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THE PROBLEM OF THE  
EXISTENCE OF GOD  
IN MAIMONIDES,  
ALANUS AND AVERROES



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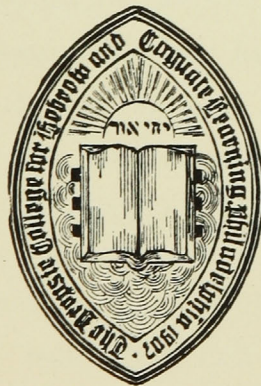
A STUDY IN THE RELIGIOUS PHILOSOPHY OF  
THE TWELFTH CENTURY

BY

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# THE PROBLEM OF THE EXISTENCE OF GOD IN MAIMONIDES, ALANUS AND AVERROES

## A STUDY IN THE RELIGIOUS PHILOSOPHY OF THE TWELFTH CENTURY

### INTRODUCTION

THE harmonization of Reason and Religion, or the demonstration of the essential agreement between the truths of Faith and the truths of Knowledge, constitutes the most important part of the philosophical speculation of the Middle Ages. The solution of this problem was the ultimate end of all rational reflection, for upon the definition of the relation of Authority to Reason all the other theses depended. The questions of the Existence of God, His Attributes, the Creation of the World, Immortality, Free-will and Predestination can only be discussed, after it has been established that consideration of these subjects lies within the power of the human intellect. In many cases the explanation of the problems of Religion and Philosophy ipso facto determines the explanation of other problems subordinate to it.

Mediaeval Philosophy or the problem of Reason and Religion was brought into existence by differences and contradictions in the results attained by Greek thinkers and the dogmas found in the Scriptures.<sup>1</sup> Prior to the introduction of the philosophy of the Ancients, the Jews, Christians, and Mohammedans had no philosophy of

<sup>1</sup> The Revealed Books of the Jews, Christians, and Mohammedans; i. e., the Old Testament, the New Testament, and the Koran.



their own—and they apparently felt no need for it. They had their religion and their Sacred Books, which they regarded not only as containing the tenets of their faith but as containing all the information necessary for man—a comprehensive encyclopedia of Life. Religion was the norm for all action and conduct, and by it they were governed and judged. Its absolute truth was never doubted, for it was the Word of the Almighty—the Law given by God to His people. This Law was, to their minds, consistent; its precepts were inspiring and elevating. As time passed, custom and precedent<sup>2</sup> were added to it, so that it became practically complete, and covered every phase of human activity. Very little independent thought, therefore, was required, since the Law contained *everything*, and its infallibility was at no time disputed.

With the advent of Greek learning, there was a perceptible change in this attitude, and the same change followed acquaintance with the works of Plato, Aristotle, or the Neo-Platonists. The intellectual powers, which had been dormant, or busy with the development and application of Dogma, now turned to these new fields.

The first example of such influence is the Jewish-Alexandrian School, the result of the contact of the Jewish Religion with Hellenic Culture. The philosophical system of this school was incorporated into Christianity during the formative period of its fundamental dogmas; but it was no longer philosophy—it was dogma. In the second half of the Patristic period when the theological disagreements and Greek philosophies made their appearance, rational investigation was again aroused. Orthodox Chris-

<sup>2</sup> For the Jews the *תורה שבעל פה*, the Oral Law, etc.; for the Christians, the Papal regulations and the Decrees of the Councils; for the Mohammedans, the *حدیث* *hadith*, a tradition, or narration, relating, or describing a saying or an action, etc. of Mohammed (Arabic-English Lexicon, E. W. Lane, London 1865; Book I, Part 2, p. 529, sub *حدیث*).



tianity sought to refute the contentions of the Heretics and firmly establish the accord between its beliefs and the conclusions of reason. In the Scholastic period the same issue is present: the accommodation of the philosophy of the Neo-Platonists and Aristotle to the ecclesiastical teachings. The identical problem faced the Jews and the Arabs, who, during this time, also attempted the harmonization of their religious doctrines with the current philosophy.

Mediaeval philosophy, then, owes its content to two sources. On the one hand, there was religion (Jewish, Christian, or Mohammedan); on the other, the philosophy of the Greeks. The former was their heritage, eternal and infallible; but the latter appealed to their reason. When they read Plato or Aristotle or the Commentators, they were able to follow the arguments, they admitted the syllogisms to be perfect and they understood the conclusions. This study afforded them great pleasure; and soon they mastered the works of the Greek Schools. But at the same time they became aware of the fact that, with the aid of their intellect only, they had succeeded, under the guidance of their Greek instructors, in proving the Existence of God, etc. Of what use then was Revelation, if one could attain to the truths of Religion without the aid of Revelation? Furthermore, there were often discrepancies between the results of Reason and the dogmas of Faith. Harmonization, syncretism was the solution proposed by the thinkers of the Middle Ages.

From this brief summary one might infer that Mediaeval civilization passed through three separate stages, the termination of each being well-marked, i.e., the Religion stage, the Greek-Philosophy stage, and, thirdly, the Harmonization stage. This, however, is not so. With the



exception of the Religion-period<sup>3</sup> of each of the religions mentioned, there was no temporal succession—it was rather coexistence. The development of religion, the assimilation of Greek thought, and the attempt to reconcile the newly-acquired philosophy with religious conceptions were at once parallel and interactionary. From the fourth to the fourteenth century, each was influenced and modified by the other. When the predominant philosophy was Neo-Platonic, theological doctrines were of a Neo-Platonic shade; later when it was customary to view the world through Aristotelian spectacles, religion received an Aristotelian coloring. Inversely, too, the same was true. Neo-Platonism was interpreted in the light of certain religious facts (Plato was often made a Christian) and Aristotle's rigid logic was at times slightly misunderstood in order to relate it to religious dogma. These manipulations, however, were not always possible; some contradictions could in no manner be removed, and it was necessary to define the orthodox position. Naturally, the theological opinion was sustained—and the great majority accepted it. The Mediaeval mind can only be comprehended when we have ascertained the sources of its knowledge.

It is an interesting and important fact that in the second half of the twelfth century, this problem of Religion and Philosophy was discussed by three prominent thinkers, who belonged to the three principal religions; namely, Maimonides, Alanus,<sup>4</sup> and Averroes. Jews, Christians,

<sup>3</sup> In Judaism, this period anteceded philosophy by at least a thousand years. In Christianity the genesis-period lasted about three hundred years. Mohammedan speculation first made its appearance about three centuries after Mohammed.

<sup>4</sup> The subject of this thesis was proposed by Doctor Henry Malter, who referred to Moritz Steinschneider, *Hebräische Uebersetzungen*, Berlin 1859, p. 276, where Steinschneider suggests that a critical comparison of the works of Maimonides, Abelard and Averroes would make a very instructive study. The present writer, however, after examining the philosophy of Abelard (*Petri Abaelardi Opera*, published by Victor Cousin, Paris 1859), found that Abelard devoted most of his attention to the consideration of the Problems of Realism and Nominalism, the Universal and the Particular,



and Mohammedans were confronted by the same question—all were anxious to establish the agreement between their religious tenets and the results of Reason, and to show that their Faith, even when probed by the Rationalism of the schools of speculative thought, would stand the test.

Maimonides sets forth his views in his "Guide of the Perplexed" (דלאלה אלחאירין, *Dalālāt al-Ḥā'irīn*); Alanus seeks to confirm the principal doctrines of the Christian Church in his treatise "On the Method of the Catholic Faith" (*De Arte seu de Articulis Fidei Catholicae*); Averroes desires to prove that the Koran, if properly understood, is in harmony with philosophy in his "Philosophy and Theology."

كتاب فصل المقال وتقرير ما بين الشريعة والحكمة من  
الاتصال  
كتاب الكشف عن مناهج الادلة في عقائد الملّة وتعريف ما  
وقع فيها بحسب التاويل من الشبه المزيفة والبدع المضلة

In the following pages, brief biographies of Maimonides, Alanus, and Averroes will be given, a résumé of their three systems will be presented, and a critical comparative study of their philosophies will be attempted with regard to sources, problems, and solutions.

and did not fully and properly take up the fundamental questions of religious philosophy. His treatise *Dialogus inter philosophum, Judaeum et Christianum*, the title of which promises a discussion of twelfth century thought, is both incomplete and unsatisfactory. It is impossible on the basis of this *Dialogus* to define Abelard's position in the solution of the problems of mediaeval philosophy. It seemed, therefore, more advisable to take as the representative of Christian thought in the twelfth century, Alanus, a disciple and follower of Abelard, who, though not so well known, took over and developed various theories of Abelard. See "Die Philosophie des Alanus de Insulis", by M. Baumgartner in *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie des Mittelalters*, edited by Bäumker and von Hertling, vol. II., part IV, Münster 1896, p. 6 ff.; *Alain de Lille*, by Albert Dupuis, Lille 1859, p. 3; Albert Stöckl, *Geschichte der Philosophie des Mittelalters*, Mainz 1864, vol. I, p. 411. Alanus takes over in its entirety a great part of the system of Abelard and in many instances gives a presentation more lucid than the one found in his source. It is because of this capacity for assimilation and incorporation that Alanus has been termed "the summary of twelfth century Christian speculation."



## BIOGRAPHY OF MAIMONIDES

Maimonides (Arabic—Abū ‘Imrān Mūsā ben Maimūn ibn ‘Abd Allāh; Hebrew—Moses ben Maimon<sup>5</sup> רמב"ם), philosopher, Talmudist, physician, and astronomer, was born in Cordova, Spain, March 30, 1135.<sup>6</sup> His father, descended from a long line of Talmudists, was a pupil of Ibn Megas, and a scholar of considerable ability.<sup>7</sup> From him Maimonides received his rabbinical education, and later studied under various Arabic teachers of his day. He mastered the entire field of Jewish literature, and his secular pursuits embraced metaphysics, logic, mathematics, medicine, physics, and astronomy—the whole range of the culture of his time. The life of Maimonides, like the lives of all great men, is enveloped in legends and fables,<sup>8</sup> and it is often difficult to separate fable from fact.

Maimonides was not permitted to continue his education in peace and tranquility. When he was about thirteen years old, his native city, Cordova, fell into the hands of the fanatical Almohades, whose motto "Islam or Death" forced many Jews to adopt Mohammedanism outwardly, and sent many others into exile. Maimonides' father chose the latter course, and after much wandering, settled in Fez, in Morocco, in 1160. What led Maimonides' family to establish themselves in Morocco, the home of the intolerant conquerors of Cordova, is not known. In Fez no Jew was allowed to profess his religion, and it seems that Maimon's family also had to appear as Mohammedans.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Either Maimon or Maimun; the poets Harizi and Immanuel rhyme this name with מן and מן. It seems that the Arabs pronounced it Maimun, while the Jews said Maimon. Cf. Abraham Geiger *Moses ben Maimon*, Breslau 1850, p. 38, note 1; H. Graetz, *Geschichte der Juden*, Leipzig, Band 6 (fourth edition), p. 265, note 1; M. Steinschneider, *Die Arabische Literatur der Juden*, Frankfurt a. M. 1902, 199 ff.

<sup>6</sup> It is worth mentioning that tradition has fondly preserved even the hour of his birth—1 o'clock in the afternoon.

<sup>7</sup> H. Graetz, *op. cit.*, vol. VI, p. 265-266.

<sup>8</sup> For some of these stories, see Gedaliah ben Joseph Ibn Yahya, שלשלח הקבלה.

<sup>9</sup> Carmoly, Geiger, Munk, Graetz and others hold that Maimon and his family



Naturally they were not happy, and their lives were insecure, so that in 1165 they determined to leave Fez and sail for Palestine. After a dangerous journey of one month, they arrived at Acre. Maimonides visited Jerusalem and Hebron; but finding Palestine poor materially and intellectually, he went to old Cairo (Fostât) where he and his brother David derived a livelihood from their business in jewels. David was the active partner, while Maimonides devoted himself to study. Soon after his arrival in Egypt, Maimonides' father died; later his brother perished in the Indian Ocean, and their fortune was lost with him.

Maimonides now gave up commerce, and began to practise medicine. At first his practice was not very extensive, but gradually his name and reputation spread, until he became private physician to Alfaḍel, the Vizir of Saladin.

Maimonides was now the greatest man in Jewry. In 1177 he was appointed (or recognized as) the official head of the Jews in Egypt, and his Responsa were accepted as authoritative. Despite these activities, professional and communal, he continued his rabbinical, philosophical, and scientific studies; and succeeded in putting forth the greatest work in Jewish philosophy, the "Moreh Nebukim", and an epoch-making religious code "The Mishneh Torah". Maimonides died in Fostât, December 13, 1204.

The works of Maimonides—Philosophy and Theology:<sup>10</sup>

(1) מורה נבוכים דלאלה אלחאירין *Dalālāt al-Hā'irīn*—Hebrew Title "Guide of the Perplexed."<sup>11</sup> This is his magnum opus, in which he develops his system in detail.<sup>12</sup>

publicly professed their belief in Mohammed. For the opposite view see M. Friedländer, *The Guide of the Perplexed*, London 1910, p. xviii. A list of references on this question is given by Yellin and Abrahams, *Maimonides*, Philadelphia, 1903, pp. 220-222, notes 5, 9, and 13.

<sup>10</sup> For more detailed information see M. Steinschneider, *Arab. Lit.*, p. 203 ff.

<sup>11</sup> An exhaustive list of the Moreh Nebukim Literature, (1) The Arabic Text, (2) Translation, (3) Commentaries, is given by M. Friedländer, *loc. cit.*, pp. xxvii-xxxviii.

<sup>12</sup> Arabic text in Hebrew characters, with French translation and explanatory



(2) תמאניה פצול, שמונה פרקים, *Shemonah Peraḳim*—the “Eight Chapters” (the introductory chapters to his commentary on the Mishnic treatise “Abot”)—contain philosophical and ethical material.<sup>13</sup>

(3) The introductory sections of the Code (הלכות יסודי) *Hilkōt Yesōdē ha-Torah* and הלכות דעות *Hilkōt De'ōt*) and the introduction to the eleventh chapter of the Talmudic Tractate “Sanhedrin” (חלק) treat, in an elementary and popular way, of various questions of philosophy.

(4) מקאלה פי צנאעה אלמנטק *Makālah fi-Ṣinā'at al-Manṭik*—a treatise on Logic. This has been translated into Hebrew, Latin, and German.

(5) פי אלסעארה *Makālah fi-l-Sa'ādah*—a treatise on felicity—Hebrew translation entitled פרקים בהצלחה *Peraḳim be-Haslahah*.<sup>14</sup>

(6) אגרת השמר *Iggeret ha-Shemad* “The Letter on Apostasy” or מאמר קדוש השם *Ma'amar Ḳiddūsh ha-Shem* “Treatise on the Sanctification of the Name (of God)”, an essay in which Maimonides discusses forced conversions.<sup>15</sup>

(7) פתח תקוה “Letter to the South” or פתח תקוה *Petaḥ Tiḳwah* “The Gate of Hope”, a letter to Rabbi Jacob al-Fayyūmī on the critical condition of the Jews in Yemen, deals with the persecution of Israel and with Messianic conceptions.

(8) מאמר תחיית המתים *Ma'amar Tehiyyat ha-Metim*

notes, was published by S. Munk in his monumental work, *Le Guide des Égarés traité de Théologie et de Philosophie par Moïse ben Maimon, publié pour la première fois dans l'original Arabe et accompagné d'une traduction française et de notes critiques, littéraires et explicatives*, Paris 1850–1866.

<sup>13</sup> Arabic text and German translation in M. Wolff *Musa Maimunis Acht Kapitel פצול תמאניה*, 2nd edition, Leyden 1903. Hebrew text and English translation in *The eight chapters of Maimonides on Ethics*, J. I. Gorfinkle, New York 1912 (Columbia University Oriental Studies, vol. 7).

<sup>14</sup> Or פרקי ההצלחה Graetz, *op. cit.*, vol. VI, note 11, page 398; M. Steinschneider, *Arab. Lit.*, p. 209.

<sup>15</sup> אגרת השמר *Iggeret ha-Shemad* was first edited by Abraham Geiger, Breslau 1850; Edelmann, *Chemdah Genuza*, p. 6. The authenticity of this treatise has been disputed. Cf. D. S. Margoliouth, “The Legend of the Apostasy of Maimonides”, *Jewish Quarterly Review*, vol. XIII (1901), pp. 539–541.



“Treatise on the Resurrection of the Dead”, written in answer to opposition to his views, on this subject, at the request of his pupil, Joseph Ibn ‘Aḳnin.<sup>16</sup>

(9) *מקאלה פי אלחודיד* *Makālah fi-'l-Tauḥid*—an essay on the Unity of God. Hebrew title: מאמר היחוד *Ma'amar ha-Yiḥūd*.

Maimonides also wrote masterful works on Halakah, Astronomy, and Medicine; the enumeration and consideration of these, however, lies beyond the scope of this essay.

Maimonides' “Guide of the Perplexed” divided the Jews into two hostile camps: the Maimunists and the anti-Maimunists.<sup>17</sup> The former comprised those who agreed with his harmonization of Aristotle and the Bible; the latter included those who considered his views heretical. The strife lasted a long time but finally the Maimunists carried the day, and Moses ben Maimon stands out as the “most comprehensive mind of Mediaeval Jewry.” Posterity has affirmed the closing words of Yedayah Bédersi's *בחנית עולם* “Examination of the World”. “The conclusion of the whole matter is, go either to the right, my heart, or go to the left, but believe all that Rabbi Moses ben Maimon (Maimonides) has believed, the last of the Geonim by time, but the first in rank.”<sup>18</sup>

#### BIOGRAPHY OF ALANUS

Alanus ab Insulis<sup>19</sup>, philosopher, theologian, controversialist, and poet, was born in Lille, northeastern France (then Flanders) about 1128.<sup>20</sup> We have almost no details of his early life, and our information with regard to his later activities is likewise scanty. It seems that

<sup>16</sup> Cf. S. Munk, *Notice sur Joseph ben Jehouda*, 1842, p. 23.

<sup>17</sup> Graetz, *op. cit.*, vol. VII, p. 28 ff.

<sup>18</sup> Quoted by S. Schechter, *Studies in Judaism* (First Series), Philadelphia 1896, p. 97.

<sup>19</sup> Also known as Alanus De Insulis, Alanus of Lille, Alanus of Ryssel, Alanus of Montpellier.

<sup>20</sup> This date of his birth is given by Bernard Hauréau, “Memoire sur la Vie et



he received his education in Paris,<sup>21</sup> and later taught there.<sup>22</sup> Alanus must have been a very successful teacher if we are to judge from the fame which he won during his life-time.<sup>23</sup> Chroniclers of the following centuries praise Alanus in the highest terms, and give him various honorary titles: Doctor Universalis, Doctor ille famosus, Magnus, etc.<sup>24</sup> Alanus did not remain in Paris; about 1170 he entered the monastery at Cîteaux. The reason for this removal is given in a very interesting legend. "Alanus, after having mastered the seven liberal arts, determined to reveal all the mysteries of the Trinity in a public lecture. The day before the lecture, Alanus, as he was walking along the bank of a river, meditating upon his subject, chanced upon a child, who had made a hole in the ground and was carrying water from the river to this hole in a little spoon. Alanus, very much surprised, asked the child what he was doing. 'I intend to carry all the water from the river into this hole,' he answered. 'But that is impossible,' Alanus said. 'Not more impossible', the child replied, 'than the task *you* have set for yourself.' The lecture was not delivered. Alanus left Paris and went to the monastery of Cîteaux, where he started as a shepherd.

quelques Oeuvres d'Alain de Lille," in *Mémoires de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres*, XXXII (1886), Part I, page 4 (M. Baumgartner, in "Alanus de Insulis", vol. II, part 4, of the *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie des Mittelalters*, Münster 1896, page 3, note 5, strangely gives this essay of Hauréau's a German title). Maurice de Wulf, *Histoire de la phil. scol. dans les Pays-Bas et la principauté de Liège jusqu'à la révolution française*, Louvain et Paris 1895, page 42, places Alanus' birth "a few years before 1128."

<sup>21</sup> So Hauréau, *op. cit.*, p. 2. Albert Stöckl, *Geschichte der Philosophie des Mittelalters*, Mainz 1864, part I, p. 411, states that Alanus studied in Clairvaux.

<sup>22</sup> Hauréau, *op. cit.*, p. 4, points out that it is no objection that John of Salisbury (died 1180) does not mention Alanus among the professors at Paris, as John left in 1148 when Alanus was only twenty years old. See also De Wulf, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

<sup>23</sup> Albéric of Trois-Fontaines says: "Apud Cistercium mortuus est hoc anno (that is, 1202: Hauréau misprints 1302) magister Alanus de Insulis, doctor famosissimus et scriptor ille Anticlaudianus, qui in theologica fecit quandam Artem prædicandi et contra Albigenses, Valdenses, Judæos et Sarracenos libellum edidit succinctum ad Guillelmum Montispeulani dominum". This was probably written some years after Alanus' death. See Hauréau, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

<sup>24</sup> See M. Baumgartner, *op. cit.*, page 1, notes 2, 4 and 5; page 2, notes 1, 2 and 3.



He was soon promoted to the rank of monk."<sup>25</sup> This legend contains the historical fact that Alanus lived for some time at a monastery.

In 1179 Alanus took part in the third Lateran Council which resulted in the condemnation of the Albigensians and the Valdensians. This fact is confirmed by authentic documents, and his works testify to his efforts in this field.<sup>26</sup> Alanus evidently assisted at other discussions of doctrine, since he had become an authority on Catholic Christianity and an able defender of its tenets. Between 1170 and 1202 Alanus seems to have spent considerable time without the monastery—we know that after the Lateran Council he lived and taught at Montpellier. He tried to retain both his connection with the abbey and his relations with the outside world. He died at Cîteaux in 1203.<sup>27</sup>

The most important works of Alanus in Philosophy and theology are the following:

(1) *De Arte seu Articulis Catholicae Fidei*—"On the method of the Catholic Faith." A systematic, geometric proof, in five books: Book I: The one cause of all things, i.e., the One-and-the-same Three-God. Bk. II: The Creation of the world, angels and man; the Freedom of the Will. Bk. III: Concerning the Son of God incarnated

<sup>25</sup> A literal translation from the Latin of this legend is given by Hauréau, *op. cit.*, pp. 2-3.

<sup>26</sup> This story of Alanus and the third Lateran Council is also contained in a legend "The Abbé of Alanus's monastery (Alanus, whose former fame was unknown, held the lowest rank in the abbey), having received the Pope's order to assemble for the Council, was preparing to go. Alanus, who had recovered his reason (which he had lost the day before his proposed lecture on the mysteries of the Trinity), begged to be permitted to accompany him. He followed the Abbé and entered by hiding under the Abbé's cloak. At the close of the debates, which were not very well argued by the orthodox, Alanus asked to be allowed a few words. The Pope gave him permission. Alanus rose to his feet, and in a fiery discourse refuted all the heretics. The Pope upon hearing this, exclaimed: 'Either you are the Devil or you are Alanus.' 'I am Alanus,' he admitted. The Abbé resigned and Alanus was presented with gifts by the Pope. He refused them and requested instead two clerks to copy his compositions. He wrote many books and died in the abbey."

<sup>27</sup> Hauréau, *op. cit.*, p. 6-7. So M. Baumgartner, *op. cit.*, p. 1, note 1; F. Ueberweg, *History of Philosophy*, vol. I, (Eng. Trans. G. S. Morris, N. Y. 1898), p. 401; Hauréau, *op. cit.*, p. 9; and Clemens Bäumker, "Die Christliche Philosophie des Mit-



for the redemption of man. Bk. IV: The Sacraments of the Church. Bk. V: the Resurrection of the dead. Contained in Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, Paris, 1855, vol. 210, col. 593–617.

(2) *De Fide Catholica contra Haereticos libri IV* "On the Catholic Faith against the Heretics." A defence of orthodox Christianity—and a refutation of all heresy. Book I: Against the Heretics; II: Against the Valdensians; III: Against the Jews; IV: Against the Pagans. Migne, col. 305–429.

(3) *Anticlaudianus sive de Officio Viri Boni et Perfecti: Libri IX*. "The Anticlaudian or On the Duty of a Good and Perfect Man," in nine Books. Migne, col. 482–579.

(4) *Regulae Theologicae*, "Theological Propositions." One hundred and twenty-five principles or fundamentals of Christian Theology, briefly discussed. Migne, col. 617–687.

(5) *De Planctu Naturae*, "The Complaint of Nature" A philosophical satire on the faults of his day. Migne, col. 429–482. English translation by Douglas M. Moffat, Yale Studies in English, No. 36, New York 1908, "The Complaint of Nature."

(6) *Liber in Distinctionibus Dictionum Theologicalium*, "A Book of Definitions of Theological Dicta"—an exegetical work, Migne, col. 687–1012.

Alanus also wrote many sermons<sup>28</sup>, a commentary on the Song of Songs,<sup>29</sup> and several books on Christian dogma. His style in all his works is highly individual, being influenced by his poetic talent and his dialectic ability.

The attainments of a long philosophical development converge in Alanus. He appeared at a period of transition,

telalters" in *Allgemeine Geschichte der Philosophie*, (*Die Kultur der Gegenwart*, second edition, Leipzig and Berlin 1913, Part I, Section 5), p. 377. De Wulf, *op. cit.*, p. 41, Stöckl, *op. cit.*, p. 411, give 1202 as the date of Alanus' death.

<sup>28</sup> See Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, vol. 210, col. 197 ff.

<sup>29</sup> Migne, col. 51 ff.



just before the Christian world was illuminated by the introduction of the complete works of Aristotle. He already knows several of the works by which the thirteenth century was dominated.<sup>30</sup> Hundreds of years prior to Descartes' "Rationes dei existentiam et animae a corpore distinctionem probantes, more geometrico dispositae," Alanus makes use of the geometric method.<sup>31</sup>

Though his system is not complete, and there are no new problems or original solutions, though he is altogether a borrower who relied upon his predecessors' ideas, yet his philosophy, through its complete mastery of speculative conceptions and literary form, is the best review and collection of the Christian thought of the twelfth century. Alanus was at once the last representative of the old school of philosophy based on the patristic doctrines of the Church and the herald of the new philosophy of the following century.

#### BIOGRAPHY OF AVERROES

Averroes<sup>32</sup> (Arabic—Abu'l-Walîd Muhammad ibn Aḥmad ibn Rushd), philosopher, theologian, jurist, and physician, was born at Cordova in 1126. He was descended from a family of eminent jurists; his father was Kâḍî (jurist and judge) in Cordova.<sup>33</sup> Averroes was a very diligent student and soon became well versed in the science of his time. He mastered theology, jurisprudence, medicine, mathematics and philosophy, under

<sup>30</sup> Through the medium of Boethius (470-525), Alanus became acquainted with certain elements of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*. Alanus was the only Christian writer of his century who mentioned Plato's *Phaedo* (*Contra Haereticos*, Bk. I, chap. 30, 330 A).

<sup>31</sup> Cf. C. Bäumker in *Philosophisches Jahrbuch der Görres-Gesellschaft*, vol. VI (1893), "Handschriftliches zu den Werken des Alanus," p. 163, and François J. Picavet, *Essais sur L'Histoire générale et comparée des Théologies et des philosophies médiévales*, Paris 1913, p. 86.

<sup>32</sup> This name is a corruption of Ibn Rushd. Ibn became in Spanish pronunciation Aben or Aven, and Rushd was somehow turned into -roes. See Ernest Renan, *Averroés et L'Averroïsme*, Paris (sixth edition), p. 7, note 1.

<sup>33</sup> S. Munk, *Mélanges de la philosophie Juive et Arabe*, Paris 1857, p. 419.



the instruction of the best Arabic teachers. He also came in contact with the learned and famous men of his century, who were attached to the Court of 'Abd-el-Mu'min. It was through the friendship of one of these philosophers, Ibn Ṭufail, that he was presented to Caliph Abu Ya'qub Yûsuf (the successor of 'Abd-el-Mu'min) in 1163. It is reported that after the introduction, the Caliph asked Averroes whether the philosophers thought the heavens were eternal or created. Averroes was somewhat surprised at this question and attempted an apology to the effect that he had not given sufficient consideration to the problems of philosophy. The Caliph, who was quite familiar with the subject, then began a discussion of this problem, until Averroes, who had recovered from his surprise, also stated his opinions, and explained in detail the various aspects of the difficulty. The Caliph was pleased, and Averroes became a favorite at the Court. At the suggestion of Ibn Ṭufail and the Caliph, Averroes undertook his work on Aristotle, which won him the title of "Commentator."

This work of explaining, analyzing and amplifying the books of Aristotle, Averroes continued for many years, and his productions in this field are extensive. In 1169 he was appointed *Ḳâḍi* in Seville; in 1171 he returned to Cordova and it was at this period that he wrote his great Commentaries.<sup>34</sup> In 1182 we find him again at Morocco, where he was made physician-in-ordinary to the Caliph; later he was appointed Grand-*Ḳâḍi* of Cordova. Under the Caliph Ya'qûb-Almanşûr (the son of Abu Ya'qûb) who ascended the throne in 1184, Averroes continued to enjoy privileges and honors. Despite his high position at court, Averroes gradually began to be suspected of heresy or disbelief. The causes which led to this suspicion

<sup>34</sup> E. Renan, *op. cit.*, page 18.



have given rise to many conjectures.<sup>35</sup> The true reason was, no doubt, Averroes' philosophy. Although he outwardly<sup>36</sup> conformed to all the rites of the Mohammedan religion, his philosophical views were entirely in disagreement with the faith of Islam. This feeling against Averroes grew in strength, until he was finally exiled to Elisana (Lucena) near Cordova by Almanşûr in 1195/6.<sup>37</sup> At this time, edicts were enacted forbidding the "dangerous" sciences, and ordering all books pertaining to them to be burned. Shortly afterward, however, there was a return to philosophy, and Averroes was recalled to Morocco. Averroes did not live long after his return to favor. He died in 1198.<sup>38</sup>

The works of Averroes in Philosophy are:

(1) *Tahāfut 'l-Tahāfut*—Destruction of the Destruction. a refutation of Al-Gazālī's "Destruction of the Philosophers."

(2) *De Substantia Orbis* or *De compositione corporis cælestis*.

<sup>35</sup> Some Arabic sources attribute Averroes' loss of favor to his having failed to give the Caliph his honorary titles, when he wrote in his "History of Animals", "I saw a quadruped of this species (the giraffe) in the house of the Berbers". Averroes omitted the various royal epithets, and was very discourteous in referring to the Caliph as merely the "king of the Berbers" ('Abd-el-Wāhid and Ibn-Abi-'Usaibi'a). Another account relates that Averroes denied the story of a tribe of 'Ad (see Sura XXVI, 123-139 et al., cf. George Sale's translation, London and New York, p. 123, note c, and the *Preliminary Discourse*, p. 4 ff) believed to have been annihilated by an earthquake; thus, of course, he was a disbeliever (El-Ansari). 'Abd-el-Wāhid also tells that the enemies of Averroes procured a manuscript in which the following words of a certain ancient author were quoted: "The planet Venus is a Deity." This was taken from its context and shown to Almansur. Averroes was accused of Polytheism. Munk, *op. cit.*, page 424 ff; Renan, *op. cit.*, p. 20-22.

<sup>36</sup> Munk seems to doubt the sincerity of Averroes' religious sentiments (*Mélanges*, p. 424, 455). Max Horten, *Texte zu den Streite Zwischen Glauben und Wissen im Islam, Die Lehre vom Propheten und der Offenbarung bei den Islamischen Philosophen Farabi, Avicenna, und Averroes* (on the title page misprinted Averraes), Bonn 1913, p. 25, says: "It is not at all questionable that Averroes considered himself a believing Muslim". The reason for his disgrace is quite clear—it was the fanaticism of the Almohades. See Munk, *Mélanges*, p. 426; Duncan B. Macdonald, *The Development of Muslim Theology, Jurisprudence and Constitutional Theory*, New York 1903, p. 255-256.

<sup>37</sup> The fable confirmed by Leon the African that Averroes took refuge with his friend and disciple Maimonides has no foundation in fact. Maimonides did not know Averroes. It was in 1190 that Maimonides (then in Egypt) first became acquainted with the works of Averroes. See Renan, *op. cit.*, p. 20, and note 1, Munk, *op. cit.*, p. 425, and note (1); Steinschneider, *Hebräische Uebersetzungen*, 49, note 35.

<sup>38</sup> December 10, 1198.



(3) Two treatises on the Union of the Separate Intellect with Man.

(4) A treatise on the Material Intellect or on the Possibility of Union (extant in Hebrew).

(5) An Abstract of Logic.

(6) Prolegomena to Philosophy.

(7) Commentary on the Republic of Plato.

(8) Commentaries on Alfārābī.

(9) A Middle Commentary on the Metaphysics of Nicolas of Damascus.

(10) A treatise: Does God know the particulars?

(11) A treatise: On the Intellect and the Intelligible.

(12) A commentary on the book of Alexander of Aphrodisias on the Intellect.

(13) Questions on "De Anima."

(14) Questions on "De Caelo et Mundo."

(15) Commentaries (of various natures) on the Physics, the Posterior Analytics, the *De Caelo et Mundo*, the Rhetoric, the Poetics, the Metaphysics, the Nicomachean Ethics, and other works.<sup>39</sup>

#### Theology:

(1) A critique of the various opinions on the accord between philosophy and theology—Arabic text published by Marcus Joseph Müller. Also in Hebrew.

(2) Methods of Demonstration for the religious dogmas. Arabic text published by M. J. Müller. Also in Hebrew.

(3) An appendix to (1), also published by M. J. Müller.

Besides other works on Philosophy and Theology, Averroes made important contributions to Jurisprudence, Astronomy, Grammar, and Medicine.<sup>40</sup>

The influence of Averroes upon his co-religionists was very slight, but his views made a profound impression upon Jewish and Christian thought of the thirteenth and

<sup>39</sup> See Renan, *op. cit.*, p. 61.

<sup>40</sup> A complete list of Averroes' works is given by Renan, *op. cit.*, pp. 61, 65-79



fourteenth centuries. Practically all the works of Averroes that have come down to us are in Hebrew or in Latin translations; the Arabic original is comparatively rare.

Averroes nowhere pretends to have founded a system of philosophy; he merely wanted to be the Commentator of Aristotle, whom he revered. Though we cannot speak of a Mohammedan philosophy in the proper sense of the term, the Arabs not only transmitted but also developed the Greek systems of philosophy to a considerable extent. To this work Averroes, "the greatest Arabic Peripatetic," made the most important contributions.

#### THE PROOF OF MAIMONIDES FOR THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

The proofs of Maimonides for the Existence of God are based altogether on Aristotle.<sup>41</sup> These proofs presuppose a knowledge of the various works of Aristotle, especially the *Metaphysics*. Maimonides considers it superfluous to enter into an explanation of the various principles, as he did not write his books for "mere tyros",<sup>42</sup> but for those already advanced in their studies, and perplexed by apparent contradictions between the tenets of Science and those of Belief. In the preface to Part II of the *Moreh*, he summarizes the groundwork of Aristotelian thought in twenty-six propositions. From these propositions he formulates his proofs for the Existence of God. "Twenty-five of the propositions which are employed in the proof for the existence of God, or in the arguments demonstrating

<sup>41</sup> Isaac Husik, *A History of Mediaeval Jewish Philosophy*, New York 1916, p. 253. The thirteenth chapter of this book (pp. 236-311) gives an excellent exposition of Maimonides' philosophical system.

<sup>42</sup> *Moreh*, Introduction, Munk, *Guide*, I, p. 6-7

Arab. ולים אלגורין בהדה אלמקאלה תפהים נמלתהא ללגמהור ולא ללמבתדיין באלנטר.

Heb. ואין הכונה במאמר הזה להבינם כולם להמון ולא למתחילים בעיין.

"It is not here intended to explain all these expressions to the unlettered or to mere tyros." For all citations from the *Moreh* given in English we have made use of the translation of M. Friedländer, *The Guide of the Perplexed*, London and New York 1910.



that God is neither corporeal nor a force connected with a material being, or that He is One, have been fully established and their correctness is beyond doubt. Aristotle and the Peripatetics who followed him have proved each of these propositions. There is, however, one proposition which we do not accept, namely, the proposition which affirms the Eternity of the Universe, but we will admit it for the present, because by doing so, we shall be enabled clearly to demonstrate our own theory" (*Moreh*, II, Introduction).<sup>43</sup>

The following is a list of the twenty-six propositions of the Aristotelians:<sup>44</sup>

1. The existence of an infinite magnitude is impossible.<sup>45</sup>
2. The simultaneous existence of an infinite number of bodies possessing magnitude is impossible.
3. An infinite series of causes and effects cannot exist even if they are not magnitudes, e.g. intellects.
4. Change is of four kinds (1) in substance: Genesis and destruction. (*γένεσις και φθορά*), (2) In Quantity,

<sup>43</sup> Munk, *Guide*, II, p. 3.

אלמקדמאת אלמחתאג אליהא פי אחבאת וגוד אלאלאה תעאלי ופי אלברהאן עלי כונה לא נסמא ולא קוה פי נסם ואנה גל אסמה ואחד כמס ועשרין מקדמה כלהא מברנהה לא שך פי שי מנהא קד אחי ארסטו ומ, בעדה מן אלמשאין עלי ברהאן כל ואחדה מנהא ומקדמה ואחדה נסלמהא להם תסלימא לאן בדלך תתברהן מטאלבנא כמה סאבין ותלך אלמקדמה הי קדם אלעאלם.

ההקדמות שצריך אליהן בקיום מציאות האלוה יתעלה, ובמופתים על היותו לא נוף ולא כח בנוף, ושהוא יתעלה שמו אחד, חמש ועשרים הקדמות, כולם בא עליהם המופת אין ספק בדבר מהם, כבר עשה אריסטו ומי שאחריו מן המשאיים מופת על כל אחת מהם, והקדמה אחת נודה להם בה, כי בזה יתבארו מבוקשנו במופת כמו שאבאר, וההקדמה ההיא היא קדמות העולם.

<sup>44</sup> Complete references to the various works of Aristotle in which they occur are given in Munk's excellent edition, *Le Guide des Égarés*, II, pp. 3-28.

<sup>45</sup> Maimonides' conception of the Infinite is taken from Aristotle; if we wish to understand Maimonides' proofs for the Existence of God, we must first explain Aristotle's Infinite. In chapter 2 of Book II (*α ἔλαττον*) of the *Metaphysics*, Aristotle postulated that infinite regress (*τὸ βαδίζειν εἰς ἄπειρον*) is impossible; there must be a unitary and superior uncaused cause, from which everything else is derived and to which everything else is attached. From this it would follow that the infinite cannot exist. This is not to be taken so unqualifiedly, for the twenty-sixth proposition of Aristotle states that time and motion are eternal. This is an infinite and yet it is possible. Aristotle's first proposition means that the *actual* infinite cannot exist—for example, there cannot exist actually a line infinite at both ends, or a line which is



Quantitative change (αύξησης και φθίσις), (3) In Quality, Qualitative change (ἀλλοίωσις). In place, Motion of translation (φορά).

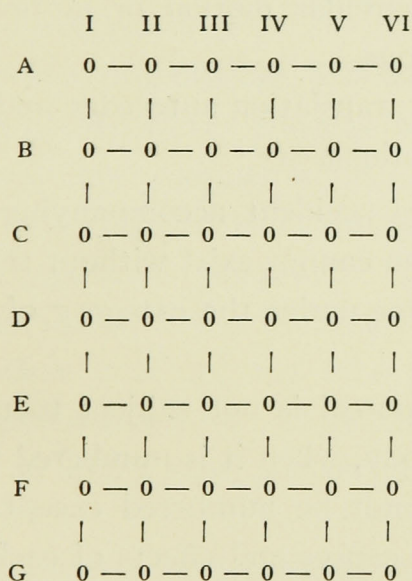
5. Every motion is change and the passing of the potential to the actual.

6. Motions are either essential, or accidental, or forcible or partial.

7. Everything subject to change is divisible.

8. Everything which is moved per accidens is neces-

infinitely divisible cannot be actually divided infinitely. But an infinite can exist potentially—i. e. only a part being realized at a time, and some part being realized at every time. The species, which Aristotle posits as eternal, are of this nature; and there are other illustrations. Aristotle's idea of the infinite can best be summarized by a diagram.



Each of the horizontal chains (A, B, C, etc) are series of motions, existing simultaneously. Take any motion "VI E" for example. "VI E" is moved by "VE," "VE" in turn by "IV E" etc. As this is a series existing actually, that is, simultaneously, all moving and being moved in the same moment, we must come to an ultimate unmoved cause, "I E." Whatever motion we start with, we finally stop at "I". "I" then is the Prime Mover. This only applies to coexistent motions.

Each of the vertical chains "I" "II" "III" etc. are series of causes and effects, where the cause is prior to the effect. The causes and effects are not coexistent; it is a potential infinite, which, according to Aristotle, is possible. Take any link "IV F." This is caused by "IV E" which is caused by "IV D" etc. This is a process in time, and is infinite. The same is true of each of the vertical series. They are coeternal with the Prime Mover "I", yet dependent upon it for their existence, since in the horizontal series, each link ultimately leads to "I". Thus the horizontals, 'A,' 'B,' 'C,' are finite with the Uncaused Cause as the starting point; the vertical series are infinite, coeternal with the uncaused cause, and parallel to it.



sarily at rest—therefore there can be no perpetual accidental motion.

9. Every body which moves another is itself moved at the moment it causes motion.

10. "Being in" a body means being in it as an accident or as constituting the essence of the body; in both cases it is a power in a body.

11. Certain things dependent upon body are accidentally divided with the division of the body; e.g. color. Soul and intellect are indivisible.

12. Every power which occupies all parts of a body is finite.

13. Only the circular motion or motion of translation can be continuous.

14. Motion of translation antecedes and is fundamental to the other motions.

15. Time is an accident accompanying motion and inherent in it. One cannot exist without the other. Whatever does not come under the category of motion is without time.

16. The incorporeal is not subject to number unless it is a force in a body, when it is numbered with the matter. Intelligences cannot be numbered except from the point of view of being causes and effects of each other.

17. Everything which is moved has necessarily a mover—either extrinsic or intrinsic.

18. When a thing passes from potentiality to actuality, the cause of this motion is another extrinsic thing.

19. Every Existent which has a cause is a "possible" existent.

20. Every necessary Existent receives its Existence from no cause.

21. No composite is a necessary existent.



22. Every body is necessarily a composite of Matter and Form—and has accidents.

23. That which has a certain Possibility in its essence may at a certain moment not exist actually.

24. That which is something potentially, necessarily has matter, for possibility is always in matter.

25. The principles of a composite individual substance are matter and form. There must necessarily be an agent or mover, which moves the substratum to receive the form; this is the proximate mover. The starting point for the investigation of motion is the study of the Mover and the Moved. It is the important statement of Aristotle "Matter cannot move itself"<sup>46</sup> that leads to consideration of the existence of the First Mover.<sup>47</sup>

These twenty-five propositions, Maimonides continues, are all true, and proved in the *Physics* and *Metaphysics*<sup>48</sup> by Aristotle and his commentators. Some are very simple, almost self-evident, while others are based on difficult and complicated premises. But they are all developed in the works of the Philosophers, and "I have already stated that it is not my intention to copy the books of the philosophers."<sup>49</sup> Only those propositions will be referred to which have a direct bearing upon our present problem.

To these twenty-five propositions Maimonides fully assents. Aristotle has proved them, and his proofs are valid. The Twenty-sixth, however, Maimonides cannot grant, despite the fact that Aristotle considers it more

<sup>46</sup> *Metaphysics*, λ, XII, 6, 1071b 29–30—*οὐ γὰρ ἡ γε ὕλη κινήσει αὐτή ἑαυτήν.*

<sup>47</sup> *τὸ πρῶτον κινεῖν.*

<sup>48</sup> *Physics* = Arabic = כתאב אלסמאע ἀκροάεις Heb. ספר השמע; *Metaphysics* = Arabic = כתאב מא בעד אלטביעה Heb. ספר מה שאחד הטבע. See *Guide*, I. p. 380, note 2.

<sup>49</sup> Munk, part II, p. 23:

Arab. וקד אעלמתך אן ליס גרץ הדה אלמקאלה נקל כתב אלפלסאפה פיהא.  
Heb. וכבר הודעתך שאין כונת המאמר הזה להעתיק ספר הפילוסופים בו.



deserving of belief than any of the others. The proposition is:

26. Time and motion are actual and eternal. According to this, Aristotle is forced to assume the existence of an actual constantly moving body, i.e. the heavens, which are not subject to genesis and destruction, since this motion is eternal. The thing that moves is finite, and the path is finite, but the repetition is infinite, which can only be circular motion (Prop. 13). This is, of course, the accidental infinite, that Aristotle here assumes (the existence of an infinite number of things which follow one after the other). This proposition Aristotle seems to regard as true, but I believe that he did not consider his proofs absolute. His commentators consider it as fully established. The Mutakallimun, <sup>50</sup> on the other hand, deny the accidental infinite altogether. My position is that Aristotle's view is neither established, nor impossible; it is possible. We will grant him this principle tentatively; we shall proceed with our proof and later return and give our reasons for rejecting this proposition.

Maimonides now turns to the proofs for the Existence of God. The chief proof is the one based on the Aristotelian principles of motion.

We see motion in the world, the four different kinds (Prop. 4). Matter, <sup>51</sup> which cannot move itself (Prop. 25), is being moved; and therefore has an agent. This motion cannot go on ad infinitum <sup>52</sup> (Prop. 3); it can only be continued until we come to the outer sphere, the first of the several kinds of motion (Prop. 14). The sphere must also have a mover (Prop. 17), either outside or inside. There are four alternatives: (1) If outside, the mover is a body like the sphere; (2) or it is an incorporeal thing,

<sup>50</sup> Arab. מתכלמון Heb. מדברים.

<sup>51</sup> ἡ ὑλη = materia = Arab. מאדה = Heb. חומר

<sup>52</sup> Ad infinitum = Arab. לא נהאיהּ Heb. אל לא תכלית



e.g., an Intelligence. (3) If inside, it is an internal corporeal power divisible with the sphere (Prop. 10, 11), or (4) an internal indivisible power (Prop. 10, 11).

The first alternative is untenable, for if the mover is a body like the sphere, it must itself be in motion (Prop. 9) and must have another to set it in motion; and the other, if a body must be moved by still another, and so on ad infinitum. This is impossible (Prop. 2).

The third is impossible. The sphere is corporeal and therefore finite (Prop. 1) and its power must be finite (Prop. 12), since it is distributed throughout the sphere (Prop. 11). Thus it cannot cause infinite motion (Prop. 26).

The fourth is also impossible since this power could not cause infinite motion by itself; for a soul that moves its body is itself moved per accidens (Prop. 6), and whatever moves accidentally must come to rest (Prop. 8); consequently the thing moved by it will stop.

Thus, only one alternative remains: (2) an incorporeal thing—a Separate-Intelligence, not a composite. It is not moved per se nor per accidens, and is therefore indivisible and unchangeable (Prop. 7,5). This is God. There cannot be two Gods—because absolutely incorporeal existences are not subject to number (Prop. 16) except in so far as one is cause and the other effect. Since there is no motion in God, there can be no time (Prop. 15).

“The result of the above argument is consequently this: the sphere cannot move ad infinitum of its own accord; the Prime Motor is not corporeal nor a force residing in a body; it is One, unchangeable, and in its existence is independent of time. Three of our postulates are thus proved by the principal philosophers.”<sup>53</sup>

<sup>53</sup> Munk, *Guide*, part II, p. 36.

פקד ודי' הוא אלנטר באלברהאן אן אלפלך מחאל אן יחרך דאתה חרכה סרמדיה Arab. ואן אלסבב אלאל פי חחריכה לים הו גסמא ולא קוה פי גסם ואנה ואחד לא יתניר לאן לים ונורה מקתרנא בומאן והדה הי אלחלהה מטאלב אלתי ברהן עליהא פצלא אלפאלספה.



This is the first proof of Maimonides for the existence of God, and is taken over almost bodily from Aristotle.<sup>54</sup> The other proofs (three in number), which Maimonides employs to establish the existence of God, were developed by the Mohammedan Peripatetics (Alfarabi and Avicenna<sup>55</sup>); but they too based their demonstrations on the Aristotelian propositions enumerated above, so that these three proofs are also due to Peripatetic influence.

Maimonides' second proof is as follows. If one element of a composite of two components exists separately, the second element must also exist separately. We see in the world things which "cause motion" and "are moved".<sup>56</sup> We also find things which "are moved" only, but which do not impart motion. Therefore, there must exist something which "causes motion," while it is itself "not moved." Since this object is not subject to motion, it is indivisible, incorporeal and independent of time, as was shown in the first proof.

Maimonides' third proof is as follows. No one doubts that things actually exist, e.g. things perceived by the senses. With respect to these things, there are three possible alternatives: (1) They are all eternal (at both ends); (2) None are eternal; (3) Some are and some are not. The first is clearly inadmissible, for we continually see things coming into existence. The second is likewise inadmissible, for there would be a possibility of all things coming to an end. This possibility would at some time be realized, since a possibility which can never be actualized is not a possibility.

הנה כבר יצא לנו מן העיון הזה במופת שהגלגל מן השקר שנייע עצמו תנועה נצחית, ושהסבה הראשונה בתנועתו אינה גשם ולא כח בגשם ושהוא אחד לא ישתנה שאין מציאותו מחברת אל הזמן, ואלו הם השלש שאלות אשר עשו עליהם מופת חשובי הפילוסופים.

<sup>54</sup> See note 44.

<sup>55</sup> Alfarabi (died 950) and Avicenna (died 1037); for a brief summary of their philosophies, see *The History of Philosophy in Islam* by Tjitze J. De Boer, translated into English by E. R. Jones, London 1903, p. 108 ff, and p. 132 ff; also Ignaz Goldziher, "Die Islamische Philosophie des Mittelalters" in *Die Kultur der Gegenwart*, Part I, section 5, p. 301 ff.

<sup>56</sup> "Cause motion"; "are moved" = Arab. תחרך = תחרך = Heb. יתנועעו = יניעו.



Such a possibility must have been realized at some time in the past, motion is eternal (Prop. 26) and genesis and destruction in the various species has no beginning—at that time there would be nothing—which can cause nothing. But we find things existing, e.g. ourselves. We therefore must conclude that there is an eternal being, not subject to genesis and destruction, whose existence is necessary (the third alternative).

The necessity of this Existent is not dependent upon any cause (Prop. 20); it has absolute existence (Prop. 21) and it cannot contain any plurality<sup>57</sup> (Prop. 21). It follows that it cannot be a body nor a power residing in a body (Prop. 22).

There cannot be two absolutely necessary existents; for, in that case, they would not be necessary existents per se, or through their essence; but through that property added to the essence of each, viz. the element of necessary existence.

Furthermore, the essence of a being which by itself constitutes its species, is of the utmost perfection. It can in no way be reconciled with the principle of dualism; for if there were two, and both had a differential element, they would be composite, and could not be the first cause (Prop. 19). If one only contained a differential element, it could not be ultimate. If there were no differential element, both would be one. In any case, we must posit Unity.<sup>58</sup>

“It is now clear that there must be a being with absolutely independent existence, a being whose existence cannot be attributed to any external cause, and which does not include different elements. . . . .this being is God”.<sup>59</sup>

<sup>57</sup> Plurality, Arab. תכתיך = Heb. רבוי.

<sup>58</sup> Unity, Arab. תחיד = Heb. יחוד.

<sup>59</sup> Munk, *Guide*, II, p. 41-42.

Arab. פקד תבריהו בחסב הדי אלנשר אן הם מוגוד לאום אלגוד באעתבאר דאתה צרורה. הו אלדי לא סבב לוגודה ולא תרכיב פיה... והדי הו אלאלאה.



The fourth proof of Maimonides reads as follows. We constantly see things passing from potentiality to actuality.<sup>60</sup> An external agent is necessary to bring about this change (Prop. 18). This agent was potential, when the thing was potential, and became actual in actualizing the thing. It was at first potential either because of some obstacle in the agent itself, or because of the absence of a certain relation between the agent and its effect. To remove this obstacle or to establish the required relation, another agent is necessary; the latter, in turn, needs an agent for itself, and so on ad infinitum. But this is impossible (Prop. 3); we must therefore come to an agent which is constant, and in no sense potential (Prop. 23). The agent cannot be material but must be free from matter (Prop. 24). "The immaterial being that includes no possibility whatever, but exists actually by its own essence is God. Since He is incorporeal, as has been demonstrated, it follows that He is One" (Prop. 16).<sup>61</sup>

#### THE PROOF OF ALANUS FOR THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

The chief proof that Alanus adduces for the Existence of God is based on the Idea of Causality; he argues a posteriori and gradually reaches the conception of a Prime Cause by deductions from several premises which he formulates at the beginning. In itself this method does not indicate that it will lead to a proof for the Existence of God, it seems rather a consideration of the Problem of Causality. It is not until the discussion ends with

Heb. הנה כבר התבאר במופת לפי זה העיון שיש נמצא מחוייב המציאות בבחינת עצמו בהכרח הוא אשר אין סבה למציאותו. ואין בו הרכבה... והוא השם

<sup>60</sup> Potentiality: Arab קוּוֹה = Heb. כח; Actuality: Arab פֻּעַל = Heb. פעל.

<sup>61</sup> Munk, *Guide*, II, pp. 43-44.

Arab. ואלמפרארק אלדי לא אמכאן פיה אצלא כל הו מוגוד בדאתה הו אלאלאה וקר תבין  
אנה לא נסם פהו ואחד כמה דכר פי אלמקרמה אלסארסה עשרה  
Heb. והנבדל אשר אין אפשרות בו כלל אבל הוא נמצא בעצמו הוא האלוה (יתברך) וכבר  
התבאר שאינו גוף א"כ הוא אחד, כמו שנוכר בהקדמה השש עשרה



the demonstration of the necessity of a Prime Cause, that its nature as an argument for the Existence of God becomes evident. In addition to this proof (the only one which he develops systematically and at length) Alanus refers to the theological ideas of world-harmony and world-order; and at times approaches a conception somewhat similar to Aristotle's proof from Motion.

The Causality-Proof<sup>62</sup> is the subject of chapters 1-12 in the *De Arte seu Articulis Catholicae Fidei*. But before Alanus undertakes the development of this argument, he enumerates in the Prologus several Definitions, Postulates and Axioms. Among the Definitions, he includes Form, Matter, Substance, Accident, Motion, and others.<sup>63</sup> The postulates are three in number. (1) Every composite has a cause which makes it a composite. (2) Infinite regress is impossible. (3) Attributes of caused things which are attributed to causes, but are not inherent in those causes, are attributed to those causes from the point of view of effect and causality.<sup>64</sup> The Axioms which enter into the Proof for the Existence of God are the following: (1) Everything receives its existence from that which brings its cause into existence; (2) Every cause is antecedent to and more worthy than its effect; (3) Nothing is prior

<sup>62</sup> Georg Grünwald in "Geschichte der Gottesbeweise im Mittelalter bis zum Ausgang der Hochscholastik", Münster 1907 (*Beiträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie des Mittelalters*, Band VI, Heft 3), treats very briefly of this Causality Proof of Alanus. He fails, however, to give a clear and detailed exposition of the development of this proof—he merely quotes several passages from the *De Arte* and translates them. In most instances, he has used Bäumker's corrections (see his remarks, p.61, notes 2 and 4. It is surprising that he has overlooked Bäumker's readings in his quotations on page 62, note 1, and page 65, note 2).

<sup>63</sup> The quotations from the various works of Alanus are based on Migne's *Patrologia Latina*, vol. 210, as corrected by Clemens Bäumker in *Philosophisches Jahrbuch der Görres-Gesellschaft*, Band VI (1893), p. 163-175, 417-429. The corrections of Bäumker (who has manuscript authority in every case) are indicated here by an asterisk at the beginning followed by the letter B, and the page number of the *Philosophisches Jahrbuch* at the end. The reading of Migne is preceded by the letter M.

<sup>64</sup> Haec tria sunt, quae peto, seu *petitiones*. Primum, cuiuslibet compositionis causam componentem esse; secundum, nullius rei causam in infinitum ascendere; tertium, quae \*causatorum sunt et (B. 166 M. creatorum) causis \*attribuuntur (B. 166. M. attribuimus), nec insunt, per effectum et causam \*illis (B. 166 M. illius) attribui. *De arte fidei catholicae* (D. A. Prologus M. 598 B.).



to or more worthy than itself.<sup>65</sup> From this enumeration Alanus proceeds to his proof. His starting point is the statement: "Whatever is the cause of a cause, is the cause of the caused."<sup>66</sup> If *A* is a thing caused by *B* which in turn has a cause *C*, *A* whose cause is *B* will receive its existence through *C*. All are agreed that a thing receives its existence through that which brings its cause into existence.<sup>67</sup> *B* brings *A* into existence, since it is its cause. *C* is the cause of *B*. Therefore, *A* receives its existence from *C*. The proposition "Whatever is the cause of a cause is also the cause of the caused" is now clear.<sup>68</sup>

An accident essentially depends upon its subject; or from the point of view of cause, the subject is the cause of the accident. The preceding proposition stated that whatever is the cause (*C*) of the cause (*B*), is also the cause of the caused (*A*); we may now substitute the subject (which is the *cause* of the accident) for *B*, and the accident which is the thing *caused* for *A*, and our proposition will read: "Whatever is the cause of the subject is the cause of the accident."<sup>69</sup>

Nothing can cause itself or give itself existence.<sup>70</sup> How can one prove this? An opponent might say: "On the contrary, a thing may be able to give itself existence."

<sup>65</sup> *Communes autem conceptiones sunt hae: Prima, omnis res habet esse per illud, quod causam eius perducit ad esse. Secunda, omnis causa prior et dignior est suo causato. Tertia, nihil est prius, vel dignius vel altius se ipso. D. A., Prologus 598 B. C.*

<sup>66</sup> *Propositio I. Quicquid est causa causae, est causa causati. D. A., Bk. I, ch. 1. M. 597 D.*

<sup>67</sup> See note 65—the first Axiom: *Prima etc.*

<sup>68</sup> *Sit enim causatum A, cuius causa B; causa autem B sit C; A habebit esse per C, cuius causa est B. Sed secundum primam animi conceptionem, omnis res habet esse per illud quod causam illius ad esse perducit. Sed B perducit A ad esse; est enim eius causa; C autem est causa B. Ergo secundum illam communem animi conceptionem, A habet esse per C. Ergo A a descriptione causae C, etiam causa A, et sic patet propositum.—We have given the reading of B. 167 throughout, as the reading of M. is altogether corrupt. D. A. I, 1, 597D–598D.*

<sup>69</sup> *II Omnis causa subiecti est causa accidentis. Accidentis enim ex descriptione ipsius habet esse per subiectum, ergo a descriptione causae, subiectum est causa accidentis. Sed praecedens theoremata est: Quicquid est causa causae, est causa causati. Ergo omnis causa subiecti est causa accidentis. D. A. I, 2, 598D–599A.*

<sup>70</sup> *III Nihil se ipsum composuit, vel ad esse perduxit. D. A., I, 3, 599A.*



Let us assume this possibility: it gives itself existence, and is therefore the Cause<sup>71</sup> of itself. This means that it must be antecedent to and more excellent than itself, according to the second Axiom<sup>72</sup>, i. e. exist before it existed, which is, of course, impossible.<sup>73</sup> We must conclude, then, that our proposition was correct.<sup>74</sup>

Matter cannot be actual without form, nor can form be actual without matter.<sup>75</sup> Matter by definition is a 'discrete' (contrasted with a continuous) thing,<sup>76</sup> and the essential characteristic of a discrete thing is either to differ or to be the basis of a difference. The second alternative must be ruled out, since matter is neither quality nor form (these obviously are the causes of differences). The first alternative must therefore be true: Matter is different, but to be different means to have a form or quality. One half of our proposition is now proved. Matter cannot be without form.<sup>77</sup>

We can also demonstrate that there can be no form in actuality without matter, since it is the form which distinguishes its substance from all other substances.<sup>78</sup> In order to accomplish this, it must be in its subject.

<sup>71</sup> Alanus defines 'cause' in his Prologus: *Causa* est per quam habet aliquid esse, quod dicitur \*causatum (B. 166 M. creatumcatum [= creatum] for catum [= causatum]) *D. A.*, 597C.

<sup>72</sup> See note 65, Axiom 2: *Omnis causa prior et dignior est suo causato.*

<sup>73</sup> Because of Axiom 3 note 65, *Tertia, nihil est etc.*

<sup>74</sup> *Immo dicit adversarius: aliquid se ipsum composuit, vel ad esse perduxit. Ergo ipsum habet esse per se: ergo est causa sui ipsius ex descriptione causae: ergo est prius set dignius se ipso per secundam animi conceptionem. Sed hoc est contra tertiam communem animi conceptionem. Nihil enim est prius vel dignius se ipso. Ergo impossibile est quod aliquid se ipsum composuit, vel ad esse perduxerit. D. A., I, 3, 599A.*

<sup>75</sup> Alanus bases his view of composition on the Aristotelian principles of matter and form, that by means of this and the Causality idea, he may reach an ultimate cause. IV. *Neque subiecta materia sine forma, neque forma sine subiecta materia actu potest esse. D. A. 4, 599B.*

<sup>76</sup> *Materia* est res discreta formae susceptibilis. *D. A.*, 597C.

<sup>77</sup> *Si enim subiecta materia est, ergo res discreta est: ergo a descriptione discreti differt, vel differre facit. Sed non differre facit, quia neque est proprietatis, neque forma; ergo differt; ergo a descriptione eius, quod est differre, ipsa est informata proprietatibus; ergo est formae subiecta; ergo non est sine forma. D. A., I, 4, 599B.*

<sup>78</sup> *Forma* est quae ex concursu proprietatum adveniens a qualibet alia subtsiat afacit suum subjectum aliud esse. *D. A. 597C.*



Matter is a necessary component in a subject. Therefore there can be no form apart from matter.<sup>79</sup>

We must now turn to the consideration of substance.<sup>80</sup> Substance, it is agreed, is composed of matter and form; in other words, it receives its existence from matter and form: matter and form cause substance. As we have just explained, matter and form cannot exist independently of each other. Form and matter become actually existent through their composition; that is, the composition is the cause of their existence. Since form and matter cause substance, by proposition I (Whatever is the cause of the cause—i. e. in this case, form and matter—is also the cause of the caused—i. e. the substance) the composition of matter and form is the cause of substance.<sup>81</sup>

Thus every substance has a threefold cause, viz. the matter, the form, and the composition of the two; and, each of these three components has one and the same cause.<sup>82</sup> The first part of this proposition follows from the preceding argument. The second part is proved by the first postulate (petitio).<sup>83</sup> Since every composition must have a cause which makes it component, there is some cause for the composition of matter and form;<sup>84</sup>

<sup>79</sup> Similiter est \* a (B. 167 M. in) descriptione formae. Forma enim facit suum subiectum esse aliud a qualibet alia substantia. Ergo forma est in subiecto, ergo in subiecta materia. Et sic habetur propositum. *D. A.* I, 4, 599B.

<sup>80</sup> Substantia est quae constat ex \* subiecta (B. 166. M. Substantia) materia vel forma. *D. A.* Prologus 597C.

<sup>81</sup> V. Compositionem formae ad materiam esse causam substantiae. Substantia enim constat ex materia et forma. Ergo habet esse per formam et materiam. (M—Ergo...materiam.) Ergo materia et forma sunt causa substantiae. (M+ compositionis per primam petitionem). Item, nec forma nisi componatur materiae, nec materia nisi componatur formae, actu esse possunt, sicut prius probatum est. Ergo forma et materia actu habent esse per compositionem earum; ergo compositio est causa existentiae earum. Sed existentia earum est causa substantiae: ergo per primum theorema compositio formae ad materiam est causa substantiae. Quidquid enim est causa causae, est causa causati. *D. A.*, I, 5, 599C.

<sup>82</sup> VI. Cuiuslibet substantiae est triplex causa, scilicet materia et forma, et earum compago, quarum trium eadem est causa. *D. A.*, I, 6, 597C.

<sup>83</sup> Primum, cuiuslibet compositionis causam componentem esse. *D. A.*, 598B.

<sup>84</sup> Since the cause of the cause (i. e. Matter and Form) is the cause of the caused (i. e. the composition), all three have the same cause.



and the same is also the cause of matter and form.<sup>85</sup>

All things subject to the category of number either are different or cause difference. For number is the altogether discrete. If anything is subject to number, it must necessarily be discrete,<sup>86</sup> and by definition of discrete, it must be the basis of a difference.<sup>87</sup>

Nothing is its own cause. This is deduced immediately from proposition III. Nothing can cause its own composition or bring itself into existence, which means that nothing exists per se. Therefore nothing can be its own cause.<sup>88</sup>

Every inferior (not self-dependent) cause has a supreme (ultimate) cause. This is an obvious conclusion from the second proposition. If there can be no infinite regress, we must reach a Prime Cause.<sup>89</sup>

This systematic geometric proof has led us to a highest cause, without which we cannot understand the existence of things. In fact the very existence of things was the starting point for our proof. We have developed the conception of this prime cause in nine propositions; we have posited this ultimate as necessary on the basis of causality. It remains for us now to investigate into the nature of this ultimate, to see if it has the characteristics which we attribute to Divinity.

The tenth proposition states: The supreme cause is

<sup>85</sup> VI. Cuiuslibet (Note 82). Prima pars huius theorematis ex praecedenti robur assumit. Secunda autem pars per primam petitionem probatur. Cum autem cuiuslibet compositionis aliqua est causa componens, ergo compositionis formae ad materiam aliqua est causa, ergo ipsa causa compositionis compaginisque et materiae et formae, quod mediante theorematae praecedenti probatur. *D. A.*, I, 6, 599A.

<sup>86</sup> See notes 75, 76, and 77.

<sup>87</sup> VII Quaecumque sub numero cadunt, differunt, vel differre faciunt. Numerus enim discretorum est summa. Ergo si cadunt sub numero, discreta sunt; ergo a descriptione discreto differre faciunt. *D. A.*, I, 7, 600A.

<sup>88</sup> VIII. Nihil est causa sui. Hoc a tertio theoremati fidem accipit: Nihil enim se ipsum composuit, vel ad esse perduxit. Ergo nihil est per se; ergo nec est sui causa. *D. A.*, I, 8, 600A.

<sup>89</sup> IX. Cuiuslibet inferioris \* causae (B. 168 M. esse) suprema causa. Nullius enim rei causae in infinitum ascendunt, sicut secunda proponitur petitione. *D. A.*, I, 9, 600A.



neither part of a composite, nor is it internally composite.<sup>90</sup> For let us assume the supreme cause to be composite in either sense. In any composite, there is a cause which makes it a composite, by Postulate I. The cause is either the one we are considering or it is another. It cannot be the one we are discussing, for it would then be its own cause, which is impossible (Proposition VIII). If it is another, by Axiom II it is superior to the thing of which it is the cause. This other, then, is the supreme cause, and not the composite. The only two alternatives we have stated are both impossible. Therefore, the supreme cause is in no sense a composite.<sup>91</sup>

Furthermore the supreme cause is neither quality nor form. Since both of these are necessarily existent in a composite<sup>92</sup> and the supreme cause is not in a composite, it is neither quality nor form.<sup>93</sup>

It follows from the preceding arguments (Proposition X) that this supreme cause is absolutely simple, whence it is clear that there is *one* supreme cause for all things, in order to be able to discuss this ultimate, we call it God.<sup>94</sup> Now, if an opponent (a heretic or a Manichaeon) argues that there is not one supreme cause only, let us assume several supreme causes, two at least. If they are subject to the category of number, they are either themselves different or are the basis of a difference (Proposition VII).

<sup>90</sup> Causa suprema neque componitur alicui neque ipsam aliqua componunt. *D. A.*, I, 10, 600A.

<sup>91</sup> X. Causa suprema—Nam sive hoc, sive illud sit, compositionis illius est aliqua causa componens per ipsam primam petitionem, quae causa componens aut est ipsa causa, de qua agitur aut alia. Sed illa, de qua agitur, esse non potest. Nihil enim est sui causa. Ergo alia est ab ea, de qua dicitur. Sed omnis causa est superior ( $M + a$ ) suo causato per secundam communem animi conceptionem, ergo illa est superior, et suprema causa, quod est impossibile. *D. A.*, I, 10, 600A–B.

<sup>92</sup> See note 78.

<sup>93</sup> XI. Causa suprema neque proprietates neque forma. Non enim componitur alicui, ergo nec est proprietates, neque forma. *D. A.*, I, 11, 600B.

<sup>94</sup> XII. Causam supremam simplicissimam, esse oportet. Unde manifestum est unam tantum esse omnium causam supremam, quam ratiocinandi gratia dicimus Deum. *D. A.*, I, 12, 600B. Comp. also *Regulae Theologicae* 63, 651C. Prima substantia non recipit maius vel minus.



They cannot be the basis of a difference, since by hypothesis they are neither quality nor form (Proposition XI). One alternative remains: they are themselves different. By definition of "differing" they must contain attributes or forms, in other words they are composites. Every composite has a supreme cause (Proposition I). Therefore they have a cause or causes, and cannot themselves be supreme causes, which is contradictory to the hypothesis.<sup>95</sup> We thus arrive at a prime cause, God, by means of the causality conception.

Before we proceed to the exposition of the other implied proofs for the existence of God in the works of Alanus, let us give a brief summary of his chief proof, which we have discussed at length.

- I The cause of the cause is the cause of the caused.
- II The cause of the subject is the cause of the accident.
- III Nothing can give itself existence.
- IV Neither matter nor form can exist separately.
- V The composition of matter and form causes Substance.
- VI The three-fold cause of Substance is Matter, Form, and Composition.
- VII Things subject to number differ or cause a difference.
- VIII Nothing is its own cause.
- IX Every inferior cause has a supreme cause
- X The supreme cause is in no sense composite.
- XI The supreme cause is neither quality nor form.
- XII The supreme cause is absolutely simple—we call it God.

<sup>95</sup> ..corollarium autem\* indirecte (B. 168 M. inductum) probatur. Si enim adversarius dicat .non unam tantum esse causam supremam ponantur ergo plures: ..cadunt sub numero; ergo differunt vel differre faciunt, per septimum theorema. Sed neutra differre facit, quia neutra est proprietatis nec forma. Ergo differunt. Ergo per discriptionem eius, quod est differre, causae illae sunt informatae proprietatibus vel formis; ....Sed compositionis cuiuslibet aliqua est causa suprema. ergo non sunt supremae causae; quod est contra hypothesim. *D. A.*, I, 12, 600C.



Alanus in his various works makes reference to three other proofs for the existence of God, none of which he attempts to explain or develop, as he does in the case of the causality proof. These three proofs are nowhere made the subject of a separate discussion; they merely occur in some minor connection, usually in support of some other argument.

In *Contra Hæreticos*, the first of these three subordinate proofs is found, the proof from Creation. Creation which is an established fact is taken as the foundation of a proof for God's existence.<sup>96</sup> "As the Apostle says, through those things which have been created, the Philosophers can comprehend the invisible things of God."<sup>97</sup> Creation necessarily implies a Creator or a God.

A proof for the existence of God from the wonder and harmony of the world is alluded to by Alanus in the first book of *Contra Hæreticos*. "Philosophers have learned God's power from the magnitude of things, His wisdom from the beauty of things and His Divine Goodness from the harmony of things."<sup>98</sup> This proof is very old; Augustine employs it,<sup>99</sup> and after him, many philosophers make use of it. Perhaps it was for this reason that Alanus did not consider it worthy of a detailed analysis.

The third of these proofs bears a striking similarity to Aristotle's proof from motion.<sup>100</sup> "Every mutable thing points to something immutable, every movable thing points

<sup>96</sup> See M. Baumgartner, *Die Philosophie des Alanus de Insulis*, Münster 1898, p. 107, note 5. This proof is really the Causality proof, but emphasis is here placed on Creation.

<sup>97</sup> *Contra Hæreticos* I, 7, 314B. Dixit enim Apostolus, quod per ea quae facta sunt, invisibilia dei conspiciuntur a philosophis (Rom. I, 20) Th. Aquinas, "Summa Theologica" Bk. I, ch. 2. Abelard and Peter Lombard also use this quotation from the Apostle as a proof for the existence of the Creator.

<sup>98</sup> *C. H.*, I, 7, 314B. Per rerum magnitudinem intellexerunt philosophi dei potentiam, per rerum pulchritudinem eiusdem sapientiam, per earundem ordinem divinam bonitatem.

<sup>99</sup> *De Civitate Dei* XI, 4.

<sup>100</sup> *Physics* VIII 5, 256a. *Metaphysics* XII 6, 1071b.



to something which is at rest."<sup>101</sup> The existence of mutable and movable things leads necessarily to the existence of an immutable, unmoved thing. In Book III we find the same idea. "Just as all plurality which is divisible, proceeds from indivisible unity, so all variable things emanate from the Invariable Creator."<sup>102</sup> Change<sup>103</sup> in the world clearly indicates one who is its cause, i.e. God, omnipotent and eternal.

Alanus has now proved the existence of an ultimate cause, the highest power, which is *one* in the strictest sense of Unity (Proposition XII). Maimonides and Averroes, after attaining to this conception, have rationally demonstrated the Deity of their Faith, and the proof is complete. Alanus, however, must continue his exposition. He has reached the Unity, but the Trinity which is the same (or another aspect of Unity) must also be deduced. In chapters 24-30 he presents his solution of the problem; he states the premises from which the Trinity is derived and attempts to show that it is compatible with the other divisions of his system.

Like the other great Christian thinkers of the twelfth century, Alanus expended much labor and thought in presenting the Trinity in the light of reason by means of analogies, comparisons, and symbols.

Just as there is a threefold cause for a substance (Prop. XI) so is there a threefold effect in one and the same Creator: the three persons of the Trinity; the Father, the Son and

<sup>101</sup> *C. H.*, I, 5, M. 311A. Omne enim mutabile insinuat aliquid esse immutabile; omne mobile insinuat aliquid esse quietum. And *C. H.* I, 8, 315B. Oportet esse immutabilem.

<sup>102</sup> *C. H.* III, 4, 405C. Sicut ab unitate indivisibili, omnis procedit pluralitas, quae divisibilis est, ita a creatori invariabili omne procedit variabile.

<sup>103</sup> Alanus enumerates six kinds of motion (following Aristotle in 'the Categories') Motus est accidens, quod attenditur secundum aliquam mutationem. Motus sex sunt species: Generatio, corruptio, augmentum, diminutio, secundum locum mutatio, alteratio. See "The Categories of Aristotle" by I. Husik, *Philosophical Review*, 1904.



the Holy Ghost.<sup>104</sup> The entire Trinity must function in each of the three.<sup>105</sup> The entire conception of the Trinity and our discussion of it can only be in figurative terms.<sup>106</sup> The members of the Trinity are equal with respect to power and nature.<sup>107</sup> The essence of the three persons is one, and none is different from the other.<sup>108</sup> Anything predicated of the Divine Essence is applicable to the three persons.<sup>109</sup> The trinity of the persons is the Unity of Deity.<sup>110</sup>

All these proofs, however, for the Existence of God are neither irrefutable nor altogether convincing: absolute necessity cannot be attributed to them. They merely guide us to the *assumption* of the existence of God, but they do not constitute proof in the strict sense, and cannot be termed Knowledge. In the case of the Trinity it is all the more so; it can at best be represented only "figuraliter." But even the carefully developed causality proof for the existence of God is not cogent. "We can not comprehend God through Knowledge, we can only comprehend Him through Faith."<sup>111</sup>

#### THE PROOF OF AVERROES FOR THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

The proofs of Averroes for the Existence of God, as contained in the second part<sup>112</sup> of his Philosophy and Theology, namely the "Speculative Dogmatics,"<sup>113</sup> are

<sup>104</sup> D. A., I, 24, and C. H., III, 3, 403B.

<sup>105</sup> D. A., I, 25.

<sup>106</sup> D. A., I, 26. Alanus means that the proof of the trinity is not absolute. Cf. Bäumker, *op. cit.*, p. 112.

<sup>107</sup> D. A., I, 27, and C. H., III, 4, 405D.

<sup>108</sup> D. A., I, 28.

<sup>109</sup> D. A., I, 29.

<sup>110</sup> D. A., I, 30.

<sup>111</sup> D. A., I, 17, 601C: Deum nulla scientia, sed sola fide deprehendimus. . . .

<sup>112</sup> The brief title of the first part of this work of Averroes is "The Accord between Religion and Philosophy". It occupies pages 1-27 in M. J. Müller's edition. In this treatise Averroes presents the views of the various Arabic schools on the question of the harmonization of religion and philosophy, and the attitude to be adopted towards the Koran. After an analysis and criticism of these theories, Averroes gives his own solution. An abstract of this treatise, a necessary prerequisite for an understanding of Averroes' philosophy, is given in an Excursus.

<sup>113</sup> Marcus Joseph Müller, *op. cit.*, pp. 27-128. The proof for the Existence of God is contained in pp. 28, 1, 17-47, 1.2.



based entirely on the Koran, and conclusions deduced from verses contained in it. Before he takes up the problem of the existence of God, Averroes says: "I shall begin with the determination of those things, which the Law-giver desired that all should believe with respect to God, and the methods which he employed in the Koran for this purpose. We shall begin with the way which leads to the knowledge of the Creator, the fundamental dogma of the Moslem. But (before we proceed to the exposition of our own views), we shall discuss the opinions of the various schools (in Islam)." <sup>114</sup>

The best known schools of our time are four in number: (1) The Ash'ariyya, (2) the Mu'tazila, (3) The Bâṭiniyya, and (4) the Ḥashwiyya. <sup>115</sup> Each has different theories concerning the Divinity, and each believes its views have been handed down from primitive Islam. In truth, this is not so, most of their dogmas being later innovations and interpretations.

In the following discussion only those principles will be considered which are absolute articles of faith.

The existence of God, and the other principles, according to the Ḥashwiyya, must not be subjected to rational investigation; they are commanded by Authority, and this is sufficient to insure their truth. In other words, they

وابتدئ من ذلك بتعريف ما قصد الشارع ان تعتقده <sup>114</sup>  
الجمهور في الله تبارك وتعالى والطرق التي سلك بهم في ذلك  
وذلك في الكتاب العزيز وابتدئ من ذلك بمعرفة الطريق التي  
تفضي الى وجود الصانع اذ كانت اول معرفة يجب ان يعرفها  
المكلف وقبل ذلك فينبغي ان نذكر آراء تلك الفرق المشهورة  
في ذلك. Page 28, l. 12-17.

(1) See Martin Schreiner, "Zur Geschichte des As'aritentums" (*Huitième Congrès International des Orientalistes*, Part II, Section 1. Leyden 1893).

(2) See H. Steiner: *Die Mu'taziliten oder die Freidenker im Islam*, Leipzig, 1865.

(3) See Scharastâni, trans. by Haarbrücker, Halle 1850, Part I, pp. 221-230.

(4) See G. von Vloten. "Les Hachwia et Nabita" 11th Congress of Orientalists, Paris, 1899.



deny that the Existence of God can be demonstrated by the human intellect. This view can easily be refuted, since the Koran itself enjoins the speculative consideration of His Existence (Sur. II, 19 et al.). "If so", one may ask, "why did not the Prophet give a philosophical demonstration of the Existence of the Creator, before he called men to His service?" The answer to this is evident. All Arabs believe in God instinctively, and it was not necessary for the Prophet to establish this truth for them.

The Ash'ariyya, on the other hand, maintain that the Existence of God lies within the proper field of the reason; but in their proofs they make use of non-Koranic methods. They start with the proposition, that the world is created,<sup>116</sup> which is based upon the premise that bodies are composed of indivisible created atoms. This theory in itself is very difficult to understand, but even granting it, does the Creator follow from creation? Is He eternal or created? If the latter, we can go on ad infinitum. If He is eternal, His action must likewise be eternal. The only solution possible is to hold that a created action can come from an eternal Agent. But the Ash'ariyya will not admit this, for they believe that everything which is connected with a created thing is itself created. And, again, if things are created, the Agent at one time acts and at other times does not act; there must be a cause, then, which changes the state of the Agent. This cause also must have a cause which sets it in action after non-action, and so on ad infinitum.

The Ash'ariyya attempted to answer these questions by saying that a created action may originate from an eternal Will. This, however, does not remove the difficulty, for a creation cannot come from an eternal Will without the medium of Action. There are three distinct elements:

<sup>116</sup> Compare Maimonides' examination of the Kalâm, *Moreh*, Book I, ch. 71.



the thing, the Will (which is the cause of the Action), and the Action (which is the cause of the Creation); were this not so, we would have a creation without an agent. The Ash'ariyya have merely made the Action a middle, but the problem remains the same.

Furthermore, this eternal Will co-existed with the non-existence of the creation an infinite time, for the creation was non-existent an infinite time. This Will enters actuality together with its creation, after the cessation of an infinity of time. As the infinite cannot end, this is, of course, absurd.

And again, if the eternal Will is to cause a certain Action, a new element must enter which was not previously present. If we do not assume this, in what way will the Existence of the Action be distinguished from its non-Existence?<sup>117</sup>

In addition to the difficulties we have mentioned, there are many other doubts: the Koran could not have commanded investigation according to these methods, for it would be an "obligatio ultra posse." We must rule out the arguments of the Ash'ariyya for two important reasons. First the masses cannot comprehend them, and secondly they are not demonstrative.

We referred previously to the proofs generally employed by the Ash'ariyya to prove the Existence of God. One of them (and this is the most familiar) is based upon three premises: (1) Substances<sup>118</sup> are inseparable from accidents;<sup>119</sup> (2) Accidents are created; (3) Anything connected with creation is itself created.

Let us take these up individually. (1) Substances are inseparable from Accidents. When applied to ordinary

<sup>117</sup> Cf. Maimonides, *Moreh*, II, ch. 14 (5th Method) where there is a somewhat similar discussion.

<sup>118</sup> جوهر Substance.

<sup>119</sup> عرض Accident.



bodies, this premise is quite evident, but when used with reference to atoms,<sup>120</sup> various questions arise. In the first place, the existence of the atom is not known per se, and philosophers are not agreed as to its nature. The Ash'ariyya maintain that the existence of the atom is almost axiomatic. When we say that the elephant is bigger than the ant, we mean that it has more parts or atoms. The elephant is not one simple existence, but a composite of atoms, which separate with the destruction of the body. The Ash'ariyya erred in their atom conception because of a confusion of contiguous and continuous quantity; contiguous quantity, which is only applicable to numbers, they apply to bodies (continuous quantities). If continuous quantity were equivalent to contiguous quantity, the science of Geometry would coincide with the science of Arithmetic, which is obviously not true.

We may also ask the Ash'ariyya: "When the Atom has come into being, what happens to the 'coming into being'?" 'Coming into being' is an accident, and when something has come into being and exists, the accident is removed, which can never happen according to the Ash'ariyya, for accidents cannot be separated from their subjects.

Furthermore, if the Existent comes from the non-Existent, with what is the action of the agent connected? In order to obviate this difficulty, the Mu'tazila were compelled to assume some Being in non-Existence. Both of these schools must necessarily admit the Existence of the Vacuum. "These doubts, as you see, Dialectics cannot dispel. This then should not be made the starting-point for the Knowledge of the Deity, at least not for the masses. The true Methods of attaining to a comprehension of God are clearer than these, as will be explained later."<sup>121</sup>

<sup>120</sup> *الجزء الذي لا ينقسم* Atom. Cf. Maimonides' refutation of the Kalâm, Proposition I: "The Theory of Atoms." *Moreh*, I, ch. 73.

<sup>121</sup> فهذه الشكوك كما ترى ليس في قوة صناعة الجدل حلها



The second premise of the Ash'ariyya, "All accidents are created" is as perplexing as their first premise, which states that bodies are created. We must assume that what we perceive by our senses to be true in the case of certain bodies and accidents, is also true in cases where we are unable to make use of our senses.

Time is an accident, but it is impossible to form a conception of its being created. Every created thing must be preceded in time by its non-existence, and the priority of anything can only be understood in terms of time. If time were created, would there be time before time?<sup>122</sup> The same is true of space. If space exists as a Vacuum, the creation of this Vacuum must be preceded by another Vacuum and so on ad infinitum. The only fact that the Ash'ariyya succeed in proving is that the accidents, which the sense perceives as created, are created. All the rest is mere rhetorical quibbling.

The third premise of the Ash'ariyya, "Everything that is connected with a created thing is itself created"—rests on a homonymy. The expression "that which is not independent of a created thing" may be understood in two ways: (1) that which is not independent of the category of created things, or (2) that which is not independent of this particular created thing. When interpreted according to (2), the proposition is true; namely that something connected with this particular created thing is itself created. If taken in the first sense, however, it is clearly untrue, because an infinite number of successive accidents may enter into one eternal subject. The later scholastics saw

فاذا يجب ان لا يجعل هذا مبداً لمعرفة الله تبارك وتعالى  
وبخاصة للجمهور فان طريقة معرفة الله اوضح من هذه على ما  
سنبين فان قولنا بعد Page 33, l. 18-21.

<sup>122</sup> Cf. Th. Aquinas "Summa Contra Gentiles", Bk II, ch. 33, where a similar argument is given in the name of those "probare volentium aeternitatem mundi." The solution of this problem is contained, *ibid.*, ch. 36,



the weakness of these premises and attempted to strengthen them by adducing proof to eliminate the possibility in (1) just mentioned. They claim that if this were so, there could never be any accident in the subject, since an accident could only exist in the subject after the termination of an infinite number of successive accidents, which is absurd. They illustrate their point by the following. One man says to another: "I shall not give you this Dinar until I shall have given you an infinite number of Dinars." This comparison, when analyzed, does not hold. There is here a definite beginning (the time when the conversation of the two men took place) and a definite end (the time when the Dinar was to be given) and in between there is an Infinity, which is obviously impossible. It does not follow from the absurdity of this illustration, that their proposition, "that which is to come into existence after the cessation of an infinity of things cannot come into existence at all," is true. An endless series may be of two kinds, either circular, or linear. If it is circular, it is naturally and essentially infinite, unless some hindering cause enters; e. g. if there is Sunrise, there must be Sunset, and vice versa. In the second case, however, where the infinite exists in a line, e.g. the human species, it can only be endless per accidens; for example in the continuation of the human species, it is not impossible for the Creator to bring forth an infinity of individuals, using different instruments to accomplish this eternal action (that is, using the father, or generator, to produce the son).

These remarks, although incomplete, show that these methods are neither demonstrative nor suitable for the masses.

The second method of the Ash'ariyya, mentioned above, rests upon two premises. The first premise is as follows: It is possible for anything to be different from what it



actually is—it might even be its opposite; in other words, nothing is true per se. The world might be larger or smaller, it might have a different form, any motion might be changed, the stone might fall upwards, and the fire tend downward, etc.

The other premise states that the 'possible'<sup>123</sup> is created and has an Agent or Creator, who is the cause of its being one of two possible things rather than the other.

The first premise has a semblance of truth only at first glance; upon investigation it is found to be mere rhetorical talk. If it were true that everything might be different from what it is—and even opposite, what would be the meaning of Wisdom and Knowledge? There would be no value at all in knowing how to make a thing best serve its purpose; and yet each thing can best serve its purpose in a certain way only. The situation in our discussion may be compared to the difference in the views of a craftsman and that of an unskilled person with respect to any object. The craftsman, who has made a study of the object, realizes that to be useful it must be made in a definite manner and possess certain qualities. The unskilled person, who has no proper comprehension of the object, fails to perceive that it would be imperfect if it were in any way different; to him, it might serve its purpose as well, even though altered in many respects. Creation must be compared to skilled work which, as the craftsman knows, cannot be otherwise than it is. God, the Craftsman par excellence, has created each thing to subserve some definite end, were it in the slightest particular different, it would be unsatisfactory. If the Ash'ariyya carry this premise to its logical conclusion, they would have to maintain that

<sup>123</sup> جائز.



one might see through the ear, and smell through the eye, etc.

This first premise is also developed by Avicenna,<sup>124</sup> who posits every existent, with the exception of God, as 'possible' or 'contingent' when considered per se. There are two classes of these contingents: (1) Contingent with regard to the Creator and its own Essence; (2) Necessary with regard to the Creator, but contingent with regard to its Essence—the necessary essence in each case is the First Agent. It would follow from this that the essence of things would change—for a 'contingent' would become a 'necessary', which is clearly incorrect. But this is not the place to discuss Avicenna's doctrines.

The second premise stated is that "the Contingent is created". This proposition is not at all clear, and the opinions of scholars are not in agreement. Plato admits the possibility of the eternity of a contingent thing; Aristotle denies it. "This is a difficult question the truth of which is only known to the masters of the art of demonstration."<sup>125</sup>

Abu'l-Ma'âli Al-Guaine attempts to clarify these premises by adducing others: (1) The Contingent must have a Determinator, i.e. an agent who causes it to realize *this* possibility rather than another; (2) This Determinator must necessarily be endowed with Will;<sup>126</sup> (3) Anything that exists in consequence of Will is created. The contingent must emanate from the Will, for there are but two possibilities—either from Nature or from Will; and Nature cannot produce one of two similar contingents but must produce both. Since the world might occupy a position in the Ether (i. e. the Vacuum) different from the position

<sup>124</sup> ابن سينا.

<sup>125</sup> وهو مطلب عويص ولن تبين حقيقته الا لاهل صناعة. البرهان. P. 39, l. 19-20.

<sup>126</sup> ارادة.



it now occupies, Abu 'l-Ma'âli deduces that it was created through Will. This conclusion of Abu 'l-Ma'âli is true, but the premise regarding the world in a Vacuum is incorrect or at least not clear, for they are compelled to assume the eternity of this Vacuum, which, if created, would require another antecedent Vacuum, etc.

The meaning of the third explanatory premise of Abu'l-Ma'âli—'Anything that exists in consequence of Will is created'—is not at all evident. Will belongs to the category of the Correlative and is inseparable from the realization of the thing willed—if one exists actually the other does also, e.g. father and son. If the Will which is actual is eternal, the Willed which is actual must also be eternal. Other complications enter into this discussion, which make it an impossible subject for the masses, a fact which the Koran recognized, making no mention either of an eternal will or created will and merely remarking that the Will is the cause of created things (Sur. XVI, 42). Thus these methods of the Ash'ariyya are neither evident as philosophical proofs, nor are they the methods of Religion. "The methods of religion have two characteristics; first they are evident, second, they are simple, not composite, i.e. the premises are few in number and the conclusions are not far removed from the premises."<sup>127</sup>

The methods that the Şûfis adduce are not based on syllogistic proof. They maintain that in order to ascend higher and comprehend Truth, one must emancipate oneself from the restraints imposed by the passions and reach a certain state of ecstasy. We do not deny the value of suppressing the passions as an aid to speculation—but we will not admit that this suppression at once brings

الطرق الشرعية . . . جمعت وصفين احدهما ان تكون<sup>127</sup> بقينية والثانى ان تكون بسيطة غير مركبة اعنى قليلة المقدمات فتكون نتائجها قريبة من المقدمات الاول P. 41, l. 18-21.



about knowledge. The methods of the Şûfîs are not suitable for all people and are not the "Proper way", for the Koran commands speculation in these matters.

As regards the Mu'tazila, we have not as yet received their books in Spain, but it seems that their methods are essentially the same as the methods of the Ash'ariyya.

If then all the methods of the various schools just mentioned are unsatisfactory and valueless, what is the correct method to be pursued in this investigation? The correct and proper method is the one contained in the Koran. If we examine this carefully, we shall find that it is composed of two parts: (1) the provision made for the comfort and happiness of man in that all existent things were created for his sake—the Proof from Providence;<sup>128</sup> (2) the wonderful creation of the existents, for example, the production of organic life, sense-perception, and intellectual cognizance—the Proof from the wonderful creation.<sup>129</sup>

The first proof is based on two principles; first, that all existents were created for man, and second, the harmony in the world must necessarily be brought about by an agent—it cannot be merely the result of chance. The first principle is self-evident—all things serve man, e.g. the regulation of day and night, the sun and moon, animals, plants, inorganic bodies etc., the construction of the parts of the human organism etc.

The second principle also rests upon two premises—first that the Existents were wonderfully created, which requires no elucidation, Sur. XXII, 72, and second, that every created thing has a creator, which is also self-explanatory. In order to attain to a true conception of the

<sup>128</sup> دليل العناية.

<sup>129</sup> دليل الاختراع.



wonderful creation, one must study the Essence of things, Sur. VII, 184.

These two proofs are the religious proofs. The verses of the Koran, which consider the existence of God, are of three kinds; some contain the Proof from Providence, some the Proof from the wonderful creation, and some include both.

Among the first class, we may enumerate Sur. LXXVIII, 6, 7; XXV, 62; LXXX, 24. As illustrations of the second class, we may cite Sur. LXXXVI, 6; LXXXVIII, 17; XXII, 72; VI, 79. The third class is exemplified by Sur. II, 19, 20; XXXVI, 33; III, 188. Sur. VII, 171; III, 16; XVII, 46 also refer to this problem.

These two proofs—Providence and Creation—are suited to the requirements of both the Scholars who have a deep insight, and the Masses who consider matters superficially. The difference between them is merely one of degree—the difference between the Craftsman and the unskilled observer.

#### SUMMARY OF THE PROOFS FOR THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

MAIMONIDES	ALANUS	AVERROES
<p>There are four proofs for the Existence of God.</p> <p>I. God's Existence follows from the Aristotelian principles of motion.</p> <p>II. If one component exists separately, the other</p>	<p>The Existence of God can be proved from the principles of causality, by several propositions.</p> <p>I. Since nothing can give itself existence, i.e. nothing is its own cause, there must be a</p>	<p>The methods of the Ash'ariyya, the Mu'tazila, the Bâṭiniyya and the Ḥashwiyya are neither demonstrative nor are they suitable for the masses.</p> <p>The proofs for the Existence of God</p>



MAIMONIDES	ALANUS	AVERROES
<p>must also. Therefore "causing motion" exists separately.</p> <p>III. If there is a 'possible' existent, there must also be a 'necessary' existent.</p> <p>IV. God's Existence follows from the Aristotelian principles of potentiality and actuality (like I).</p>	<p>supreme cause, in no sense composite. It is thus neither quality nor form: it is absolutely simple, it is God.</p> <p>II. Minor proofs. (a) Creation implies a Creator; (b) Harmony must be caused; (c) Change must have a cause.</p>	<p>as contained in the Koran are two in number.</p> <p>I. The Proof from Providence: (a) All things were created for man. (b) Harmony must necessarily be caused.</p> <p>II. The wonderful creation: (a) Existents are wonderfully created. (b) Creation must have a Creator.</p>

The above summary presents in outline form the proofs of Maimonides, Alanus and Averroes for the existence of God. A comparison of these proofs discloses several interesting facts. (1) Maimonides' proofs are clearly the most scientific and intellectual, (2) Alanus attempts a combination of the philosopher's view with the opinion of the masses, (3) Averroes gives the orthodox, popular exposition. It remains to be seen if any one of the three has succeeded, and if so, to what degree.

Maimonides, as has been explained before, bases himself on Aristotle, the recognized authority in philosophy and science in the second half of the twelfth century. In general, Maimonides accepted Aristotle's theories, and undertook to prove the Existence of God on Aristotelian hypotheses—not that the Existence of God needed any proof (according to Maimonides), but it could best be



shown that philosophy and religion were not in conflict by deducing the fundamental postulates of religion from the propositions of the great philosopher. In his argument Maimonides is strictly logical and scientific—he states his premises, announces the conclusion which he will try to reach, and proceeds with his proof. All this, no doubt, involves an obsolete philosophy and the value of such disquisitions may be questioned, since Aristotelianism is now completely discarded. But this criticism can apply to almost everything in the past which has been superseded by something else in the present—and because of its generality fails specifically. If carried to its logical conclusion, every opinion of every philosopher which has been discarded (and there are very few which remain unshaken) is of no value; the history of philosophy will therefore add nothing to our knowledge! The mere statement of this reasoning shows its absurdity. One cannot judge any philosopher by the relevancy of his philosophy to the thought of to-day, but rather to the views and beliefs of his own century and the centuries which preceded it. This is the criterion which we must use for our estimate of Maimonides. The Existence of God was a fact known through Revelation and it permitted of no doubt. On the basis of creation and the Bible it was evident to and believed in by the masses. From the Harmony and Providence, the people felt that it was unquestionably so; to their minds no proof was necessary. But from the point of view of philosophy, none of these presentations were satisfactory; the trained intellect could easily refute them all. Maimonides undertook to show that the theses were true, even if the common proofs for them could be rebutted; and this he does by demonstrating the existence of God from Aristotelian premises. In a word, Maimonides' position is this: *God exists*—we



all know it, some in one way others in another. The ordinary man relates this truth to Creation, Providence, Harmony, etc. But the philosopher sees fallacy in these assumptions. He must start with science and with Aristotle, which Maimonides does, and demonstrate that from this, too, the existence of God inevitably follows. The importance of this harmonization of Maimonides is best evidenced by the fact that his solution dominates the Jewish and Christian thought of the thirteenth century.

Alanus has one main proof for the existence of God: the Causality Proof, which he develops at great length; Maimonides' third proof is a similar argument. This development of Alanus is interesting because of his application of geometric methods to philosophical demonstration. Alanus does not consider this Causality-proof as irrefutable, as has been stated above. "They (the proofs) merely guide us to the *Assumption* of the Existence of God—but they do not constitute proof in the strict sense, and cannot be termed Knowledge." As minor proofs, Alanus gives: (1) Creation implies a Creator; (2) Harmony must be caused; (3) Change must have a cause. It has already been explained that Maimonides does not give these minor proofs, since he considers them as the views of the masses and therefore well-known. The proof of Alanus for the existence of God resolves itself into Maimonides' third proof.

Averroes is an apologist for the Koran, in his treatise "The Accord between Religion and Philosophy". He gives the popular conceptions, and supports them by verses from the Koran. It is difficult to see in this work, Averroes the greatest commentator of Aristotle, to whom Aristotle was the infallible judge of all things. His proofs are the minor proofs of Alanus, which Maimonides does not consider worthy of any mention at all, since they are "for the



masses". Thus the question arises: "What accord has Averroes brought about between the views of philosophy and religion on the subject of the Existence of God?"<sup>130</sup> The answer is evident, "None", and he does not attempt any. He wrote his treatise "The Accord between Religion and Philosophy" for the masses and therefore gave the proofs of the masses. Demonstration, he says, is for "the elect".

From the foregoing it is apparent that Maimonides gives the best harmonization of the views of religion and philosophy on the question of the Existence of God, since he attempts to reach the truths of Religion through the hypotheses of Reason. Alanus' proof is the third proof of Maimonides plus the opinion of "the masses." Averroes considers the popular arguments as given in the Koran to be the most satisfactory, since they are intelligible to all.

The ideas of all three are to-day obsolete. Our system of philosophy cannot assimilate them. We say they have failed in their attempt—but will it ever be possible to bring within the scope of finite understanding that which transcends human experience?

<sup>130</sup> See Léon Gauthier, *Accord de la Religion et de la Philosophie*, traité d'Ibn Roschd, traduit et annoté, Alger 1905, p. 147 ff., and p. 178, note 3. "Though he (Renan) mentions Müller's edition of the three treatises (of Averroes) he clearly did not read them."



## EXCURSUS

ABSTRACT OF THE "PHILOSOPHY AND THEOLOGY"  
OF AVERROES

## THE ACCORD BETWEEN RELIGION AND PHILOSOPHY

\*<sup>[1]</sup>The purpose of this work is to determine the relation between Religion <sup>a</sup> and Philosophy <sup>b</sup> i. e. Is philosophical and intellectual speculation <sup>c</sup> permitted by religion; and if it is permitted, is its pursuance optional or obligatory?

Philosophy is investigation into the nature of the Existent. This all will admit. But the Existent is the Created, and the Created leads at once to the Creator. It follows, therefore, that from the point of view of religion, philosophy is either necessary or leads to a proper understanding of religion. The Koran has commanded the study of logic and the other sciences in numerous places, e. g. Sura LIX, 2; VII, 184;<sup>[2]</sup> III, 88 etc. But knowledge of the Existent can only be obtained through intellect and reflection, which consists in deducing the unknown from the known by means of the syllogism.<sup>d</sup> The syllogism, then, is essential, and we must perfect ourselves in the use of it, until we attain to Demonstration <sup>e</sup> (ἀπόδειξις). That we may detect Fallacy, we must first study Inference. Thus in order to obey the Command of religion, with respect to investigation of the Existent, we must become

\*The numbers in brackets refer to the pages of the Arabic text, published by Marcus Joseph Müller, "Philosophie und Theologie von Averroes" in *Monumenta Saecularia* of the Königlich Bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften, München 1859.

- (a) شرع Religion.
- (b) فلسفة Philosophy. φιλοσοφία.
- (c) نظر Speculation.
- (d) قياس Syllogism.
- (e) برهان Demonstration ἀπόδειξις.



familiar with all these preliminaries which are as necessary for thought as tools are for work.<sup>[3]</sup>

The jurist <sup>f</sup> always uses reason to guide him, for he must decide issues: the Theologian should do the same.

The argument on the basis of Innovation <sup>g</sup> cannot be raised, for we can reply: The same applies to the Jurist who is continually "innovating", yet no one considers it a violation of the principles of the Koran. However, the majority of theologians recognize inference, and reason.

It is the duty of every investigator to know what his predecessors have said on the subject, for no one can by himself develop a science, as is true of the jurist's art<sup>[4]</sup>. Whether this predecessor is a co-religionist or not does not concern us, e. g. the instrument we use for slaughter, whether it originates from a co-religionist or not—as long as it fulfils all the requirements, is permitted. We must know what earlier philosophers have thought. If their opinions are correct, we shall accept them; if they are not, we shall comment upon them. This is the method by which we can come to know the Creator: first, creation must be established, which leads to the things created, which in turn leads to a Creator. We must make a systematic investigation, and we as the later investigators should attempt to derive some benefit from all who investigated earlier. Take mathematics, for instance; suppose we did not have our science of geometry or astronomy. Could any man, however wise, discover the relative size of the earth and the sun, etc, except by means of Revelation or something similar to Revelation? If one were to tell him that the sun was one hundred and fifty or one hundred and sixty times as large as the earth, he would consider that person

(f) فقيه Jurist.

(g) بدعة Innovation.



insane, yet this fact is indisputable. The same is true of the science<sup>h</sup> of Jurisprudence<sup>[5]</sup>—no science can be produced by an individual. How much more so the Science of Sciences—Philosophy! And if we find anything in the works of our predecessors in agreement with truth, we ought to be happy and thank them for it; if, on the other hand, it is contrary to the truth, we must point it out as false and dangerous, but we cannot blame them for it. The purpose of the Books of the Ancients is the same as our own. If one who is talented and has moral virtues is hindered from pursuing this work, the way that leads to the knowledge of God is closed. The fact that one may err in philosophical speculation because of the insufficiency of his talents, or misunderstanding in his studies, or inability to control his passions, or lack of proper teachers,<sup>i</sup> ought to deter no one from the study of philosophy, since error exists per accidens<sup>j</sup> and not per se.<sup>k [6]</sup> One who forbids the study of philosophy or any other science to a fit person, is like one who tells a thirsty person not to drink water, because some people choke by drinking.

We Moslems are convinced of the truth of our faith and are certain that we can reach happiness through it. But the methods of comprehending God and creation (which our religion enjoins) are not the same for all people. Some believe because of Demonstrative<sup>l</sup> Proofs, others base their opinions on Dialectic<sup>m</sup> Propositions, and a third

(h) فقه Science of Jurisprudence.

(i) Cf. Maimonides, *Moreh*, I, chap. 34; Munk, *Guide*, I, pp. 118–130, who gives five reasons: (1) Difficulty of the subject, (2) Limitations of the human mind, (3) many prerequisite sciences, (4) natural disposition, (5) material necessities.

(j) عرض Accident.

بالعرض Per accidens.

(k) بالذات Per se.

(l) See footnote (e).

(m) جدال Dialectic.



class is satisfied with Rhetorical " statements. Our Divine Law, in calling men to its precepts, has employed these three methods.<sup>[7]</sup>

Demonstrative speculation (the highest form of thought) cannot in any way conflict with the fundamentals of Religion, since truth is not contradictory to truth. If Demonstrative Speculation leads to a certain conclusion, we must seek the decision of the faith upon this subject. If we find no decision, all is well. If religion does discuss this matter, it will either agree with or oppose the conclusion of reason. If they coincide, all is again well. If, however, they are at variance we must find an interpretation,<sup>o</sup> a simile or an allegorical (homonymous) use of words. In every case where there is an apparent disagreement, there will be an interpretation.<sup>[8]</sup>

The principle (or method) of interpretation is accepted by all Moslems, but its application in specific cases is often a matter of controversy. The question may now arise: In what instances is interpretation permitted? If the agreement is universal, it allows no interpretation; when there is dissent, interpretation may enter.<sup>[9]</sup> It is not difficult to show that there has been dissent in almost every question, for agreement in theoretical issues is not like agreement in practical things.

On what grounds, then, did Abu Ḥâmid (Al-Gazâli) accuse Abu Naşr (Alfârâbi) and Avicenna of heresy,<sup>p</sup> because of their views with respect to the Eternity<sup>q</sup> of the World, God's knowledge of Particulars,<sup>r</sup> and Resurrection<sup>s</sup>?<sup>[10]</sup>

(n) خطاب Rhetoric.

(o) تاويل Interpretation.

(p) تكفير Heresy.

(q) قدم العالم Eternity of the world.

(r) جزئيات Particulars.

(s) حشر الاجساد Resurrection.



We answer: In the first place, he does not make this accusation absolutely; and secondly, there can be no heresy, since there can be no agreement because of interpretations, which can only be imparted to those who have attained to the use of Demonstration and Interpretation.

Abu Ḥâmid erred when he accused the Peripatetics of believing that God has no knowledge of Particulars. They merely say that His knowledge is not similar to ours,<sup>[11]</sup> which is also true in the case of Universals. "Knowledge" is a homonym<sup>t</sup> like جليل (a great, momentous, affair or a small, paltry affair) or صريم (daybreak, dawn or dark night). Accusing philosophers of heresy has no meaning at all.

The entire problem of the Eternity or "Newness"<sup>u</sup> of the world resolves itself, I think, into a mere difference of words—and essentially, the philosophers agree. There are three categories of Existence—two extremes and a mean. The first extreme is a Thing caused by an agent, composed of matter and form, and generated in time,<sup>[12]</sup> e. g. the various bodies, water, air, etc. The other extreme is a Thing, uncaused, made out of nothing, and is not subject to time, e. g. God. The mean, a Thing made out of nothing not preceded by time yet created by an agent, i. e. the world in its totality, is the Existence that has occasioned much strife and discussion. All posit future time as endless, but there is a division of opinion with respect to past time. The scholastics and Plato hold that past time is finite, while Aristotle and his school maintain that it is infinite. Be this as it may, this mean, or the World in its Totality, resembles the Eternity—extreme in some phases and in others like the simple created Thing.

(t) اشتراك Homonymy.

(u) حدوث "Newness".



The scholastics <sup>v</sup> view the world from the latter extreme and call it Created—the Aristotelians see it from the side of the Infinite and therefore designate it as Eternal. Fundamentally it is a question of terminology.<sup>[13]</sup> We may add here that the Koran seems to hold eternity at both ends; the Scholastics are compelled to resort to interpretation to derive their theses from the Koran. These questions are very difficult. The person who solves them correctly deserves praise, but he whose solutions are not correct should not be blamed if he is a "fit" person, since this is not a matter of free will, but of necessity (i. e. rational conclusions).<sup>[14]</sup>

Errors are of two classes. (1) A pardonable error in a fit person, e. g. the case of a skilled physician who makes a wrong diagnosis. (2) An absolutely unpardonable error, i. e. a misconception in the Principles of Religion, e. g. the Belief <sup>w</sup> in God, Prophecy, <sup>x</sup> and Blessedness <sup>y</sup> in the Future Life. The three methods of proof,<sup>[15]</sup> mentioned above, lead to the knowledge of these principles.

For those who cannot obtain through Demonstration what the "Men of Demonstration" have deduced, God has given parables and likenesses. This is what we mean by exoteric and esoteric interpretation.<sup>[16]</sup> Some passages of the Koran (those which in their literal sense belong to the Principles) must not be interpreted. Others, on the contrary, must be given an exoteric meaning. There is still a third class, where there is a difference of opinion as to the propriety of interpretation.

To which of these three classes does Eschatology belong? We answer: There is no consensus of opinion on this sub-

(v) متكلمون Scholastics.

(w) اقرار بالله Recognition of God.

(x) نبوة Prophecy.

(y) سعادة Blessedness.



ject. <sup>[17]</sup> Some understand it in its literal sense, others prefer interpretation, and the interpretations vary. A "man of demonstration" who errs here is to be excused. In this consideration of Eschatology, we have reference to its Nature, not to its Existence, which is one of the Principles.

Interpretations should only be imparted in demonstrative books (contrary to the view of Abu Ḥâmid). <sup>[18]</sup> It is the duty of the learned to interdict the masses from demonstrative works; for this study, which, in the case of the fit, guides them to a proper understanding of the faith, in the case of the unfit, would alienate them from their religion.

The purpose of the religious law is to teach true Knowledge, and true Practice. True Knowledge is the knowledge of God and Things according to their essence, and especially the knowledge of the religious law and Blessedness in the future life. <sup>[19]</sup> True Praxis, practical wisdom, consists in doing those things which will lead to blessedness, and abstaining from those things which will cause the opposite. There are two divisions of the practical wisdom. (1) Outer physical actions, under the head of Jurisprudence; (2) Psychic action, such as thankfulness, patience, etc.

Knowledge is of two kinds: verifiable<sup>z</sup> and conceptual.<sup>aa</sup> There are three methods of securing verifiable knowledge: Demonstration, Dialectic, Rhetoric. Conceptual knowledge comprises the Thing in Reality and its image. All these methods are employed by religion, <sup>[20]</sup> and form the basis of the following classification. (1) Inferences, in which the premises, <sup>bb</sup> based on apparent truth or mere

(z) تصديق Verification.

(aa) تصور Conception.

(bb) مقدمة Premise.



opinion, may be true, and in which the conclusions <sup>cc</sup> are taken as real, not as figurative. These must not be interpreted. (2) Where the premises, based on apparent truth or opinion, are true, but the conclusions are figurative. These must be interpreted. (3) Where the premises based on probability or opinion are not true, but the conclusions give the real thing. This is the opposite of (2) and must not be interpreted. (4) Where the premises, based on probability or opinion are not true, and the conclusions are figurative. Scholars <sup>dd</sup> may interpret such inferences, but the masses <sup>ee</sup> must be content with the literal sense. <sup>ff</sup> [21]

In accordance with this classification, there will be three categories of people: (1) Interpreters in no case, (2) Dialectic Interpreters, (3) Interpreters—the masters of Demonstration, those adept in the science of Philosophy. <sup>[22]</sup> If interpretations are revealed to the multitude, it will lead to heresy, since the literal meaning will be removed, but the interpretation will not be comprehended. Interpretations should not be published in dialectic and rhetorical works. If we are asked by "men of Dialectic or Rhetoric," we must reply: "The question is difficult; God alone knows the interpretation." Those who publicly point out obscure verses, or indicate contradictions, are the cause of the great harm. One might compare them to a man who censures a skilled doctor, interested in the health of people, for giving "general" rules for health. This man invalidated these general rules by showing their inapplicability in certain instances. The people lose their faith in these rules, and since this man

(cc) نتیجه , Pl. نتائج Conclusion.

(dd) خواص Scholars, the "elect".

(ee) جمهور Masses.

(ff) ظاهر و ظاهر Literal Sense.



cannot make them proficient in the medical science, are left with nothing.<sup>[23]</sup>

The true interpretation is the faith <sup>gg</sup> which was given to man. Because of the view that interpretation should be imparted to all, various parties, enmities etc. arose in Islam, e. g. The Mu'tazila and the Ash'ariyya.<sup>[24]</sup> A large part of the Ash'ariyya build their theories on pure sophistry.<sup>hh</sup> They deny many important principles, e. g. accident, the influence of things upon each other, cause, etc. From these, other sects branch off—some emphasize speculation, others belief. If we are now asked: "In the face of such controversy, what are the true methods in our religion?" we answer: "Those given in the Koran." When interpreted, the interpretation must be clear, and more evident than the literal sense (which can hardly be).<sup>[25]</sup> In the first period of Islam, when all was taken literally, people were more religious; later, when interpretation was introduced, disagreement arose.

The religious propositions contained in the Koran have three properties: (1) They are conducive to Happiness; (2) They are graduated and suited to the various classes of thinkers; (3) They contain the key to their interpretation.

There should be no problem of Reason and Authority, for "Philosophy is the friend and foster-sister of Religion."

(gg) اِيمَانٌ Faith.

(hh) سَفْسَطَةٌ Sophistry.











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