazālī see Baneth, “Judah Halevi and al-Ghazzali”; Barry S. Kogan “Al-Ghazali and Halevi on Philosophy and the Philosophers,” in *Medieval Philosophy and the Classical Tradition in Islam, Judaism, and Christianity*, ed. John Inglis (Surrey: Curzon, 2002).

61 See Halevi/Hirschfeld, *Kuzari*, I. 1, 36; IV. 3, 210–1; V. 10, 256–9; I. 65, 53–4.

62 Halevi/Hirschfeld, *Kuzari*, I. 1, 36; IV. 13, 217–9.

63 Halevi/Hirschfeld, *Kuzari*, IV. 15, 220–3.

64 Halevi/Hirschfeld, *Kuzari*, V. 12, 265.

65 Halevi/Hirschfeld, *Kuzari*, IV. 17, 224.

ematics and logic, people unjustly assume that they achieve the same certainty in physics and metaphysics.<sup>66</sup> When, however, one examines the state of cosmology and metaphysics, one finds endless disagreements.<sup>67</sup> In cosmology, Halevi echoes some of al-Ghazālī's critiques of the philosophical view,<sup>68</sup> and there are even more serious problems in metaphysics.

Halevi begins by noting that although philosophers ascribe knowledge, will, and power to God, they acknowledge that God's knowledge, will, and power are structurally different from human beings'. Human beings represent truth through three different capacities, which following *Book of Creation* (*Sefer Yetzirah*) Halevi calls "calculation" (*sefar*), "speech" (*sippur*), and "writing" (*sefer*). A person represents truths mentally through intellect, communicates truths orally through speech, and transmits them in written form through writing. Human knowledge is *receptive* and involves accommodating our mind to truth. In contrast, God's knowledge is *creative*. God's capacity for calculation

66 Halevi/Hirschfeld, *Kuzari*, V. 14, 268; al-Ghazālī, *Al-Ghazali's Path to Sufism*, 31–2, 34; al-Ghazālī, *The Incoherence of the Philosophers*, first introduction, 4.

67 See Halevi/Hirschfeld, *Kuzari*, I. 13, 45; IV. 25, 239; V. 14, 273. See Diana Lobel, *Between Philosophy and Mysticism* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2000), 68–71.

68 See Halevi/Hirschfeld, *Kuzari*, IV. 25, 238–49; V. 14, 273. The philosophers' cosmology is based on the principle that from one only one follows. The philosophers (here Halevi seems to refer to Farabi; Avicenna's account is slightly more complex) assume that from God thinking Himself the first intellect is emanated. From the first intellect contemplating its cause the first intellect emanates a second intellect and from the first intellect contemplating itself, it emanates the sphere of the fixed stars. From the second intellect contemplating itself and its cause the second intellect emanates a third intellect and the sphere of Saturn. All this continues until it terminates with the tenth intellect, the agent intellect. Halevi raises a number of problems with this schema. First, why are there only ten emanations? Why does not the agent intellect emanate more intellects and spheres? Second, why does the third intellect only emanate two things? It should emanate four things-- one from thinking itself, another from thinking the second intellect, a third from thinking the first intellect, and a fourth from contemplating God. Third, why does the intellect thinking itself emanate a sphere and thinking its cause emanate an intellect and not vice versa? Fourth, why when does Aristotle not emanate a sphere when thinking himself and why does he not emanate a separate intellect when thinking of God? Fifth, does not the fact that an intellect emanates two things violate the principle of from one only one follows? Halevi's criticisms seem to have been suggested by al-Ghazālī. See al-Ghazālī, *The Incoherence of the Philosophers*, discussion 3, third aspect, 65–78. Maimonides likewise mentions some of the Ghazalian critiques. See Maimonides, *Guide of the Perplexed*, Pines, II:22, 317–8. For discussion of Halevi and Maimonides' criticisms of the philosophers' cosmology and their relation to al-Ghazālī see Harry Wolfson, "Halevi and Maimonides on Design, Necessity and Chance," in his *Studies in the History of Philosophy and Religion*, vol. 2 ed. I. Twersky and G. H. Williams (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1977), 8–15; Arthur Hyman, "From What is One and Simple Only What is One and Simple Can Come to Be," in Goodman, *Neoplatonism*, 111–35; Baneth, "Judah Halevi and al-Ghazzali," 184.

(*sefar*), speech (*sippur*), and writing (*sefer*) is a unity through which God brings the world into existence. God's ability to calculate is His thought, which comprises the mathematical relations between objects. God's speech is His will through which things are created (as in Genesis where God creates through speech), and God's writing is His action, which expresses His power and is coextensive with His will. For Halevi philosophical ratiocination must employ language.<sup>69</sup> Given that we use the same words to describe God's attributes as to describe our own, philosophical ratiocinations concerning God's nature are necessarily misleading and imprecise.<sup>70</sup> Along similar lines, Halevi notes that philosophers agree that God is a timeless unity.<sup>71</sup> Given that as finite creatures, human beings use discursive reason and so must represent God's attributes separately over time, we can never properly grasp God's nature.<sup>72</sup> Halevi's critique of the human ability to grasp God is ontological as well as epistemological. Given the discrepancy between God's infinite essence and human beings' finite intellect, any being grasped by human beings could not be God.<sup>73</sup>

Halevi notes an inconsistency in the philosophers' claim not to accept anything not derived through rational analysis. His criticism is related to a criticism mounted by al-Ghazālī and so it is worth beginning with al-Ghazālī. At the beginning of his autobiography, *The Deliverance From Error* (*al-Munqidh min al-Dalāl*), al-Ghazālī notes the inability of reason and the senses to ground themselves. Al-Ghazālī recounts his youthful confusion over the many theological disputes among Muslims. To escape this confusion, he resolves only to accept ideas about which he cannot entertain the slightest doubt.<sup>74</sup> He begins with two apparently infallible sources of knowledge, sense perception (*al-hissiyāt*) and self-evident truths (*al-darūriyyāt*) such as the law of noncontradiction. Al-Ghazālī begins by noting that sense perception is not always infallible. For example, a star appears to the senses as a small dot, whereas reason judges it to be much larger than the earth. Reason likewise can be doubted, for although the self-evident truths

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69 Halevi/Hirschfeld, *Kuzari*, IV. 5, 213–4.

70 See Halevi/Hirschfeld, *Kuzari*, IV. 25, 228–9.

71 See Halevi/Hirschfeld, *Kuzari*, II. 2, 84.

72 Putting together Halevi/Hirschfeld, *Kuzari*, IV. 25, 228–9; IV. 5, 213–4; IV. 6, 214.

73 See Halevi/Hirschfeld, *Kuzari*, V. 21, 291. Guttman points out that F.H. Jacobi makes the same point some seven hundred years later. See Guttman, *Religion and Knowledge*, 67.

74 Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Ghazālī's Path to Sufism*, 20.