

interpretation

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- 1 Robert Sacks The Lion and the Ass: a Commentary
on the Book of Genesis (Chapters 11-20)
- 83 David K. Nichols Aeschylus' *Oresteia*
and the Origins of Political Life
- 93 John A.
Wettergreen On the End of Thucydides' Narrative
- 111 Aryeh L. Motzkin On Halevi's *Kuzari* as a Platonic Dialogue
- 125 R. S. Hill Duncan Forbes's
Hume's Philosophical Politics
- 137 Aryeh L. Motzkin Harry A. Wolfson
as Interpreter of Medieval Thought

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ERRATA

Professor Motzkin's article, *On Halevi's Kuzari as a Platonic Dialogue*, contained unfortunately a number of misprints. Corrections follow:

<i>passim</i>	for Haver, haver			p. 120, note 1	<i>for</i> nasr <i>read</i> naṣr
		<i>read</i> Haver, ḥaver			din dīn
p. 112, line 10	The aim	Our aim		p. 120, note 5	dhalil dhalīl
p. 113, line 9	hama'seh	hama'seh			jujaj ḥujaj
p. 114, line 14	yuhaqqiqūn	yuhaqqiqūn			aqna'ani aqna'anī
p. 114, bottom	hujjaj	ḥujjaj		p. 121, line 2	Cuase cause
p. 115, line 2	tālat	tālat		p. 121, line 15	esoteric exoteric
	suhbati	suhbatī		end of note 9	<i>add</i> cf. below, n. 23, end.
p. 117, line 4				p. 121, note 12	<i>for</i> nawāmis
from bottom	shari'ah	shari'ah			<i>read</i> nawāmīs
p. 117, line 2					darura darūra
from bottom	hujja	ḥujja			Mehqere Mehqere
p. 119 bottom	the good	virtue		p. 121, note 14	greatest greater
p. 120, note 1	dalil	dalīl		p. 122, note 19	fadl faḍl
	dhalil	dhalīl			tahqīq taḥqīq
	khazari	khazarī		p. 122, note 22	adarr aḍarr
	ta'lif	ta'lif			matma' maṭma'
	hujja	ḥujja		end of note 24	<i>add</i> Migne, <i>Pat. Lat.</i>
	dalil	dalīl			CXCIX, 652B.
	fi	fī		p. 124, note 27	<i>for</i> al-mutawahhid
					<i>read</i> al-mutawahḥid

ON HALEVI'S *KUZARI* AS A PLATONIC DIALOGUE

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I

The recent publication of the first satisfactory edition of the original Arabic text of the *Kuzari* provides us with the opportunity to reread one of the most notable books of the twelfth century, and to reconsider some of the perennial problems the *Kuzari* articulates.¹

II

Since the *Kuzari* is a dialogue, the first question that needs to be resolved is the mutual relations of the views of the Haver, the Jewish rabbi who is the main interlocutor, and those of the author of the dialogue. Any assertion about Halevi's philosophic — or antiphilosophic — positions necessarily presupposes at least a tentative resolution of this problem. This quandary is analogous to the problem of the relationship of the Socrates who appears in Plato's dialogues and the author of those dialogues. As for Plato and Socrates, one may say that hardly anyone asserts today the identity of Plato's teaching and that of the central character of his dialogues. This is the case even if we believe that Plato was more or less "Socratic" only in his "early" dialogues; and it is certainly so if we believe Plato's second epistle, addressed to Dionysius.² After attempting to explain to Dionysius why he, Plato, never wrote (that is, why one should not write) philosophical treatises, for the more rarefied the discussion, the more ludicrous would the vulgar find it — Plato declares that there does not exist (nor will there ever exist) anything written by Plato himself, and that all writings that bear his name were born or generated of a young — or new — and beautiful Socrates.³ In other words, Socrates of the Platonic dialogues is not, nor is he meant to be, the historical Socrates, but rather the philosophical Socrates, Socrates as he should have been, the ideal Socrates, the "idea" of Socrates, which is of course always "young and beautiful," and does not "become old," that is to say, does not become corrupted, nor withers away forever.⁴

Unfortunately there are no epistles by Judah Halevi in which he explains either his method of writing or his aims.⁵

The problem of Plato-Socrates and its parallel problem of Halevi-the Haver are not presented here as historical riddles. Beyond the question of the similarity or dissimilarity of Plato's Socrates to Socrates, son of Sophroniscus and Phaenarete, who was born in 469 and died in 399 B.C.; and beyond the historical questions that the text of the *Kuzari* calls forth, there is the problem of the philosophical

interpretation of the text. We can hardly attempt a reconstruction of Plato's or of Halevi's thought unless we have at least a tentative solution to the problem of the identity, or lack of identity, of Socrates and the Jewish Rabbi with the authors of the dialogues in which these two appear as the principal characters. As for Plato, we are fortunate in having his own testimony. Even if we would not subscribe to the authenticity of the Epistles (skeptical critics of the Epistles, most certainly of the Second Epistle, are getting ever fewer), Plato's dialogues themselves furnish us with firsthand testimony of his own views regarding this question, usually implicitly and by way of allusion, but at times quite explicitly.⁶ As for Judah Halevi, there is no comfortable solution to the problem posited. The aim is to revive the discussion of this problem, and to demonstrate the inadequacy of the usually accepted answer.

III

That Halevi was intimately conversant with philosophy has been noted more than once. No philosopher could have represented philosophy better than Halevi in the first speech of the *Kuzari*. Halevi demonstrates in this speech that he knows the works of the *falāsifa*, the Aristotelians who wrote in Arabic, to the core. He repeatedly shows, both in this speech as well as in a number of other speeches in the *Kuzari*, that the philosophic approach, the views of the philosophers, are hardly foreign to him, or, as has been noted, that there was at some point in his life, a "philosophic period."⁷ The philosopher opens his presentation of philosophy to the Khazar king with the word *laysa*, i.e., "there is not." Halevi knows full well that the beginning of philosophy consists in a tearing down, in the assertion that "what people say isn't so," or, if you will, that "what we are told is not so."⁸

Now, what is the significance of the contention that Judah Halevi had been a philosopher "at some point"? It is true that Al-Ghazzali, for example (there is no difficulty in noting some apparent parallelisms in Al-Ghazzali and Halevi, although their similarity is often overstated), relates that he had decided to "pursue to the end all that these sects [or schools] contain" — including philosophy. Nevertheless, one may reasonably conclude on the basis of his various writings, including his autobiography, that he had not considered himself a philosopher at any time. Can we maintain with an equal degree of certainty that the same was true of Halevi? The situation of Halevi was perhaps analogous to that of Augustine, who was the first to be confronted with the problem of an accommodation or a "harmonization" of philosophy and a monotheistic religion. But whereas Augustine, who refrains from identifying himself with philosophy, "uses" philosophy, Halevi holds the view that an amalgam of religion and philosophy is undesirable. A "philosophic" religion will persuade neither the king nor the multitude, and a religious "philosophy" is not philosophy, for it is neither autonomous nor discretionary. Shall we content ourselves with pointing at the "constant presence of philosophy in the thought of Judah Halevi" and the "apprehension that Judah

Halevi had on account of this (presence of philosophy), lest it shake his *Weltanschauung* to its foundations,"⁹ as if he were a Rabbi Nahman of Braslav? Is there no intimation that Halevi might not have been as artless as he may seem?

IV

Judah Halevi initiates this book by his retelling of the events that had prompted the Khazar king to start out on his search for a way to please the God whose angel had appeared to him in a dream. The God informs the king that "his intention is commendable but his deeds are blameworthy." And, in fact, religion is first and foremost "deeds," actions, and not "thoughts" or theory. *Lo hamidrash hu ha-iqqar ela hama'aseh* (action, not study, is the [essential] principle) — this maxim cited in the *Ethics of the Fathers* is a fundamental precept of any religion, an axiom or tendency that points to the gulf separating religion from philosophy.¹⁰ Indeed, the king finds it impossible to acknowledge the truth of the philosopher's speech, for the philosopher does not point at any operative way of fulfilling God's demands, which were revealed to the pagan king in his dream. Nor can the philosopher be of any help if the Khazar's aim is restricted to the attempt of placating the dream's God. From the standpoint of philosophy one can hardly distinguish Christianity from Islam, and for that matter, there is hardly any distinction between these two religions and any other monotheistic religion. All "actions," that is, for the purposes of this discussion, all the various forms of worship, are of no consequence.¹¹ This is not to suggest that the philosopher does not pray, offer sacrifices, or engage in any other form of public worship. However, the philosopher offers sacrifices because he views these actions as a civic duty: the philosopher who is about to die remembers that he "owes" a cock to Aesculapius. It is in no way a philosophic duty. Nor does philosophy prescribe any actions at all, excluding those actions that are indispensable for the sustenance and consummation of philosophy, and for the material (in the widest sense of the word) well-being and undisturbed intellectual activity of the philosopher.¹²

The pagan king possesses healthy instincts, and he has a compelling common sense. To be sure, this dialogue begins with a personal religious experience, as nonphilosophic as can be imagined. Just the same, the king does not allow himself to be hoodwinked. Furthermore, it is not the Haver but the Khazar who is in charge of the discussion; it is the king who decides which arguments are convincing and which are not; it is the pagan who determines who is to get the floor; and he is the one who cuts off the speaker once he decides that he has to yield the floor. Moreover, the Khazar king decides when a subject matter has been exhausted and it is time to pass on to another. This is so not only in the beginning of the discussion (as for example in a number of Plato's dialogues, in which Socrates seizes the reins only at a later stage of the dialogue), but throughout the book.¹³ The logographic necessity is clear; for the king's conversion is the ultimate proof (inherent in the dialogue) of the eternal truth of Judaism.¹⁴ If, however, it is the Khazar king who

determines verities, then the Haver, and Judah Halevi, must nolens-volens acknowledge the actual existence of a natural good, autonomous of any ethnic, religious, or national belonging – for the king is not a descendant of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.¹⁵

Let us consider the discussion between the pagan king and the Jewish rabbi beginning in I,44 and ending, it seems, in I,68. In this discussion the king interrogates the rabbi about Jewish chronology or chronometry, and this discussion naturally leads to the question of whether the universe was created in time or is eternal. After some general discussion in which the Jew becomes for awhile the one who questions and the pagan the one who answers,¹⁶ the king confronts the Haver with the following difficulty: How can you claim that our universe has been in existence for only a few thousand years, when we possess the testimony of the people of India that there are in their country ancient remains (*athār*) and monuments, which clearly substantiate (*yuhaqqiqūn*) the allegation that these monuments were erected many thousands of years before? The rabbi cannot come up with a credible reply, and so he is compelled to use the basest of ad hominem attacks, he is constrained to denigrate the credibility of all the people of India: the Indians are an “*ummah sā’ibah*,” a licentious nation.¹⁷ One should pay no heed to what Indians say, for they wish only to provoke. To be sure, the Haver himself cites the pre-Adamites who are mentioned in the book of Nabatean Agriculture, and Halevi thus quickly disabuses us of the notion that he believes the rabbi’s answer to be persuasive. Says the Khazar king: had you said that I am piling on proof originating with “the people who walk in darkness” (*‘āmmah dahmā*), *your answer would have hit the mark (fa-asabta al-jawāb)* [italics mine].

The Khazar king does not permit the rabbi to persuade him by vilifying the Indian nation in toto, and he implores the Haver to try and counter the philosophers’ assertions by rational argumentation. And what does the rabbi come up with? The philosophers are all Greeks, and are not of the sons of Shem (Semites), and thus have no received tradition, which is *the only testimony* one can rely on. Furthermore, their philosophy is pirated from the Persians, who appropriated theirs from the Babylonians [Who plagiarized the Indians?]. The proof: no philosophers arose in Greece before the Greeks came into contact with the Persians, nor after Rome conquered Greece. The king shows quite clearly that this answer is unacceptable, and we find it difficult to believe – having come to respect Halevi’s intellectual stature – that Halevi was persuaded by arguments that he himself notes are unconvincing. Does the rabbi’s polemic succeed in showing that Plato’s or Aristotle’s teaching is in error or devoid of any merit? The *Kuzari* does not inform us of something that was well known to Judah Halevi, who was, as we noted, well versed in Greek philosophical literature: it neglects to mention that the Greek philosophers held the view that they owed more to the Egyptians (sons of Ham) than to any other barbarians, Babylonians or Persians not excluded. Be that as it may, the Khazar king is compelled to cut off discussion of this topic (I,68). All of the Jew’s arguments are, as was pointed out above, *hujjaj muqni’ah*, rhetorical

proofs, and do not suffice to confound the king. Should the pagan decide, after all, to continue and seek the Haver's company (*wa-'in tālat suhbati laka*), he would at that time demand that the Jewish rabbi supply him with demonstrative proof (*hujjaj qāti'āh*).

Thus we learn that Judah Halevi allows that the Jew's thesis, the dialectic of the best possible spokesman for Judaism that Halevi can fashion, is problematic. Now Halevi's critique of the Jewish rabbi is not analogous to Plato's critique of Socrates. Plato's critique is not extra-philosophic: it is rooted in the ground of philosophy. Halevi's critique of his so-called spokesman, however, is not rooted in his religion, his *ummah*. Plato may take issue with Socrates and with Socrates' apology, with Socrates' defense of philosophy, for the success of Socrates' defense before his judges is not unequivocal, even were we to believe Socrates when he avows that he wishes to die and prefers death to exile. As for Socrates, he has reached ripe old age, and thus one may say he has already "lived philosophy." But it is neither expedient nor fitting that every future philosopher would "live philosophy" in an identical way, and here we come upon the crux of Plato's critique: Plato himself wrote with the view of the hemlock before his eyes, as Lessing noted.

This is not the case with Judah Halevi. The rabbi succeeded in his mission; that this is so we learn both from the *Kuzari* as well as from historical sources. What speeches should Halevi make the Haver utter? Has Halevi one convincing logographic motive that would explain away the obstacles he continually throws in the Jewish rabbi's path? We are forced to conclude that Halevi cannot but let us know that the Haver is not his spokesman, that he and the Jew are not one. We permit ourselves to say then that Judah Halevi is marching to the beat of a different drummer.¹⁸

Let us return to the question of Plato and Socrates. No one would gainsay that Plato is not Socrates, and that Plato holds the view that the position of Socrates and his way of life are inadequate, as Alfarabi has already pointed out. Plato thinks that Socratic ethics must be rooted in Timaeian metaphysics on the one hand, and protected by Thrasymachean politics on the other. The ethical philosophy of Socrates requires the political philosophy of Plato. Be that as it may, Plato's reservation in relation to his chief spokesman are not extra-philosophic, as we noted above. Could anyone contend (as some do regarding Halevi) that having been stung by that gadfly Socrates and having contracted the fever of philosophy, Plato can return to be what he had been prior to that sting? Would we be content to maintain that this left him with but a faint mark?

Again, once we perceive that Judah Halevi is aware of the limitations of all standpoints represented in the *Kuzari*, it seems that we have to reflect upon the significance of this awareness. For an awareness of the limitations of any philosophic position, or even of philosophy itself, of the search after human wisdom as such, is not extra-philosophic. Philosophy indeed demands just that: that its own premises do not escape the scrutiny of any of its serious students.

However, an awareness of the limitations of any religious position necessarily casts suspicion on any critic of religion who possesses such an awareness. The standpoints of the Christian and Moslem scholars are also presented equably by Halevi, but it is clear from his scathing critique of both Christianity and Islam (and there the Khazar king is Halevi's spokesman) that neither of them is considered by him to be plausible. But what about philosophy, which was rejected at the outset? It becomes clear that it is philosophy — which the Khazar king rejected because it dismisses the notion that dreams (such as the king's dream) or actions (such as religious worship) have any merit — that leaves the king restive, and he returns to it again in the fifth part of the *Kuzari*.¹⁹

V

A central issue in the *Kuzari* that may aid us in our attempt to determine Judah Halevi's tendency or aim is the problem of knowledge. Does Halevi hold sensual perception or rational knowledge to be superior to the other? A first reading of this dialogue might lead us to the conclusion that Halevi holds sensual perception to be more reliable or accurate. For one thing, the *Kuzari* begins with a retelling of a certain experience the Khazar king underwent, a nonrational experience that occurred in a dream and belongs to the faculty of the imagination. This personal event determines the course of the discussion, it defines at the outset the character of the dialogue. Above all, the dream experience tips the balance in determining the outcome of the first encounter between the king and philosophy.

The view that Halevi held the testimony of the senses to be superior to that of reason may be further buttressed by citing the words of the king in IV,16: It has become clear to me what the difference is between *elohim* and *adonai* [both signifying God, the latter sometimes translated as Lord], and I have come to understand how great is the distance between "the God of Abraham" and "the God" of Aristotle: for the Lord (*Adonai*) on high is longed for by men who have perceived him by the senses, on the basis of an eyewitness (*yatashawwaqu ilayhi shawqan dhawqan wa-mushāhadatan*), whereas logical reasoning leads to a predilection for God (*Elohim*). In other words, religion's God belongs to the sensitive soul, or if you will, to its passionate part. The God of philosophy dwells in the domain of rational, intellecting soul. On which side of the fence would we find Judah Halevi? Does Halevi prefer "taste" (sentiment) or "syllogism" (reason)? The view of all readers of Halevi save one is that the answer is palpably clear and indisputable.

In the center of the longest speech in the *Kuzari* (IV,3), while he explains the term *adoney ha-adonim* (Lord of Lords), Halevi turns the tables on his apparent viewpoint. The senses have no power to know the essence of things, says Halevi. They have merely the power to know the accidents that the beings attach to themselves. The essence of things and their nature (*amr*) may only be grasped by sane reason. Whoever has acquired the intellect in actu will be able to apprehend

the essences and natures of substances. Halevi goes on to describe the relation of the intellect to the senses and to the faculty of the imagination as analogous to the relation of one who sees well to another whose sense of sight is weak. Those who rely on the faculty of imagination (and have trust in the experiences that emanate from the imaginary faculty) are as blind people, who must be steered and guided. Who is to guide them and steer them? He who sees well, who has a powerful intellect, he who has attained the active intellect. These are the words of the *Kuzari* and what follows from them. How are we to resolve this shocking contradiction in Judah Halevi? There are two possibilities, if we assume that Halevi's intellectual powers were no weaker than ours, and that he was therefore aware of at least the elementary contradictions in his writings. The first possibility is to believe that the story of the Khazar king told at the outset of the dialogue and the remarks in IV,16 represent the standpoint of Halevi, while what the Haver says in IV,3 is said for political purposes. The alternative is to reflect upon the possibility that what is said in IV,3 is in accord with the views of Halevi, whereas the scene that opens this philosophic drama must be interpreted in a way that is at variance with the common interpretation. Unfortunately, we cannot revive the author and demonstrative proof in these matters is impossible. The reader must decide which alternative is more reasonable.

VI

One should not conclude on the basis of what is explicitly or implicitly stated here that we maintain that Halevi would not have uttered the very words the Haver is made to speak if he had found himself in similar circumstances. There is no denying that Halevi's Haver is the best advocate of Judaism that Halevi believed he could fashion, and had Halevi been summoned to the court of the pagan king and had been charged with the task of presenting the case for Judaism, he would have carried his mission as zealously and as ably as his Jewish rabbi. He might very well have started off with a philosopher's speech, although he would have known in advance that it would not have any immediate effect. That is precisely why the philosopher speaks first: he is least satisfactory, assuming the king's quest, and he is farthest removed from Judaism. Christianity is the least satisfactory religion, perhaps also because it has established a certain relationship with philosophy; it is in his reply to the Christian scholastic that the Khazar king first mentions nature and natural philosophy. However, the relationship of Christianity to philosophy is apparently analogous to that of magic to science.

As Christianity is to philosophy, so is Islam to Judaism. Islam shares with Judaism a pristine monotheism. Islam, like Judaism, is a religion centered on the *shari'ah*, the Islamic law, which is analogous to the Jewish *halāchāh*. Just the same, Islam is, as far as Halevi is concerned, "magical," for its greatest *hujja*, or proof for its asserted superiority, is the unique and peerless magic of the words of the Koran.

Why do the philosopher and the Jew never confront each other? If Halevi's intention in the *Kuzari* is to demonstrate the superiority of Judaism, would not a conversion to Judaism of a philosopher, who is a far more dangerous and powerful enemy of religion, be far more convincing than a conversion of the remote mountainous *Kagan* Bulus, prince of the Khazars? Halevi does not pit the philosopher and the Jew against each other. The king is already religious, very religious. "assiduous in the performance of his duties." Religious princes who dream of angels are the best possible candidates for conversion. A dialogue between the philosopher and the Jew, like Plato's *Philosopher*, does not exist because it cannot exist. Are we permitted to wonder whether it is possible that in such a confrontation it would be the philosopher who would emerge triumphant, and it is the Jew who would be converted to philosophy?²⁰

Judaism, according to the Haver, is a religion to which one is born, whereas to be a perfect Jew one must dwell in the land of Israel, for only there can one fulfill all of God's commandments. Indeed the Haver announces in the book's epilogue that he is about to take that necessary step in making his Judaism whole: he is "ascending" to the Holy Land. What kind of Jew would one be who is not a descendant of Shem, and who not only refrains from leaving "his land, his birthplace and his father's house," but actually endeavors to the best of his abilities to persuade others not to go to the land of Israel? For that precisely describes the position of the Khazar king at the end of the dialogue. He had been a pagan, he had become a Jew, but he never ceased to question. As the book ends, far from being a man of dogma, the king retains his original state of mind, clearly portrayed throughout: open-minded, reflective, seeking, alert, doubting, tenacious. Like a philosopher?

VII

We are compelled to address ourselves to the following question: Why did Judah Halevi choose not to adopt the opinions of the *mutakallimūn*, the doctors of Islamic theology, as Saadia Gaon had chosen to do? For the Kalam is not only a paramount system of apologetics. Nor is it possible to claim that philosophy was unknown to the *mutakallimūn* of Halevi's age. It was unquestionably familiar to the fathers of the Kalam as well as to the founders of Christian apologetics, which served as the model for the Kalam. Furthermore, the Kalam allowed for greater variation within its pale than did the Aristotelianism of the *falāsifa*.

This dilemma is reminiscent of our perplexity regarding Maimonides. Many have wondered why Maimonides refused to adopt Plato's views on the question of the eternity of the world or its creation in time, since Plato's position, which was usually culled from the *Timaeus*, may be harmonized without undue effort with the demands of religion. It is equally perplexing to ponder on Maimonides's reasons for constantly emphasizing the contradiction between the unadulterated religious dogma asserting creation ex nihilo and classic Aristotelianism, which affirms the

eternity of the world. As to Maimonides, one can not plausibly maintain that he considered Plato's philosophy to be "intellectually unsatisfactory." It becomes clear, and this has been pointed out before, that Maimonides wanted to exacerbate the essential conflict (in the theoretical realm) between philosophy and religion rather than camouflage it. Every student of Maimonides must therefore consider the question whether Maimonides took this position, and whether he had to take it for exclusively religious purposes, or whether he had other aims that he kept to himself.²¹

There is no escaping a similar conclusion regarding Halevi. Had Halevi's primary intention been to shield Judaism against the specter of philosophy, he need not have restricted himself to the way of the Kalam.²² If indeed Halevi's principal aim had been to safeguard the humiliated religion, to make the faithful of Israel, and especially the perplexed youth, immune to the philosophic virus, he could have chosen to walk the path the great medieval Christian theologians had paved before him. He could have adopted the way of his celebrated contemporary Peter Abelard. At the very same time that Judah Halevi wrote a dialogue in which a Jew, a Christian, a Muslim, a pagan, and a philosopher took part, Abelard wrote his renowned work, *A Dialogue between a Philosopher, a Jew and a Christian*. Abelard's declared position was that Christianity, which represents pristine truth, encompasses and encloses all other truths. Christianity is of course Judaism refined, but it is also filtered philosophy.²³ Nothing would have prevented Halevi from asserting, just as his contemporary the Bishop of Chartres — John of Salisbury — did, that the philosopher is a lover of God;²⁴ or to describe Moses, as Thierry of Chartres, another contemporary, did, as a divine philosopher.²⁵

The best solution to the challenge posed by philosophy would be from the standpoint of religion the subordination of philosophy and its domestication, its transformation into a tame, harmless, and perhaps even a serviceable animal in the palace of the mistress theology.²⁶ The philosopher — or philosophy — is indeed a dangerous wolf of the steppes,²⁷ its nails are barbed, its teeth incisive. But philosophy may be trapped and caged. It is possible to dull the teeth of the Epicurean, the wolf, to trim his nails, and to transform him into a superior watchdog, obliging and tame, an accommodating and faithful servant, who attacks only when ordered, and only the enemies of the nation and of religion.

This solution was adopted, more or less, by the Christian West, and Judah Halevi, whose mastery of philosophical as well as apologetic Christian literature is unquestionable, was no doubt familiar with it. Nonetheless, he himself chose not to adopt it.

The reason for this is that Halevi was convinced that castrated philosophy is not philosophy, and that the true philosophy as it appears in the writings of the classical philosophers, Plato and Aristotle, will always be a challenge to religion. As a prerequisite to our resolution of the problem we posed about Judah Halevi's genuine position must come our answer to the question whether Socrates' dictum about the identity of knowledge and the good is indeed true. In other words, every

reader of the *Kuzari* must address the question of whether true knowledge necessarily implies the true way of life. A positive reply to this question would require a reevaluation of the book before us.

¹*Kitāb al-radd wal-dalil fī al-dīn al-dhalīl (al-kitāb al-Khazari)* (the book of reply and demonstration in regard to the despised religion), ta'lif R. Yehudah Halevi, ed. David Hartwig Baneth, text emended by Haggai Ben-Shammai (Jerusalem: Magnes Press and the Israel Academy of Science and Humanities, 1977). Baneth published a few hundred invaluable emendations to Hirschfeld's *Editio princeps* (in which the book is entitled *Kitāb al-hujja wal-dalil fī nasr al-dīn al-dhalīl* [the book of proof and demonstration in the defense of the despised religion], Leipzig, 1887; reproduced photomechanically, together with critical articles by Goldziher, Horovitz, Efros, Nemoy, Vajda, and Baneth, Jerusalem, 1970) in the *Ignaz Goldziher Memorial Volume*, part II (Jerusalem, 1958). After Baneth's death in 1973, H. Ben-Shammai was charged with the final preparation of the book for publication. The Baneth-Ben Shammai edition is, as could be expected, definitive. A random scrutiny of a number of problematic locations in the text demonstrates conclusively the superiority of the present edition. This is hardly surprising: Hirschfeld's edition is chockfull of errors in copying the text, errors of judgment, and plain misprints. Regrettably, Baneth's edition is not preceded by an analytic introduction of any kind.

²Second Epistle, 314 A-C.

³ὄ γὰρ ἔστιν τὰ γραφέντα μὴ οὐκ ἐκπεσεῖν. διὰ ταῦτα οὐδὲν πώποτ' ἐγὼ περὶ τούτων γέγραφα, οὐδ' ἔστιν σύγγραμμα Πλάτωνος οὐδὲν οὐδ' ἔσται, τὰ δὲ νῦν λεγόμενα Σακράτους ἔστιν καλοῦ καὶ νέου γεγονότος.

⁴See second Epistle 314 A-C; cf. Seventh Epistle 341 C.

⁵About Halevi's views of writing in general, cf. II, 72 ff. Halevi calls our attention to the fact that this book is "sealed" and enigmatic at the very outset (I,1), where he quotes from Daniel 12:10, "and the wise shall understand," thereby also pointing at the immediately preceding verse, "for these things are closed up and sealed, without end." Indeed, there is no need to pile on proofs in order to demonstrate that Halevi and his "spokesman" are not identical, for Halevi in his introduction to the dialogue clearly says: *wa-kāna min jujaj al-havēr mā aqna'ani*, that is, "there were among the Haver's proofs some which persuaded me"; in other words, there were among the Haver's proofs those that did not persuade him and that are not in accord with Halevi's views. Clearly then, Halevi and the Jewish rabbi are not to be confused with each other. Cf. Leo Strauss, "The Law of Reason in the *Kuzari*," in *Persecution and the Art of Writing* (Henceforth: "The Law of Reason") (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1952), p. 101, note 17. Albeit these words of Halevi solve our problem for all practical purposes, I believe it is useful to broaden the discussion in order to clarify further Halevi's tendency as well as the perennial conflict of philosophy and religion.

⁶Cf., e.g., *Phaedrus* 275 D.

⁷Cf. Salo W. Baron, "Yehuda Halevi," *Jewish Social Studies* 3(1951), 259, note 33.

⁸Compare the opening words of the Haver, "I believe," which are identical to the opening words of the Christian. The Muslim begins his speech with the word "we." The Khazar king asked the Christian and the Muslim to tell him about their "knowledge" and their "action," whereas from the philosopher and the Jews he wishes to learn about their "belief." Cf. "The Law of Reason," p. 104, note 25. (And indeed *i'iqād*, belief, is a homonym. Cf. Maimonides, *The Guide of the Perplexed* I,50). Otherwise stated, the philosopher is asked about his belief and answers "there is not"; the Jew is asked about his belief and replies "I believe."

⁹Cf. Shlomo Pines, "On Leo Strauss," in Hebrew, *Molad* 7 [30], no. 37-38 [247-48] (1976), p. 457. Pines's contention cannot be lightly dismissed. As Max Beerbohm noted in his *Happy Hypocrite*, "his true person slowly adapted to the mask he had put on for purposes of duplicity." (I am quoting from Daniel Patrick Moynihan's citation of this in *A Dangerous Place* [Boston: Little,

Brown, 1978], p. 167) Indeed, persuasion, while not impossible, is difficult without commitment to the cause one is pursuing. But that is begging the question, which is, What is the cause? One may be just as truly committed to a "necessary opinion" as to a "true opinion." Be that as it may, one can imagine that a view presented as one's own — having been chosen as a lesser evil — becomes as attractive to oneself as it is meant to be perceived by the world at large. The question then would have to be restated as follows: Would Pines argue that one's own notion of the shortcomings of one's professed views or ideology becomes in time completely obliterated, and may no longer be found lurking, as it were, in the shady recesses of one's soul? Let us take Maimonides as a case in point. Pines does not take issue with the view that Maimonides had a double teaching. In fact, he considers this view of Maimonides a "glaring" truth, and indeed Pines contributed no less than anyone else to making this reading of Maimonides just about the rule among respectable scholars. Now Maimonides spent the major portion of his adult life serving as the chief rabbi of the Jewish community of Egypt, and writing, first, a comprehensive commentary on the Mishna and then a complete rewriting of the Oral Law, his *Mishne Torah*. Very few thinkers or philosophers devoted as much time or energy to the promulgation of their esoteric teachings. If in Pines's view Maimonides's true opinions were not overcome by his "necessary opinions," why would he have us believe that the opposite was or is the case with the other thinkers? Is it because they were lesser in stature? For surely Pines does not contend that Maimonides was exceptional in this respect. Since Pines recommends that we honor Strauss by treating him in a similar way, we may ask whether it is Pines's considered view that Strauss's thinking was overcome by what Strauss said explicitly — either about medieval philosophers or about contemporary ideologies, institutions, regimes, countries. If Pines would answer in the negative, then I think he should elaborate on his *prima facie* not unreasonable contention that the mental habit of putting on a mask becomes (second) nature; we would be well-served if Pines would point out which thinkers — he obviously has some in mind — let their adumbrated and inner teachings slip further and further back into total darkness and abnegation.

¹⁰See A.L. Motzkin, "Spinoza and Luzzatto: Philosophy and Religion," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* (1979), 43-51; cf. also A.L. Motzkin, "On the Interpretation of Maimonides," *Independent Journal of Philosophy* 2 (1978), 39-46. Cf. S. Pines, "Note sur la doctrine de la prophétie et la réhabilitation de la matière dans le *Kuzari*," *Mélanges de philosophie et de littérature juives* 1 (1957), 253.

¹¹See II,49. Cf. III,65, end ("four entered the orchard . . . the third etc.).

¹²Cf. IV,19: "fa-intajaw al-nawāmis wa-hiya siyāsāt ghayr lāzima lākin mustathna bihā illā in kānar darūra" (and they [the philosophers] established laws, these being however non-obligatory ways of behavior, to be applied only when necessary). And further "moreover they are not of the opinion that if they be robbers or murderers they would be punished on account of it." Cf. S.D. Luzzatto, "The Writing of the Mishna and Maimonides," [in Hebrew] in *Mehqere Hayahadut* (Warsaw: Hatsefira Press, 1913) Vol. 1, Pt. 2, Bk. 4. p. 168. See Motzkin, "On the Interpretation of Maimonides," pp. 39-46.

¹³This is a "true Socratic dialogue." Cf. S. Heller-Wilensky, "The Relationship of Faith and Reason according to Judah Halevi," [in Hebrew], in *The Philosophic Teaching of Rabbi Judah Halevi* (Jerusalem: Ministry of Education and Culture, 1978), p. 44. Heller-Wilensky notes further that "Halevi decries blurring the bounds of . . . religion and philosophy. . . ." Cf. Baron, "Yehuda Halevi," p. 257.

¹⁴On the other hand one should keep in mind that four-fifths of the dialogue, that is to say almost all of the *Kuzari*, takes place *after* the conversion of the Khazar king to Judaism, which took place some time before the second part of the book. In other words, the greatest part of the *Kuzari* is a dialogue between two Jews, one of whom is, to be sure, a perplexed Jew. Against this background it becomes clear why the philosophic discussion *tout court* is delayed until part V of the book: as much time as possible passes after the king's conversion.

¹⁵Cf. Pines, "Note sur la doctrine de la prophétie," p. 254.

¹⁶For another instance in the dialogue in which the Jewish rabbi is the questioner and the Khazar

king answers cf. I, 71 ff. The king is the first to mention “nature.” The Jew does not know what nature is. He knows of course only about “the heavens and the earth and all that is between them”: there is no “nature” in the Bible. The discovery of nature is the discovery of philosophy; with the birth of the concept of nature, the “way” of the cosmos, philosophy is born.

¹⁷And not as Even-Shmuel translates, *ummah she-ein 'immah masoret*, that is, a nation having no tradition. Cf. R. Dozy, *Supplément aux Dictionnaires Arabes* (Leiden and Paris: Brill and Maisonneuve, 1927) Vol. II, p. 711: al-mar'ah al-sā'ibah: une femme qui ne se garde pas elle-même et qui n'a personne pour la garder... sā'ibah: une chose qui est commune et publique, qui est en friche; rēlāché; trop libre. Cf. A. de Biberstein-Kazimirski, *Dictionnaire Arabe-Français* (Cairo, 1875), Vol. II, p. 643, def. 3: *Esclave affranchi — anta sā'ibah: tu es libre*. In other words, sā'ibah means a licentious woman or a liberated slave, or if you will, in modern parlance, a liberated woman.

¹⁸According to V, 14, the philosophers excelled in human wisdom: “na'am annahum faddalū bil-hikmah al-insāniyyah.” Halevi quotes Socrates twice (cf. IV, 13). It ought to be noted that even when Halevi points out in IV, 13 the profound mutual antagonism of religion and philosophy and their essential polarity, his critique of philosophy is limited — like Maimonides's critique — to metaphysics, and is predicated on the multiplicity of philosophic (metaphysical) points of view. He does not “blame” the philosophers: “fa-annahum yu'adhharūn” — it is possible to make an apology for them. It may not be accidental that he uses this word in proximity to the name of Socrates. Be that as it may, Halevi disregards the multiplicity of points of view in “human wisdom or the human science.” Compare I, 13 where it is said that there is not one proposition about which the philosophers concur with I, 62, where he contradicts this assertion. It is only the philosopher's first speech that the king finds convincing. He says (I, 2): “qāla lahu al-khazarī inna kalāmaka lamuqni' . . .” (said the Khazar [king to the philosopher]: your words [or: speech] are convincing). No such encomium is offered after the Christian's speech (“your speech is illogical”), the speech of the Moslem, nor even the Jew's presentation: his first speech is fiercely attacked.

¹⁹All this happens after the indoctrination of the king by the Jewish rabbi throughout the book. Says the king (V, 13): “arā li-hādihā al-kalām al-falsafī fadl tadhqiḡ wa-tahqiḡ 'alā sā'ir al-kalām” (I hold the view that this philosophic speech is more excellent in precision and accuracy than all other speeches). The Haver knows it full well: “wa-hādihā alladhī kuntu akhāfahu 'alayka min al-inkhidā” — this is exactly what I feared will be tempting to you! No religion, certainly not the Kalam nor even Karaism, can be tempting. Philosophy is the real fruit of the tree of knowledge, the only perilous temptation.

²⁰Cf. “The Law of Reason,” pp. 104-05.

²¹Cf. “The Philosophic Sources of the *Guide of the Perplexed*, Translator's Introduction,” translated with notes by Shlomo Pines (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963). See also S. Pines, “Spinoza's *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, Maimonides and Kant,” *Studies in Philosophy, Scripta Hierosolymitana* 20 (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1968), 3-54.

²²Halevi attacks the Kalam with unparalleled acrimony: The Kalam — “lā fā'id fī dhālika” — is totally useless. More than that; “lam yanfa' hu bal rubbama adarr bihi” — the art of the Kalam will not benefit him in any way, and may be of great harm. In “The Law of Reason,” especially pp. 99-100, Strauss says that “the explicit aim of the *Kuzari* is identical with the aim of the Kalam.” This “explicit aim” makes it possible for Strauss to refer to Halevi (p. 100) as a *mutakallim*. Strauss is not unaware of the *Kuzari*'s virulent attack on the Kalam. Strauss' point then must be understood as follows: a dialectic such as the one before us must be either philosophical or theological (belonging to the Kalam). Since “it is impossible to call Halevi a philosopher,” we have no choice but to call him a *mutakallim*. Cf. also Leo Strauss, “The Mutual Influence of Theology and Philosophy,” *Independent Journal of Philosophy* 3 (1979). Compare what Halevi has to say about philosophy and about the great advantages inherent in it (see the notes above), not only for “al-tahadhhuḡ fī al-kalām.” Cf. V, 16 and compare also with IV, 13 and V, 14. Furthermore, the first philosophers were of such exalted rank that one may say of them that “hā' ulā' i afrād lā matma' fī darajātihim.”

²³Petrus Abaelardus, *Dialogus inter philosophum, Iudaem et Christianum*, ed. Rudolph Thomas (Stuttgart-Bad Constatt: Friedrich Frommann Verlag – Gunther Holboog, 1970). A comparative study of Abaelard's *Dialogus* and the *Kuzari*, properly done, would surely prove fruitful. Unfortunately, the study of A. Grabois, "Un chapitre de tolérance intellectuelle dans la société occidentale au XII^e siècle: le *Dialogus* de Pierre Abélard et le 'Kuzari' d'Yehuda Halevi," in *Pierre Abélard, Pierre le Vénéral, Colloques Internationaux du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique* N° 546 (Paris: Éditions du C.N.R.S., 1975). pp. 641-54, falls far short of the mark. Grabois may be excused for lack of philosophical insight, for as he says (p. 653), "je suis historien," but not for shoddy scholarship, as when he makes the title of the work read "*kitab al-khogue v'al-dalil*," thereby revealing his lack of ability to handle the text; or when he asserts that the dialogue precedes the conversion of the Khazar (p. 644), whereas four-fifths of the dialogue takes place after the king's conversion; or when he states that Halevi's method of pitting against the king one interlocutor at a time who is never heard from again follows Plato's style (p. 644); or when he says that a doctrine of free will is fundamentally opposed to "the monotheistic conception" (p. 647). It is to his admitted "nonphilosophic" training that we must attribute his unsuccessful attempts to struggle with the text, as when he gives up trying to reflect upon the absence of a dialogue between the Jew and the Christian in Abaelard's *Dialogus* by leaning back on the hypothesis that the *Dialogus* is "incomplete" (p. 650). The thought that a confrontation between the philosopher and the religious (whether Christian or Jew) is more revealing than a confrontation between a Christian and a Jew, whatever the historical or social circumstances of Abaelard's time were, never seems to have crossed his mind. He apparently believes that Halevi's rabbi's position is less "juridique" than the one of Abaelard's Jew, but that strange notion is not substantiated, unless the characterization of Spanish Judaism as "literary and poetic" is to be taken as proof (p. 651). Abaelard's *Dialogus* is considered proof of "permanent" and "profound" contacts between Jews and Christians of "urban society," and of "intellectual circles" in Paris, where Jews and Christians (and presumably philosophers) discussed the principles of their faiths (p. 652).

All of the above purports to serve as materials for a theory of a liberal climate, of "intellectual tolerance," and of an "open society" in the twelfth century. That some twentieth-century scholars are quick to parrot slogans of the age is hardly proof that great minds of the twelfth century did the same. Greater profit might be gained from Rudolf Thomas's paper in the same volume, "Die Persönlichkeit Peter Abaelards in *Dialogus inter Philosophum, Iudaem et Christianum* und in den *Epistulae* des Petrus Venerabilis: Widerspruch oder Übereinstimmung," pp. 255-69, and especially p. 269, note 61 and the following citation: "desideravi, intellectu, quod credidi. . . . Ich schweige ja nicht in meinen Gedanken, selbst wenn ich mit dem Munde schweige. . . ."

²⁴See John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, VII, V, 646a. For example, in *Ioannis Saresberiensis Episcopi Carnotensis Policratici sive De Nugis Curialium et Vestigiis Philosophorum*, ed. Clemens C.I. Webb (London, 1909; rpt. Frankfurt A.M.: Minerva, 1965), Vol. II, p. 109.

²⁵"Philosophus divinus." See Thierry de Chartres, *De sex dierum operibus*, in J. Hauréau, *Notices et extraits de quelques manuscrits latins de la Bibliothèque nationale* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1890), Vol. I, p. 62, where Moses is also called the wisest of philosophers, *prudētissimus philosophorum Moyses*. See also Edouard Jeuneau, "Un représentant du platonisme au XII^e siècle: Maître Thierry de Chartres," *Bulletin de la Société Archéologique d'Eure-et-Loir, Mémoires*, 20 (1954), 5, where Thierry, no less than William of Conches or Abaelard, is quoted as attributing to Plato knowledge of the Trinity. Cf. also J.M. Parent, *La doctrine de la création dans l'école de Chartres*, Publications de l'institut d'études médiévales d'Ottawa, VII (Paris: J. Vrin, 1938), p. 80, where Parent quotes from *De sex dierum operibus*, in which Thierry identifies the holy spirit with Plato's world soul. One might perhaps also mention that the commentary *Librum hunc* found Thierry's doctrine equivocal and couched in "reprehensible language."

²⁶Cf. Ramon Lull, *Declaratio per modum dialogi edita contra aliquorum philosophorum et eorum sequacium opiniones erroneas et damnatas a venerabili patre et domino episcopo Parisiensis: seu liber contra errores Boethii et Sigerii*, in Otto Keicher, *Raymundus Lullus und seine Stellung zur*

arabischen Philosophie, Beiträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie und Theologie des Mittelalters, Vol. 7 (Münster i. W., 1909), heft 4-5.

²⁷The solitary (*al-mutawahhid*) is indeed dangerous, above all *because* he disengages himself from the general run of men: he commits heresy by dissenting from the dogma that is at the root of every nation, every religion, every society. The philosopher is always “the solitary,” even when he engages in the political life of his people. See IV, 18-19: every anachoretic man is considered to be a philosopher. Cf. III,1: solitary, certainly, but apparently not always. Without the company of young men, whom he loves more than anything else, and with whom he can trade in his ideas, the philosopher can not exist.