One Truth or Two?

Jewish Averroists on the Truth of the Philosophers and the Truth of the Prophets: The Case of Isaac Albalag

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Table of Contents

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Abstract

The impact of Averroes on Jewish philosophy is best attested in *Sefer Tiqqun ha-de'ot* (*Correcting the Opinions*), a Hebrew translation with commentarial notes on the encyclopedic work of the Muslim theologian Abu Hamid al-Ghazāli (d. 1111), *kitāb Maqāsid al-Falāsifa*. Isaac Albalag, the author of the *Tiqqun*, lived in the second half of the thirteenth century either in Catalonia or Provence. In the *Tiqqun*, Albalag takes upon himself the task of purging philosophy from what he regards as misconceptions and absurdities that entered philosophy at the hands of flawed philosophers such as al-Farābi, Avicenna, and al-Ghazāli. To this group of philosophers belongs Maimonides with whom Albalag disputes over the question of the origin of the world and his understanding of religion. The form of philosophy that Albalag aims to restore is Aristotelianism, which he understands through the lens of Averroes' commentaries on Aristotle and independent treatises.

Although the *Tiqqun* is structurally based on the *Maqāsid* and draws its basic critiques and arguments from Averroes' works, it does not lack originality. In dealing with the question of the relationship between religion and philosophy, Albalag advances a view that marks a conspicuous deviation from the Maimonidean-Averroists harmony view which was fairly standard in his intellectual milieu. Religion and philosophy, Albalag claims, contradict each other, yet they are simultaneously true. This view, which Albalag enhances through an unusual conception of prophecy, prompted scholars to read his thought in light of the double truth doctrine, which was advocated by Medieval Latin Averroists.

The present study proposes to offer a comprehensive and contextualized analysis of the *Tiqqun*. By examining Albalag's double truth claim against the *Tiqqun's* fundamental epistemological and metaphysical premises and against the backdrop of contemporary philosophical theories, the present study proves that the double truth doctrine, rather than being an actual dogma, represents for Albalag a practical solution for the implications of the tension between religion and philosophy for the masses' beliefs and the autonomy of philosophy. In reality, Albalag remained faithful to philosophy, namely Aristotelianism, which he deemed *the* truth.

Résumé

L'influence d'Averroès sur la philosophie juive est le plus prononcé dans *Sefer Tiqqun ha-de'ot* (Correction des opinions), une traduction en hébreu commenté sur le travail encyclopédique du théologien musulman Abu Hamid al-Ghazāli (d. 1111), *kitāb Maqāsid al-Falāsifa*. Isaac Albalag, l'auteur du *Tiqqun*, vivait dans la deuxième moitié du treizième siècle, soit en Catalogne ou en Provence. Dans le *Tiqqun*, Albalag s'est pris la tache de purger la philosophie de ce qu'il voyait comme des idées fausses et absurdes qui sont entrées dans la philosophie aux mains des philosophes imparfaits tels que al-Farābi, Avicenna et al-Ghazali. Appartenait à ce groupe de philosophes, Maimonides avec qui Albalag avait des différends sur l'origine du monde et sa compérhension de la religion. La forme de philosophie qu'Albalag voulait restaurer est l'Aristotelianisme, qu'il a compris à travers les commentaires d'Averroes sur Aristote et les traités d'indépendants.

Bien que le *Tiqqun* est structurellement basé sur *le Maqāsid* et tire ses critiques de base et ses arguments du travail d'Averroes, ceci ne manque pas d'originalité. En abordant la question du rapport entre la religion et la philosophie, Albalag met en avant un point de vue qui marque une déviation remarquable de l'harmonie entre le Maïmonide et l'Averroïsme ce qui était assez courant dans son milieu intellectuel. Selon Albalag, la religion et la philosophie se contredisent, mais sont simultanément vraies. Ce point de vue, qu'Albalag accroit par une conception peu commune de la prophétie, a incité les savants à lire ses pensées à la lumière de la doctrine à deux vérités, lequel a été recommandé par les Averroïstes latins médiévaux.

Le rapport qui suit présente en détail une étude complète et contextualisée du Tiqqun. En examinant la double revendication d'Albalag contre les prémisses épistémologiques et métaphysiques fondamentales du *Tiqqun* et sur fond de théories philosophiques contemporaines, la présente étude prouve que la double doctrine de la vérité, plutôt que d'être un dogme réel, représente pour Albalag une solution pratique aux implications de la tension entre religion et philosophie pour les croyances des masses et l'autonomie de la philosophie. En réalité, Albalag est resté fidèle à la philosophie, à savoir l'Aristotélisme, qu'il a considéré comme la vérité.

Introduction

Jewish Averroism refers to the school of thought of Post-Maimonidean philosophers who combined the teachings of Maimonides and Averroes.[1] Of special interest to Jewish Averroists was the question of the relationship between religion and philosophy. Following Maimonides, who arguably attempted to narrow the gap between religion and philosophy and bring them into synthesis,[2] Jewish Averroists, such as Ibn Kaspi, Moses Narboni, and Isaac Polqar, understood Judaism as "a philosophical religion."[3] Averroes' religious epistemology with its characteristic principle that "truth does not contradict truth"[4] equipped these philosophers with extra tools by means of which they continued Maimonides' synthetic enterprise.

The present study is devoted to the thought of the Jewish Averroist Isaac Albalag. Albalag represents a pattern of Jewish Averroists who, though fully adopting Averroes' philosophical schemes of physics and metaphysics, appears to provide a different answer to the question of the relationship between religion and philosophy. Unlike Averroes, Albalag states that religion and philosophy contradict each other, which led scholars to read Albalag's thought in terms of the double truth doctrine attributed to Christian Averroists. According to this doctrine, truth of religion and philosophy may contradict each other while at the same time remaining true.[5] In this study, I propose that Albalag

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[1] For the expression of Jewish Averroism see Oliver Leaman, "Jewish Averroism" in *The History of Islamic Philosophy*, edited by Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Oliver Leaman (New York: Rutledge, 1996), 1360.

[2] Julius Guttmann*, Philosophies of Judaism,* (N.J, Aronson, 1988), 152.

[3] For the concept of philosophical religion see Carlos Fraenkel, *Philosophical Religion from Plato to Spinoza: Reason, religion, and Autonomy* (Cambridge University Press, 2012), 5. According to Fraenkel, "philosophical religion" signifies the view that the Law "established by a prophet" embodies the same philosophical principles as the divine *nomoi* conceived by philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle."

[4] Averroes, *The Decisive Treatise*, translated by Charles Butterworth (Brigham Young University Press, 2009), 8.

[5] Representatives of the double truth doctrine in Latin Averroism are Siger Brabant and Boethius of Dacia. In March 1277, Bishop Stephen Timpier of Paris published a list of 219 teachings one of which relates to the double truth doctrine adopted by some Averroists. The Bishop describes this doctrine as follow: they claim that there are teachings

adopted a single truth theory that considers philosophy to be the only source of truth. Unlike Maimonides and the majority of later Maimonidean philosophers, Albalag's philosophical enterprise aims to separate religion and philosophy.

Isaac Albalag was a philosopher and translator who lived in the second half of the thirteenth century.[6] Very little is known about his life. The exact place of his origin is unknown, but scholarly conjectures have tended to the view that he lived either in Provence or Catalonia.[7] Albalag's only philosophical treatise *Tiqqun ha-de'ot* (*The Rectification of The Opinions*) is a Hebrew translation of the first two parts of Abū Hāmid al-Ghazāli's (d.1111) encyclopedic work *Maqāṣid al-Falāsifa* (*Intentions of The Philosophers*).[8] Though the treatise is basically a translation of the *Maqāṣid,* Albalag's commentary on the text is so extensive that the treatise can justifiably be considered a philosophical work in its own right.

Albalag has commonly been identified as one of the most radical Jewish thinkers in Medieval Europe, primarily on account of his outspoken commitment to the eternity doctrine and his remarks against traditional interpretations of the biblical narrative of creation. The eternity doctrine, however, was not the only, albeit the most outstanding, manifestation of Albalag's radicalism. His conception of God and his views regarding the relationship between the Divine and terrestrial spheres provided further grounds for

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that are "true according to philosophy but not true according to Catholic faith…. As if there are two contradictory truths and as if there stood against the truth of the Holy Book another truth in the books of the damned heathen" Quotation is taken from Frank Griffel, "Was Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī an Averroist After All? On the Double-Truth Theory in Medieval Latin and Islamic thought." Some studies have argued that such a doctrine was never held by any philosophers in the middle ages see Richard C. Dales, "The Origin of The Doctrine of The Double Truth," *Viator*. Vol 15 (1984): 169.

[6] His date of birth according to the catalogue of Moritz. M. Steinschneider is 1307.

[7] Colette Sirat, *A History of Jewish philosophy in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge University Press, 1985), 238.

[8] Translating the third part of the *Maqāsid* was completed by Albalag's student Isaac Poulqar, see G. Vajda, *averroïste juif, traducteur et annotateur daḷ-Ghazâlî* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1960), 268.

contemporary and succeeding scathing polemics against him. In *Sefer ha-emūnot*, for instance, Shemtov ben Shemtov curses Albalag for his position on the state of the soul after death and the nature of the Torah, designating him as the "heretic." [9]

Albalag's intellectual background is better known than his personal life. Judging from the chronological epoch and geographical territory in which Albalag is supposed to have lived, it is evident that he witnessed the significant flourishing of the Jewish intellectual activities in Europe that commenced with the massive Arabic-to-Hebrew translation project. During the thirteenth century and the first third of the fourteenth century translation from Arabic into Hebrew contributed considerably to broadening the scientific and philosophic horizon of European Jews.[10] The translation enterprise encompassed a wide variety of Arabic philosophic sources, but the greatest attention was paid to the Judeo-Arabic literature, and at the project's heart stood the works of Judah ha-Levi, Saadia Ga'on, and Maimonides. Maimonides' works were accorded particular attention, being carefully translated and commented upon by several prominent figures.[11]

In addition to the translation of Maimonides' *halakhic* and philosophical works, the translation enterprise made it a priority to make Aristotle's science available to the Jewish audience. One reason for this interest in Aristotle was that learning Aristotle's science was seen as a prerequisite to understanding the *Guide of the Perplexed,* Maimonides' most significant philosophical treatise, in which he arguably carries out a genuine synthesis

[9] Shemtov ben Shemtov, *Sefer ha Emunot*, I:1
[10] Steven Harvey, "Arabic Into Hebrew Translation Movement and the influence of Averroes upon the Medieval Jewish Thought," *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Jewish Philosophy*, edited by Daniel H. Frank and Oliver Leaman (Cambridge University Press, 2003), 259.
[11] For example Shem Tov Ibn Flaqura's commentary *Moreh ha-Moreh* (*The Guide to the Guide*), edited by Yair Shiffman (World Union of Jewish Studies, 2001), and Moses Narboni's Commentary on the *Guide*, edited by J Goldenthal (1852); reprinted in *shĕlôshâ Qadmônê Mĕparshê ha-Môreah* (Jerusalem: Orstel, 1961).

between religion and philosophy. Maimonides himself indicated in a letter to his disciple Ibn Tibbon that the reader of his *Guide* would necessarily have to have mastered the teachings of Aristotle in order to properly understand his philosophical thoughts. In addition, the letter includes recommendations of other philosophers worthy of studying. With respect to Aristotle's works, Maimonides states that they are "the roots and foundations of all works on the sciences," but they can only be understood through the commentaries of Alexander, Themistius, and Averroes. [12] The letter also includes a high evaluation of al-Farabi and Ibn Bajja. As Steven Harvey proposes, Maimonides' letter to Ibn Tibbon provided the "most likely" reason for the specific choices of the texts translated into Hebrew.[13]

Access to Aristotle was made possible through the Hebrew translation of Averroes' commentaries on Aristotle's works. The precise interest in Averroes' commentaries was not limited to transmitting his works from Arabic to Hebrew. Following the translation of Averroes' commentaries, a series of super-commentaries were undertaken.[14] Most noticeably, Gersonides was the chief figure who contributed to the wide dissemination and explication of Averroes' works. [15] Other Arabic works, such as *Maqāṣid al-Falāsifa,* Ibn Rushd's *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut*, and Ibn Tufayl's *Risālat ḥay ibn Yaqzān* received some

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[12] Steven Harvey, "Did Maimonides' Letter to Ibn Tibbon Determine which Philosophers Would Be Studied By Latter Jewish Thinkers?" *JQR* Vol. 83 N.1/2 (Jul.- Oct 1998), 51-70.
[13] Ibid
[14] For studies on the reception of Averroes among Jewish philosophers and the Latin West see E. Renan, *Averroès et l'averroïsme* (1861), translated into Arabic by Adil Zu'aytar, *Ibn Rushd wa'l-rushdiyyah* (Cairo: Dār iḥyā' al-kutub al-arabiyya, 1975), 195.
Steven Harvey, "On the Nature and Extent of Jewish Averroism: Renana's *Averroès et l'averroïsme* Revisited," *Jewish Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 7, No. 2. (2000), pp. 100-119.
[15] Most of Gersonides' super-commentaries are still in manuscripts. Only small portions have been edited and studied. For A list of Gersonides' super-commentaries on Averroès sée Charles Touati, "Le Pensée Philosophique et Théologique de Gersonide (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1973). For a study on Gersonides' school of super-commentaries see Ruth Glanser, "Levi ben Gershon and the Study of Ibn Rushd in The Fifteenth Century," *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 86 (1995): 51-90, and a PhD thesis by Jesse Stephen Mashbaum, *Chapters* 9-12 *of Gersonides' Super-Commentary on Averroes' Epitome of the De Anima: The Internal Senses* (Brandies University, 1981).

attention and were translated into Hebrew, but there is no sufficient evidence that they occupied any scientific significance during the thirteenth century. [16] It was Averroes' commentaries on Aristotle's science that always gained the highest interest, and access to Aristotle's natural and metaphysical thought largely, if not exclusively, took place via his intermediation.

The vast project of translating Averroes' commentaries not only made him a central philosophic authority for European Jews, but, surprisingly, Averroes later on came to replace Aristotle, for whose sake the translation activities were held in the first place.[17] Jewish Aristotelian philosophers in Christian Europe emphasized the significance of Averroes and considered him a reliable source for scientific learning. On account of the tremendous significance that Averroes occupied among Jewish intellectuals, Ernest Renan maintains that Averroes owes his reputation as a commentator to Jewish philosophers.[18]

The commitment of Jewish philosophers to Averroes' thought went beyond the domain of science and extended into the scope of religious philosophy.[19] In the course of time, philosophers made use of, and eventually adopted, Averroes' explications of theological difficulties particularly regarding issues such as the creation of the world, the relationship between God and the universe, and the fate of the individual human soul after death. The unorthodox teachings of Averroes with respect to these issues that were

[16] In the beginning of the fourteenth century there were a growing interest in the *Maqāṣid* as a medium for learning physics. For a discussion of this topic see Steven Harvey "Why Did Fourteenth Century Jews Turn to Al-Gazāli's Account of Natural Science?" *The Jewish Quarterly Review*, Vol. 91, No. 3-4 (Jan.-Apr., 2001), pp. 359-376
[17] Steven Harvey, "Arabic Into Hebrew Translation Movement and the influence of Averroes upon the Medieval Jewish Thought," *The Cambridge Companion to Arabic Philosophy*, edited by Peter Adamson and Richard C. Taylor (Cambridge University Press, 2005).
[18] Ernest Renan. *Avérroes et la'averroïsme*, translated into Arabic by Adil Zu'aytar, *Ibn Rushd wa'l-rushdiyyah* (Cairo: Dār iḥyā' al-kutub al-arabiyya, 1975), 195.
[19] Ibid

integrated in his commentaries left a conspicuous mark on the European Jewish philosophic sentiment of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.[20]

The penetrating influence of Averroes on Jewish thinking gave rise to many opposing voices, especially once his main unorthodox views began to emerge in philosophical works aiming to reinterpret Scripture and the Jewish tradition in light of the Averroist theological perspectives.[21] Opposition to Averroes' philosophy, however, was only a small part of a larger debate over the legitimacy of studying philosophy overall, which spanned the entire thirteenth century and continued until the end of the first half of the fourteenth century.[22]

Although Averroes was a major catalyst for this debate, he was not the only one. Maimonides and his works also played a central role in the debate. The initial eruption of the debate coincided with the translation and wide circulation of Maimonides' philosophical thoughts as projected particularly in the *Guide* and the *Book of Knowledge,* two essential texts that contributed to the emergence of rationalism among European Jewry.[23] Now gaining popularity, the *Guide of the Perplexed*, with its deeply entrenched philosophical foundation, provided Jews with new perspectives about religion and Scripture that in many respects greatly challenged long-established traditionalist formulas.

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[21] Perhaps the best example to cite here is Ibn Kaspi who wrote several works, some of which are biblical commentaries, reflecting a strong synthetic approach between philosophy and religion. For studies on Ibn Kaspi's thought see B. Mesh, *Studies in Joseph Ibn Caspi*: *Fourteenth-Century Philosopher and Exegete* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1975).

[22] Green Stern, "Philosophy in Southern France: Controversy Over Philosophic Study and The Influence of Averroes Upon Jewish Thought," *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Jewish Philosophy*, edited by Daniel H. Frank and Oliver Leaman (Cambridge University Press, 2003), 281. Gregg Stern, *Philosophy and Rabbinic Culture: Jewish Interpretation and Controversy in Medieval* (Routledge, 2009), 15-17.

[23] The *Guide* was translated twice, first by Samuel Ibn Tibbon in 1210 and Judah al-ḥarizi in 1210. Ibn Tibbon's translation gained more circulation than al-ḥarizi's. For a comprehensive study of the features of Ibn Tibbon's translation see Carlos Fraenkel, *From Maimonides to Samuel Ibn Tibbon: the Transformation of the Dalalat al-Hâ'irîn to the Moreh ha-Nevukhim* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2007) [Hebrew].

Things in Scripture that had appeared unrealistic and contrary to reason now received profound scientific explanations in the philosophical framework of the *Guide*. The way Maimonides interpreted Scripture, despite being appreciated in rationalist circles, was met with large-scale dismissal and opposition by traditionally minded thinkers and Kabbalists.[24] If Averroes' philosophical thought was seen as dangerous to Judaism, Maimonides, the leading *halakhic* and intellectual leader, was in some Jewish circles viewed as no less threatening, perhaps even more so. [25]

Living in the second half of the thirteenth century, either in Catalonia or Provence, Albalag must have witnessed this controversy. A rationalist, Albalag was counted by scholars among the group of thinkers who actively took part in siding with the leading rationalist figure of the time, Maimonides.[26] In truth, although Albalag sides with rationalism and philosophy, he presents himself as a critic of Maimonides. Albalag's critique of Maimonides relates to his philosophical as well as religious thought:

> … Rabbi Moses, in the book entitled *moreh ha-nevukhim,* brought [confused] conceptions into philosophy. Indeed, his error (*ta'ūto*) with respect to wisdom (*ḥokhmah*) was not greater than his error with respect to faith (*ha-'emunah*). Any one who shall investigate his thought and the thought of al-Ghazali and compare their ways of resolving [issues] will recognize that they both belong to the same type… they both draw from one spring, and learned and adopted one method: the very methodology of Abu Nasr and Ibn Sina who deviated from the method of Aristotle for reasons that we will address shortly.[27]

Maimonides' error with respect to wisdom, as with the case of al-Ghazāli, al-Farabi, and ibn Sina, consists in his deviating from Aristotle. But what about "faith" in

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[24] See Moshe Halbertal's examination of the controversy over Maimonides' interpretive approach to Scripture, specifically chapter 5. Moshe Halbertal, *Between Torah and Wisdom: Rabbi Menaḥem ha-Meiri and The Maimonidean Halakhists of Provence* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2000) [Hebrew]. Bernard Septium's *Hispano-Jewish Culture in Transition: The Career and Controversies of Ramah* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982), 61-75.
[25] Daniel Jeremy Silver*, Maimonides Criticism and The Maimonidean Controversy*, 1180-1240 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1965).
[26] See for example Joseph Sarachek, *Faith and Reason: The Conflict Over The Rationalism In Maimonides* (New York, Hermon Press, 1970)
[27] *Tiqqun*, p. 5

which Albalag finds Maimonides at fault? Albalag does not answer directly. Nor does he examine any of Maimonides' *halakhic* or doctrinal viewpoints so that we can determine exactly where his error lies. Although Albalag openly disagrees with Maimonides over some philosophical doctrines, he does not determine a specific religious doctrine on which he disagrees with Maimonides. A careful reading of the *Tiqqun,* however, reveals that Maimonides' error with respect to faith has to do with his philosophical religious discourse. Deviating from his rationalist peers, and more in line with Maimonides' detractors, Albalag criticizes Maimonides for assigning philosophical meanings to Scripture. He includes Maimonides in the group of what he calls "hasty" individuals (*nimharīm*) who

> seek to establish (*le-qayēm*) and strengthen (*le-ḥazzēq*) this doctrine (*daʿat*) [what appears to them to be the doctrine of the Torah] through speculative arguments (*taʿanôt ʿiyyūniyyōt)* which they think are stronger than the arguments of the philosophers… Followers of this path were numerous in all nations. Also, in our nation they are numerous, and Rabbeynu Mosheh belongs to them. Those ignorantly acted (*hiskīlū ʿasōh*)[28] in two ways.[29]

Albalag's critique of Maimonides involves philosophical and doctrinal aspects. The former pertains to Maimonides' non-Aristotelian approach, which resulted in him "denying" demonstrative doctrines"[30] and adopting undemonstrative ones. The latter pertains to Maimonides' assumption that the prophetic knowledge contained in Scripture can be arrived at, whereas in fact, as Albalag repeatedly emphasizes, the "intention of the prophet can not be known."[31] Significantly, this statement poses a challenge to the notion on which Maimonides' philosophical interpretations of Scripture are founded. In his introduction to the *Guide,* Maimonides states that the purpose of his work is to explain the meaning of biblical terms and obscure parables of Scripture. In stating this, Maimonides

[28] Cf. Genesis 31:28
[29] *Tiqqun*, note 30, p. 44
[30] Ibid
[31] Ibid

admits that the secrets of the Torah are accessible and that they could be, albeit not entirely, discovered and taught to individuals who possess of certain qualifications. In contrast, Albalag adopts a different dogma, one that deems the true meaning of prophetic knowledge to be an inaccessible secret except to a prophet. Not even a philosopher could have access to the intention of the prophet.

> … prophetic [secrets] can not be known except to the prophet… there is no merit for a wise man (*ḥakham*) over a fool (*kesīl*) in understanding them. For they are the secrets (*sôdôt*) that nobody, except a prophet, has the ability to understand [32]

In my view, denying the possibility of arriving at the true intention of prophets rules out the possibility of affirming or denying the identity between the secrets of the Torah and philosophical doctrines. Albalag alludes to this point as he states, after criticizing Maimonides, that "we have no capacity to arrive at the intention of the Torah based on our investigation."[33] Maimonides thus was wrong because he attempted to harmonize Scripture and philosophy. This approach led Maimonides to compromise philosophy so that it might fit with his understanding of Scripture.

Not all the secrets of the Torah are prophetic. The Torah is a multilayered text. In addition to the surface and prophetic layers, the Torah contains a philosophic layer. This division raises a crucial question: how can we distinguish between prophetic secrets, philosophic secrets, and the surface layer addressed to the multitude? Albalag never determines what the borderline between these layers is. On the assumption that the Torah contains philosophic secrets, Albalag does sometimes engage with philosophical interpretations of Scripture, despite his critique of Maimonides. He, however, admits that

[32] *Tiqqun*, p. 4
[33] *Tiqqun*, p. 44

his interpretations do not necessarily determine the true meaning of Scripture and declares that it is "possible" (*'efshar*) for Scripture to accord with "philosophical doctrines" as well as many other "opposing doctrines."[34] This declaration aligns with Albalag's previous affirmation that "we have no capacity to arrive at the intention of the Torah." Together with his critique of Maimonides, it indicates that Albalag's interpretive notes are not meant to harmonize religion and philosophy, but to separate them.

On the other hand, Albalag makes two other claims about Scripture and prophecy. These two claims indicate that the secrets of the Torah are somehow known and that they can be compared and contrasted with philosophy. Like his predecessors, Maimonides and Averroes, Albalag states that "there is no distinction between the Torah and philosophy"[35] except with respect to the form in which they express truth.[36] Nonetheless, Albalag still admits that Scripture and philosophy are not constantly in harmony and that they contradict each other. Surprisingly, Albalag claims to accept both as true; neither philosophy nor religion overrides the other.

It is particularly on account of the latter claim that scholars considered the possibility of Albalag's adopting the double truth doctrine. The general scholarly approach tends to assess Albalag's view on the relationship between religion and philosophy against the Maimonidean philosophic understanding of religion that dominated the Jewish intellectual atmosphere in Albalag's time. But since some crucial points of contradiction between religion and philosophy proved to be unresolvable in Albalag's philosophic framework it has been argued that Albalag thought that philosophy and faith "do not

[34] *Tiqqun*, p. 44
[35] Tiqqun, p. 2
[36] *Tiqqun*, p. 2

coincide." [37] In opposition to the "superficial harmony" between religion and philosophy, Albalag sacrificed "the unity of truth" in favor of the double truth theory. [38]

Scholarship on the *Tiqqun* is not extensive. With the exception of George Vajda's fine edition, translation, and notes on the *Tiqqun*[39] the majority of research on Albalag has focused on individual aspects of Albalag's thought; but most attention has been placed on the double truth aspect and its underlying key element, Albalag's theory of prophecy. Vajda's discussion of this aspect of Albalag's thought provides different interpretations. He examines Albalag's statements regarding the existence of two contradictory truths in light of the doctrine of double truth advocated by some Latin Averroists, but he does not arrive at a definite conclusion. Vajda admits his perplexity and suggests that Albalag himself was most likely perplexed regarding the relationship between reason and faith.[40]

Julius Guttmann discusses the issue in two separate works and points to the double truth aspect of Albalag's thought. [41] At the same time, Guttmann draws attention to a number of discrepancies in the *Tiqqun* that render the sincerity of the double truth claim questionable.[42] Charles Touati explains Albalag's notes on the issue in terms of the theory of epistemological relativism. [43] According to Touati, Albalag held truth to be relative to prophets and philosophers such that they have different evaluations of different

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[37] Colette Sirat, *A History of Jewish Philosophy in the Middle Ages*, 1985, 238.
[38] Julius Guttmann, *Philosophies of Judaism*, 1988, 227.
[39] Georges Vajda, *Averrosite Juif, traducteur et commentateur d'Al-Ghazali*, 1960. George Vajd, *Sefer Tiqqun hade'ot* (Yerushalayim : ha-Aḳademyah ha-le'umit ha-Yiśre'elit le-mada'im, 1973) [Hebrew].
[40] Georges Vajda, *Averrosite Juif, traducteur et commentateur d'Al-Ghazali*, 1960, 265-4. George Vajda, *Sefer Tiqqun hade'ot* (1973). Vajda devotes the last chapter of his book on this issue, see pp. 251-266.
[41] Julius Guttmann, *Philosophies of Judaism,* 1998. Julius Guttmann, "Mishnato Shel Isaac Albalag," *sefer ha yuvil* [Hebrew]
[42] Julius Guttmann, *Philosophies of Judaism*, 1988, 227-229.
[43] Charles Touati, "Vérité prophétique et vérité philosophique Chez Isaac Albalag" *Des études juives* 121, 1962, pp. 35-47.

epistemological claims. Based on this theory, Touati, furthermore, poses the question of whether Albalag held the ethico-political values of the Torah to be relative.

Shalom Sadiq examines the double truth claim in relation to Albalag's theory of prophecy, concluding that philosophy and the Torah maintain harmony, yet the prophet possesses access to truth that surpasses human reason.[44] Zinberg,[45] Sirat,[46] Leaman,[47] Cohen-Sherbok,[48] Schwied[49] provide a general overview on Albalag's thought and highlight the double truth aspect. Sarah Klein-Braslavy examines the impact of Albalag's theory of prophecy on other Jewish thinkers.[50]

In addition to studies on the double truth aspect of Albalag's thought, Heimann Auerbach provides an edition with an introduction to the first part of the *Tiqqun*.[51] Charles Manekin examines Albalag's discussion of the problem of Divine knowledge and future contingency[52] and Albalag's view on the fourth figure of syllogism. Steven Harvey discusses the literary feature of the *Tiqqun's* introduction.[53] Symour Feldman, David Lemler, and Racheli Haliva examine some aspects of Albalag's theory of perpetual

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[44] Shalom Sadiq, "La Doctrine De La Double Vérité Dans La pensée Philosophique De Rabbi Isaac Albalag" Revue des études Juives, Vol. 174, 2015, pp. 145-174

[45] Israel Zinberg, "Isaac Albalag and The Doctrine of Double Truth" in the *A history of Jewish Literature*, edited and translated by Bernard Martis (Cleveland, Press of Case Western Reserve University, 1973)

[46] Collete Sirat, *A History of Jewish Philosophy in the Middle Ages*, 1985.

[47] Oliver Leaman,"Jewish Averroism," *History of Islamic Philosophy*, 1996.

[48] Dan Cohen-Sherbok, *Medieval Jewish Philosophy: an Introduction* (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon, 1996).

[49] Eliezer Schweid, *The Classic Jewish Philosopher,* translated by Leonard Levin (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2008) Eliezer Schweid *Ta'm va heqesh* (Ramat-Gan: Masadah,1970) [Hebrew]

[50] Sarah Klein-Braslavy, "Vérité prophétique et vérité philosophique chez Nissim de Gerone. Un interprétation du Récit de la Création et du Récit du Char. *des études juives* 134, 1975.

[51] Heimann Auerbach, "Albalag und seine übersetzung des Makasdi al-Ghazali" printed in *Abū ḥamid al-Gazālī* (d. 505/1111) *Texts and Studie*s, edited by Fuat Sezgin (Frankfurt am Main: Institute for the History of Arabic-Islamic Science at the Johann Wolfgang Goethe University, 1999), 63-107.

[52] Charles Manekin, *Medieval Jewish Philosophical writing,* edited by Charles Manekin (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007). Charles Manekin, "Some Aspects of The Assertoric Syllogism," *History and Philosophy of Logic*. Vol. 17. n1-2 (1996) pp. 49-71.

[53] Steven Harvey, "Author's Introduction as a Gauge For Monitoring Philosophic Influence: The Case of Al-Ghazali," *Tribute to Michael,* edited by Sara Klein-Braslavy et al ([Ramat Aviv]: Universiṭat Tel-Aviv, 2009)

creation.[54] Mauro Zonta examines the impact of Albalag's thought on the Italian philosopher Giovanni Pico.[55]

The present study proposes to bring new insights into the scholarship on Albalag's thought in general and the issue of the double truth in particular. I implement this through a comprehensive study of *Sefer Tiqqun ha-de'ot*. By analyzing the major themes of the treatise, I aim to show that the double truth doctrine has no ground in the *Tiqqun* and that Albalag committed himself to a single truth theory whose foundation is Aristotelianism.

I contend that the conflicting views Albalag presents regarding the relationship between religion and philosophy and the unknowability of the secret meaning of Scripture are intentionally made in order to challenge the philosophical approach to religion, and thus separate religion and philosophy. For Albalag religion and philosophy are necessary for intellectual and social ends respectively. Neither religion nor philosophy could be abandoned. Therefore, although he held philosophy to be *the* source of theoretical truth, he ostensibly continued to support the Torah, even when it explicitly contradicts philosophy, for social and political reasons.

I further propose that the double truth claim serves as a literary device that Albalag employs without truly endorsing it. He does this in order to express his philosophical views freely without the need to compromise philosophy, and without causing offense to the masses' belief system or eliciting the indignation of religious authorities. This proposal

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[54] Symour Feldman, "An Averroist Solution To A Maimonidean Perplexity" *Maimonidean Studies*, vol. 4 (Yeshiva University Press, New York, 2000), 15-31. David Lemler, *Création du monde et arts d'écrire dans la philosophie juive médiévale* (Xe -XVe siècles), doctoral dissertation: École Pratique des Hautes Études, (Paris, 2015). Racheli Haliva, The Origin of The World: An Anti Sceptic Approach in Medieval Jewish Averroism, edited by Racheli Haliva, *Scepticism and Anti Scepticism in Medieval Jewish Philosophy And Thought* (De Gruyter, 2019)

[55] Mauro Zonta, "Due Note Sulle Fonti Ebraiche Di Giovanni Pico E Giordano Burno," *Rinascimento*; Jan (2000)

is suggested by some remarks in the *Tiqqun* that reflect Albalag's concerns about the possible consequences of the spread of philosophy in his time.[56] Both the philosopher and the unlearned person encounter difficulties: the former due to charges of adopting irreligious doctrines, and the latter due to the offenses caused by philosophy to the religious dogmas[57].

That being said, one can show that Albalag's Aristotelianism is merged with a strong skeptical trend. Despite Albalag's rationalism and confidence in Aristotelian science, he simultaneously held that the human intellect is limited, particularly, with respect to metaphysical issues. Whereas this skeptical trend suggests that Albalag would accord Scripture a substantive role in compensating for the shortage in human knowledge, Albalag's skepticism is two-sided: it pertains to Scripture as well. Albalag's emphasis on the impenetrability of prophetic knowledge and the *true* meaning of Scripture is no less significant than his emphasis on the limitation of human reason with respect to metaphysical truth.

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[56] *Tiqqun*, p. 2, 51

[57] I examine Albalag's thought form a Straussian point of view. According to Strauss the secret teaching of medieval philosophers, like Maimonides, lies specifically in the gap separating religion and philosophy rather than their conformity. The concept of the philosophical mind of prophecy was nothing but a noble lie that they used to popularize philosophy and to protect philosophers from the charge that they considered themselves superior to prophets. Whereas I agree with many scholars that Strauss' reading is excessive and in fact involves obvious generalization, I consider *Tiqqun ha-de'ot* to be an accurate reflection of this reading. There are many reasons that render Strauss' reading applicable to the *Tiqqun*, most importantly the fact that Albalag finds no qualms emphasizing the contradiction between religion and philosophy. Moreover, unlike many medieval philosophers who wholeheartedly and thoroughly engaged in philosophical interpretations of Scripture in order to prove their compatibility, Albalag's interpretive notes are not systemic and seem to serve, first and foremost, practical goals: to clear the philosophers from the charge that they destroy "*horsim*" the Torah and to offer a religious legitimatization for philosophy. For Strauss' view see for instance his "Jerusalem and Athens: Some Introductory Reflections," *Studies on Platonic Political Philosophy*, with an introduction by Thomas Pangle (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1983), 147-73. For critiques of Strauss' interpretation see, for instance, Zeev Harvey, "How Leo Strauss Paralyzed the Scholarship on the Guide of the Perplexed in the 20th Century" [in Hebrew], *Iyyun* 50 (2001): 387-96; Carlos Fraenkel, "Theocracy and Autonomy in Medieval Islamic and Jewish Philosophy" *Political Theory* v38 n3 (06/2010): 340-366

Resolving the question of the relationship between religion and philosophy comes as one among other issues on the *Tiqqun's* agenda. As Albalag informs us, the *Tiqqun* has pedagogical aims that it fulfills through al-Ghaz*ā*li's *Maqāṣid al-falāsifa*. Because learning is progressive, from easy to difficult, Albalag chose to translate the *Maqāṣid.* The reason for this specific choice is that the *Maqāṣid* encompasses a large-scale survey of the doctrines of ancient and contemporary philosophers presented in an "intermediary style between philosophy and popular faith,"[58] which makes it a suitable treatise for educating those who do not have sufficient experience in philosophy.[59]

Ironically, the reason Albalag translated the *Maqāṣid* runs in opposition to its author's (assumed) goals as stated in the prologue to the treatise. Abu Hamid al-Ghazāli, known as *ḥūjat al-Islām* (the Proof of Islam), was one of the most influential theologians in the middle ages.[60] Al-Ghazāli was a prolific author. His writings spanned a wide variety of subjects. In addition to numerous theological, legal, epistemological, Sufi works, al-Ghazāli wrote a number of treatises on logic and philosophy, the most important being his *kitāb Tahāfūt al-falāsifa* [61] (The Incoherence of the Philosophers) and *Maqāṣid al-falāsifa* (the Meanings of the Philosophers). In *kitāb Tahāfūt al-falāsifa,* al-Ghazāli raises harsh polemics against contemporary and ancient philosophers, which culminates in him charging Muslim philosophers who adopted Greek philosophy with unbelief. Before

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[58] *Tiqqun*, p. 4
[59] *Tiqqun,* p. 4
[60] For the life and thought of al-Ghazali see Montgomery Watt. *Islamic Philosophy and Theology* (Abingdon, Oxon; New York: Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group), 124-144. Michael Marmura. "Al-Ghazali," *The Cambridge Companion to Arabic Philosophy*, edited by Peter Adamson and Richard C. Tylor (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 137-54.
[61] Al-Ghazali's most significant works include his autobiography *Deliverance from Error,* translated by R. McCarthy (Louisville (Kenn.): Fons Vitae 2000). *Ihyaa ulum al-Din*. 16 parts in 5 vols (Cairo: Lajant Nashr al-Thaqafa al-Islamiyya) *Faysal al-tafriqa bayna l-Islâm wa-l-zandaqa*, edited by S. Dunyâ (Cairo, 1961). *Al-Qistâs al-mustaqîm*, edited by Kamal Ibrahim et al (Baghdād: Maktabat al-Andalus, 1969). *The Niche of Lights: A Parallel English-Arabic Text*, edited and translated by D. Buchman (Provo (Utah): Brigham Young University Press, 1998).

composing his refutation of the philosophers, al-Ghazāli had set down a survey of their doctrines in *kitāb Maqāṣid al-falāsifa*. As al-Ghazāli explains in the introduction to this treatise, his goal in presenting the doctrines of the philosophers is to provide a preparatory work for the refutation to follow in *kitab Tahāfut al-falāsifa*.

> You have requested me to provide a sufficient explanation that would reveal the falling to pieces of the philosophers, their conflicting views, contradictions, and obfuscations. There is no way to accomplish your goal unless I have had explained to you their doctrines and approach; for it is impossible to refute doctrines before being fully acquainted with them and their details…. It will become clear in *kitab al-Tahāfut* what must be dismissed as unsound in their [the philosophers'] doctrines.[62]

Scholars have debated whether this note on the goal of the *Maqāṣid* was originally included in the treatise or was a late addition. [63] Some scholars even argue that the *Maqāṣid* postdates the *Tahāfut*.[64] In Medieval Latin translations of the *Maqāṣid*, al-Ghazāli's future goals as reported in the above quoted note were not known because the preparatory part of the *Maqāṣid* was not translated. Due to this, *Maqāṣid al-falāsifa* became widely known in Medieval Latin as representative of al-Ghazāli's thought. [65] It is clear that Albalag had access to the *Maqāṣid's* prologue and that he was aware of the goals reported therein. This is reflected in one note wherein Albalag criticizes al-Ghazāli's approach in dealing with the issue of divine knowledge, which he believes was devised to help him in the future refutation of the philosophers. Albalag states: "[al-Ghazāli followed this approach] particularly to fulfill the request … and compose a treatise in which he would [reveal] the confusion of the philosophers as is stated in the introduction to the

[62] *Maqāṣid,* pp. 10-11
[63] For this debate see Ayman Shihadeh, "New Lights on the Reception of al-Ghazali's Doctrines of the Philosophers (*Maqāṣid al-Falasifa*)," *In The Age of Averroes,* edited by Peter Adamson (London: Warburg Institute, School of Advanced Study, Nino Aragno, 2011)
[64] Frank Griffel suggests this based on a textual evidence found in manuscript MS London, British Library Or. 3126. See "MS London, British Library Or. 3126: An Unknown Work by al-Ghazali on Metaphysics and Philosophical Theology" *Journal of Islamic Studies*. Vol. 17, Issue1. January, 2006; pp. 1-24
[65] For the reception of the *Maqāṣid* in Medieval Latin, see P. O. Salman, "Algazel et Les Latin" in *Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad al-Ghazzālī (d. 505/1111). Texts and Studies*, 1999. Anthony H. Minnema, "algazel Latinus: The audience of the Summa Theoricae." *Traditio,* Vol. 69, 2014; pp. 153-215.

treatise."[66] By using the *Maqāṣid* for pedagogical goals, Albalag contributes to popularizing philosophy through a treatise whose future goal was, as the data available to Albalag indicates, destroying philosophy.

Translating the *Maqāṣid* is not particularly meant to transmit the opinions of the philosophers as presented by al-Ghazāli. As the title of the book indicates, *sefer Tiqqun ha-de'ot,* Albalag aims to refine and rectify philosophical doctrines. During the time of Albalag, Aristotelianism became the philosophical school *par excellence*.[67] Albalag himself deems Aristotle synonymous to truth, and proceeding from this, he takes upon himself the task of purging Aristotelianism of what he thought to be misconceptions and obscurities brought about by Avicenna, al-Farabi, and ancient commentators. As we read through the *Tiqqun*, Albalag's polemics against these philosophers unfold.

Albalag's understanding of Aristotle is certainly indebted, first and foremost, to Averroes' commentaries and *kitāb Tahāfut al-Tahāfut* in which Averroes responds to al-Ghazali's *Tahāfut al-falāsifa*. The impact of Averroes is evident in Albalag's treatment of different philosophical issues and, particularly, his attacks on al-Ghazāli. But this does not mean that Albalag followed Averroes blindly in all philosophical inquiries. In a few occasions, where Albalag recognizes Averroes' deviation from what he believes to be the correct doctrine of Aristotle, Albalag does not hesitate to register his objection to Averroes. A case in point is Albalag's critique of Averroes for deviating from Aristotle by occasionally admitting the premise maintaining that from the One only one thing proceeds. We have no reason to assume that Albalag engaged with Aristotle independently of

[66] *Tiqqun*, p. 78
[67] Charles Manekin, *Medieval Jewish Philosophical Writings*, 2007, 140-43.

Averroes' commentaries. In the contexts where Albalag refers directly to Aristotle or criticizes Averroes, we assume that he is adopting independent interpretations of the quotations made by Averroes from Aristotle.

The present study is divided into two parts. The first part, comprising three chapters, is devoted to examining the major theoretical issues involved in the question of the relationship between religion and philosophy and the double truth claim. Chapter one treats the question of the relationship between religion and philosophy from a purely epistemological perspective. Two central concepts to the *Tiqqun* provide the framework of this chapter: *yedi'ah* (knowledge) and *'emunah* (belief). Albalag uses the two terms to differentiate reason-based and authority-based knowledge. Although Albalag does not explicitly identify other aspects of the *yedi'ah-'emunah* distinction, I propose that this distinction is not exclusively methodological, but involves a qualitative aspect: the epistemic value obtained through *yedi'ah vis-à-vis 'emunah*. Albalag holds a firm commitment to the ideal of certainty to such as extent that knowing the truth must be accompanied by a verified awareness that the acquired knowledge involves no doubts. This ideal of certainty, I conclude, raises implications for the epistemic value of *'emunah* and leads the reader to conclude that certain knowledge is obtained only through *yedi'ah*. To prove this I examine Albalag's evaluation of different logical tools against the scheme of hierarchal assents adopted by medieval Aristotelians and against his view of the literary character of Scripture.

Chapter two examines Albalag's theory of prophecy. The double truth claim rests on a conception of prophecy that assigns prophets unique epistemological qualities. In addition to their theoretical faculty, prophets possess a supra rational mode of cognition by

virtue of which they have access to knowledge that lies beyond human reason. What prophets apprehend via this mode of cognition surpasses reason-based knowledge not only in quantity, but also in quality. Thus, what a prophet perceives through prophecy may not be in accordance with reason and nature-based knowledge, and hence truth of philosophy and truth of prophecy can be in conflict. In case of contradiction, neither prophecy nor philosophy overrides the other, but one should accept them both as true. In this chapter, I examine Albalag's theory of prophecy against the epistemological and metaphysical frameworks of the *Tiqqun* and against theories of prophecy in the medieval philosophic discourse. I conclude that this conception of prophecy does not rest on scientific ground and that Albalag devised it for pragmatic reasons. From one side, it reassures the masses regarding the superiority of prophets and prophecy over philosophers and philosophy. From another, by claiming the existence of inaccessible supra-rational prophetic knowledge, Albalag seems to challenge any attempt to reconcile Scripture with philosophy, and hence liberate philosophy from the shackles of religion.

Chapter three provides an examination of Albalag's political thought as consisting of his viewpoint on the qualities of the leader and his role in perfecting society, on the one hand, and the role of the Torah in the accomplishment of human happiness, on the other. In this chapter I relate the conclusion I made in chapter two to a significant passage in the *Tiqqun* in which Albalag speaks of a righteous leader whose task is to unite people in creed and praxis. The existence of this leader is necessitated by the needs of human beings and made possible by the eternal divine providence that provides the natural means necessary for the continuous existence of the human species. The argument Albalag provides for the sake of the existence of a righteous leader, which corresponds to

Avicenna's proof of prophecy, is included in this schema. Albalag, however, omits altogether the mention of prophecy and uses a generic term in referring to the righteous leader, *moreh ẓedeq*. This omission, I argue, supports the conclusion of chapter two, namely that Albalag did not really believe in the existence of prophecy of supernatural qualities. In speaking of the means necessary for the permanence of the human species, Albalag offers a picture of the features and duties of the leader in accommodation with his naturalistic perception of the world and the reality of human nature and existence. With respect to the role of the Torah in the accomplishment of human happiness, I investigate Albalag's ideas against Maimonides' criterion for divine law, namely the aim of directing people toward intellectual perfection. The way Albalag presents the aim of the Torah deviates considerably from Maimonides to such an extent that Albalag relegates the Torah to merely socio-political duties, whereas philosophy becomes the real means for human happiness.

The second part, comprising two chapters, is devoted to Albalag's analysis of topics in physics and metaphysics. This part aims to show that Albalag's philosophical investigations in matters related to physics and metaphysics 1) provide no supporting evidence for the double truth claim, and 2) reinforce the argument that Albalag regarded Aristotle to be *the* truth. Chapter four examines some aspects of Albalag's conception of God against the background of al-Farabi, Avicenna, al-Ghazāli, Maimonides, and Averroes. In this chapter I discuses three issues related to the conception of God: His relation to the Prime Mover, the domain and manner of His wisdom, and will. In Albalag's investigation of these three aspects, he hardly applies the double truth claim and undertakes the task of establishing a conception of God in accordance with the Aristotelian

conception of divine perfection. This includes rigorous attempts to purge what he believes to be correct Aristotelian doctrines from the misconceptions brought about by al-Farabi and Avicenna. However, Albalag's investigation displays a tension between dogmatism and skepticism, which Albalag sometimes resolves in favor of skepticism. Particularly, in his investigation of divine wisdom and will Albalag holds firm to the standards of the Aristotelian conception of divine perfection, but he generally admits that determining the exact nature, the essence, of these divine attributes is not possible due to the limitation of human reason with respect to metaphysical truth. While we would expect Albalag to compensate the shortage in human knowledge through prophetic knowledge or declare simple acceptance of the Torah's doctrine about God, Albalag contents himself with the skeptical approach (specifically with respect to metaphysics), which he attributes to Aristotle.

Chapter five takes up the most crucial controversy with which Albalag was concerned: the issue of creation versus eternity. In his discussion of the issue, Albalag presents extensive argumentations in favor of what he describes as the theory of eternal creation, at the same time he declares acceptance of the Torah's doctrine as true. It is only with respect to the issue of eternity versus creation that Albalag applies the double truth doctrine. My analysis in this chapter aims to prove that neither the theory of eternal creation nor the Torah's doctrine of creation represent Albalag's actual opinion. Based on a deep analysis of Albalag's scheme of causation in the celestial and sublunary realms, I conclude that Albalag perceived of the universe as eternally existent, but dependent on God only with respect to motion. Albalag uses the formula of eternal creation to soften his commitment to the eternity doctrine, whereas the declaration about the truth of the Torah's

doctrine aims to reinforce the masses' belief in the Torah which is tied up with the creation doctrine.

Part 1: The Relationship between Religion and Philosophy

Emunah, yedi'ah, and Certainty: A Reconstruction of the *Tiqqun's* Epistemology

It wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that the chief concern of the *Tiqqun* is epistemological. Like Maimonides, Albalag addresses and proposes to resolve the epistemological difficulties of his time. The *Guide of the perplexed* is devoted to a perplexed student who, upon learning Aristotelian philosophy, came to realize the incompatibility of a superficial understanding of the Bible and philosophy.[68] This perplexity would have required the student to make the bitter decision of giving up on either what he (mistakenly) believes to be the foundations of religion or philosophy. The issue might seem different with the *Tiqqun's* audience for whom the critical question is not whether philosophy and religion agree or disagree but how "certainty" could be obtained. To be sure, the question on the compatibility of religion and philosophy is not absent from the *Tiqqun*. Albalag examines different views regarding the relationship of religion and philosophy and presents an unusual view of his own. But this comes, more or less, as part of the broader question about the conditions and means for obtaining certainty.

The question of certainty lends itself to another significant question regarding the ultimate goal of man and the means for achieving it. Like Aristotle and Maimonides, Albalag held contemplation to be the highest virtue. The path to true happiness is knowledge. Man achieves true happiness as he attains knowledge of "all truth."[69] The features of this knowledge and the means for it form a significant subject of investigation in the *Tiqqun*.

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[68] *Guide*, Letter of Dedicatory
[69] *Tiqqun,* Introduction, pp. 2-3

Due to the centrality of epistemology to the *Tiqqun's* philosophical enterprise, I devote this chapter, which is divided into four sections, to examining the major principles of Albalag's theory of knowledge. My examination is based on the logical part of the *Tiqqun* and Albalag's epistemological notes as employed in his analyses of different philosophical questions. Section one introduces the distinction between the concepts *yedi'ah* and *'emunah* and proffers the epistemological problems arising from this distinction. Section two offers initial assessment of Albalag's concept of *'emunah* against the background of the Post-Maimonidean debate on the meaning of the term. Section three discusses the criteria and means for true knowledge and illustrates the significance of the criterion of certainty. The concluding section returns to the concept of *'emunah.* This section measures the value of *'emunah* against the epistemological criterion of certainty.

1. *Yedi'ah* and *'Emunah*: An Overview and Questions

In accordance with his overall abbreviated style, Albalag employs the terms *emunah* and *yedi'ah* without clearly specifying their meanings. In the logical part of the *Tiqqun*, the term *yedi'ah* is used in a generic sense, describing all types of knowledge "to which the soul acquiesces." This includes "sense perception," authority-based knowledge, "first principles," and investigation-based knowledge.[70] The term continues to be used in this generic sense throughout the logical part of the *Tiqqun*.

In the preface to the *Tiqqun* and the rest of the treatise, in which Albalag expresses his own philosophical views, on the other hand, the term *yedi'ah* is not used in the generic

[70] The Logical part of Albalag's Commentary on the *Maqāsid*, edited by Heimann Auerbach, "Albalag und seine übersetzung des Makasdi al-Ghazali" reprinted in *Abū ḥamid al-Gazālī* (d. 505/1111) *Texts and Studie*s, edited by Fuat Sezgin (1991).

sense as in the logical part. Even though Albalag does not provide a clear definition of the term, his actual use indicates that it has a specific signification regarding the features of and means for attaining true knowledge. The first, and most puzzling, mention of the term *yedi'ah* comes in a context wherein Albalag describes the distinctive epistemic quality of prophets. One of the central claims of the *Tiqqun* pertains to the definition of prophecy and the epistemological advantage of prophets. Prophets are unique individuals who, by virtue of their supra-rational capacity, have access to a domain of knowledge to which nobody else does.[71] With respect to this domain of knowledge, prophetic apprehension forms a mode of *yedi'ah.* Albalag explains this idea as follow:

> No one can share with the prophet his prophetic apprehension, let alone surpass it. Therefore, this apprehension constitutes *yedi'ah* with respect to the prophet, and *'emunah* with respect to the recipient (*meqabbēl*).[72]

Here Albalag differentiates between two modes of apprehension: *yedi'ah* and *'emunah.* The contrast between these two modes indicates that *yedi'ah* pertains to a first-hand knowledge, whereas *'emunah* is rooted in a body of transmitted knowledge accepted on account of authority. This, however, does not seem to be the key feature underlying the *yedi'ah – 'emunah* distinction.

In the post-Maimonidean discourse, under the influence of Averroes, philosophers used the term *yedi'ah* in reference to knowledge in the Aristotelian sense, *episteme*.[73] They argued that to know something is to know by way of a demonstration why the thing is what it is and that it cannot be otherwise. In other words, *yedi'ah* results in an affirmation of the truthfulness of the cognized object, or, simply stated, certainty. When

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[71] *Tiqqun*, Introduction, p. 3
[72] Ibid, p. 4
[73] On the signification of the term *yedi'ah* in the post-Maimonidean discourse see Shalom Rosenberg, "The Concept of *Emunah* in Post-Maimonidean Jewish Philosophy," *Studies in Medieval Jewish History and Literature*, edited by I. Twersky and Jay M Harris (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979). Charles Manekin, "Hebrew philosophy in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries: an overview," *History of Jewish Philosophy* (London; New York: Routledge, 1997)

Albalag uses *yedi'ah* to describe prophetic knowledge, we must exclude associating it with speculative knowledge, since Albalag repeatedly and emphatically differentiates between prophetic perception and other rational modes of cognition. Albalag clearly distinguishes between these two modes even with respect to the prophet: what a prophet "knows by way of prophecy" is different in content and features from what "he knows by speculation."[74] The remaining assumption would be that by associating *yedi'ah* with the knowledge arrived at via prophecy Albalag wants to reflect the quality of certainty on prophets. Thus, *yedi'*ah as applied to prophets means that the mode of apprehension designated as prophecy accords prophets certain knowledge.

This, of course, raises a question regarding the epistemic value of *'emunah* vis-à-vis prophetic *yedi'ah*. Could *'emunah* lead the recipient to certainty just as prophecy does with respect to prophets? In theory, this should be the case, provided that we have credence in the authority of prophets and the authenticity of the transmitted tradition. But this answer wouldn't be convincing for those who grow "doubtful"[75] of the authenticity of the transmitted tradition. Indeed, this skeptical inclination, as Albalag himself points out, constitutes one of the major epistemological difficulties that prompted him to compose the *Tiqqun*.[76] From a philosophical perspective, moreover, authority-based knowledge does not qualify as a means for certainty. Al-Farabi stresses this point clearly as he explains the conditions that determine certainty. As Deborah Black notes, al-Farabi excludes "all forms of second-hand knowledge which can't be traced back to the knower's *direct* awareness of the extrinsic subject of belief" from the domain of absolute certainty. Al-

[74] *Tiqqun*, note. 30, p. 44
[75] *Tiqqun*, Introduction, p. 4
[76] Ibid

Farabi includes "every thing based on mere authority" in this evaluation.[77] Bearing in mind both the skeptical inclination and the philosophical orientation of the *Tiqqun's* addressee, it is hard to see, how Albalag would convince the reader that *'emunah*, as a second-hand source of knowledge, could achieve certainty.

The question about the epistemic value of *'emunah* pertains, as well, to other considerations. Setting to the side the aforementioned passage, the contrast between *'emunah* and *yedi'ah* pertains to human rather than prophetic knowledge—which assumingly belongs to the specie of Divine knowledge as Albalag's theory of prophecy indicates. In the course of his discussion of the issue of eternity versus creation, Albalag draws a sharp contrast between two methods for resolving this issue, "reason" (*derekh yedi'ah*) and "faith" (*derekh 'emunah*), [78] without defining their respective relevance to accomplishing certainty. One might justifiably assume that, given Albalag's characteristically prevailing praise of the Aristotelian scientific method, the former mode must be superior to the latter and more capable of leading to truth and certainty. Nonetheless, this assumption faces a challenge as we come across two puzzling statements in the *Tiqqun* in which Albalag places "*yedi'ah*" and "*'emunah*" on the same footing with respect to truth, despite their being associated with the opposing doctrines of eternity and creation.

> You may find that my reason-based knowledge with respect to many things is *contrary* (*hefekh*) to my belief (*'emunatī)* because I know by means of demonstration that my knowledge is true (*'emet)* on account of nature and believe on the authority of the prophets that its *opposite* is true.[79]

[77] Deborah L. Black, " Knowledge *('ilm*) And Certitude (*Yaqin*) in al-Farabi's Epistemology." *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy*, Vol. 16, 2006, pp. 11-45.
[78] *Tiqqun,* note. 30, p. 51
[79] *Tiqqun*, note. 30, p. 43

Elsewhere, Albalag shows that scripture and philosophy impart conflicting doctrines about the age of the world, yet they are simultaneously true.

> As you discern my exposition, you shall know that my knowledge (*yedi'atī*) is true and my belief (*'emunatī*) is true.[80]

Many questions arise from these two statements: how serious is Albalag regarding the simultaneous truthfulness of the opposing doctrines of reason and belief? Knowing that truth is closely associated with certainty—as will be discussed below—can we say that both *'emunah* and *yedi'ah* are equal sources of certainty? To formulate the question differently, considering the indicated conflict between the deliverances of reason and the content of belief, could one be certain about a doctrine and its antithesis? If the answer is yes, which would enhance the double-truth hypothesis, how can we reconcile this with Albalag's assertion that "the truth communicated by the Torah and philosophy is identical and that there is no distinction whatsoever between them"?[81] Moreover, examining the issue from a soteriological perspective, can we say that *'emunah* and *yedi'ah* are both capable of leading to intellectual perfection and immortality of the soul? These questions will be the pivot around which the present chapter revolves. To begin with, I briefly discuss Maimonides' conception of *'emunah* and the controversy it aroused, which obviously lies at the background of the *'emunah - yedi'ah* distinction in the *Tiqqun*.

2. Reason-based Versus Simple Belief in Post-Maimonidean Discourse

The root of the word *'emunah* lies in biblical and rabbinic literature, where it connoted "trust," "reliance," and "acceptance."[82] Post-Maimonidean philosophers infused

[80] Ibid, note. 30, p. 52
[81] Ibid, Introduction
[82] Charles H. Manekin, "Hebrew Philosophy in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries: an Overview," 1997, p. 353.

this terminology with additional meanings. Due to the lack of technical philosophical terms in Hebrew, *'emunah* was first used in rendering the Arabic term *'itiqad,* referring to reason-based belief.[83] The word *'emunah* continued to be used in this sense in the Jewish philosophical literature through the 13th and 14th centuries as many scientific works were transmitted to the west and translated from Arabic to Hebrew. Later, as scholasticism began to influence Jewish thought, *'emunah* took on the meaning of "faith" in the sense of authority-based assent or *fides*. [84]

Reason-based *'Emunah*

The rational sense of *'emunah* is reminiscent of Maimonides' concept of *'itiqād,* certain belief. To understand the significance of this concept to Maimonides' philosophical enterprise and its influence on latter Jewish philosophers, one should consider the technical term *yaqīn* (certainty), which refers to a cognitive state corresponding to Aristotle's *episteme*, the end of knowledge by demonstration. As Deborah Black explains, *yaqīn* was substituted for *epistemē* in Arabic philosophy but maintained the Greek word's connotation.[85]

The most explicit reflection of the characteristics of *yaqīn* appears in *kitāb al Burhān and Sharāi't al-Yaqin al-Farabi*, in which al-Farabi stipulates a set of conditions for certainty:

> Absolute certitude is 1) to believe of something that it is thus or not thus 2) to agree that it corresponds and is not opposed to the existence of the thing externally 3) to know that it corresponds to it 4) it is not possible that it not corresponds to it or that it be opposed to it; and further 5) that there does not exist anything opposed to it at any time; and that all of this does not happen accidentally, but essentially.[86]

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[83] Ibid
[84] I am grateful for Professor Zev Harvey for drawing my attention to this development in the meaning of *emunah* in the Jewish philosophical literature.
[85] Deborah L. Black, "Knowledge (*'ilm*) And Certitude (*Yaqin*) in al-Farabi's Epistemology." *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy*, Vol. 16, 2006, pp.11-45.
[86] Quotation is taken from D. Black, "Knowledge and Certitude," 2006, p. 15.

Al-Farabi's concept of certainty had a clear impact on Maimonides' epistemology.[87] When discussing divine attributes, Maimonides refers to the concept of certainty and posits a set of conditions for it that is parallel with those established by al-Farabi. It is precisely in this context that the concept belief takes on a rationalist dimension.

> Belief *(i'tiqād*) is the affirmation that what has been represented is outside the mind just as it has been represented in the mind. If together with this belief it is realized that a belief different from it is in no way possible, and that no starting point can be found in the mind for a rejection of this belief, then there is certainty (*yaqīn*).[88]

Like al-Farabi, Maimonides holds that in order for a particular belief to elevate to the level of certainty, it has to meet a number of conditions. A subject (S) can be said to have achieved certitude concerning a proposition (P) only if: (1) S believes P; (2) P corresponds to an extra-mental existence; (3) S recognizes that not-P is in no way possible, and (4) S recognizes the no proposition (G) that could lead to the rejection of P is possible.[89]

Upon fulfilling these criteria, a person will dispel all doubt with regard to her belief. The question that arises, of course, is how can these criteria be met? What method should a seeker of certainty employ in order to transform her simple belief, which may be true or false, to an objective belief whose truthfulness is accompanied and verified by awareness of its certitude? To al-Farabi, certainty is fundamentally related to a demonstrative syllogism, although he also mentions lower degrees of certainty, or near-certainty that can

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[87] Charles H. Manekin, "Maimonides and the Arabic Aristotelian Tradition of Epistemology," *Beyond Religious Borders*, edited by Miriam Goldstein and David M. Freidnereich (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 78. Although the rational character of *Emunah* presents itself clearly in the *Guide*, some scholars have different evaluations of the Maimonides' conception of *Emunah*; see for instance Abraham Nuril, "Remarks on Maimonides' Epistemology," *Maimonides And Philosophy: Papers presented at the sixth Jerusalem Philosophical Encounter, May 1985*, edited by Shlomo Pines and Yirmiyahu Yovil (Dordrecht; Boston: M. Nijhoff Publishers, 1986), 36-52.
[88] *Guide* I:50
[89] Charles Manekin, "Maimonides and the Arabic Aristotelian Tradition of Epistemology," 2012, 79.

be achieved by means of dialectical and rhetorical syllogisms.[90] A subject can affirm the infallibility of her belief either through immediate knowledge, which applies to primary principles, or through demonstration.[91]

Similarly, Maimonides associates certainty with knowledge achieved by means of demonstration,[92] which applies to both theological and scientific matters. Following the explanation of the conditions of certain belief, Maimonides points to the particular theological domains where certainty can be accomplished:

> When you shall cast off desires of habits, you shall be endowed with understanding, and shall reflect on what I shall say in the following chapters, which will treat the negation of attributes, you shall necessarily have certainty in this matter.[93]

As Charles Manekin notes, the "following chapters" contain philosophical speculation and treat a variety of fundamental theological matters, such as the proof of God's existence, His unity, and His incorporeality.[94] These are many occasions where Maimonides posits *būrāhn*, demonstration, as the key methodology for achieving certainty about theological questions. The technical and methodological considerations of certainty (*yaqīn*) that are associated with belief, as Maimonides defines it, render belief akin to demonstrative knowledge. [95]

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[90] In the *Book of Demonstration* al-Farabi points to three types of syllogism: demonstrative, dialectical, and rhetorical syllogisms. Of these, only demonstrative syllogisms can produce certain assents. Dialectical and rhetorical syllogisms lead to proximate certainty. See al-Farabi, "Book of Demonstration," *Classical Arabic Philosophy: And Anthology of Sources*, edited and translated with an introduction by Jon McGinnis and David C. Reisman (Indianapolis: Hackett Pub. Company, 2007), 63-73.

[91] In *kitab al-Burhan,* al-Farabi maintains: "And our saying it is impossible for it not to correspond or to be opposed," is the assurance and strength with which convection and belief enter into the definition of certitude. And it is necessarily required that the belief does correspond and that it is not possible for it not be correspond, and that it is be in some state that is not possible to opposes. Rather its state is such that it is necessarily required that it correspond to the thing and not be opposed to nor contradict it. And this strength and assurance in the belief is an acquisition from the thing which produces the belief, *this being naturally or through the syllogism* Conditions of Certitude." Quotation is taken from D. Black "Knowledge and Certitude," 2006, p. 24.

[92] Maimonides, *Treatise on Logic,* Chapter VIII, edited and translated by Israel Efros (New York: American Academy for Jewish Research,1938), 48-49.

[93] *Guide* (1:50)

[94] Charles H. Manekin, " Maimonides and the Arabic Aristotelian Tradition of Epistemology"

[95] Shalom Rosenberg holds that Maimonides' concept of *emunah* is open to two possibilities: subjective and objective interpretations; see "The Concept of *Emunah* in Post-Maimonidean Philosophy," p. 284. Charles Manekin, by contrast, stresses on the objective side of Maimonides' concept of *emunah*; see "Maimonides and the Arabic Aristotelian

Post-Maimonidean philosophers largely adopted this interpretation of *emunah*, which I will refer to as "rational *'emunah*," to employ common scholarly terminology. As Shalom Rosenberg points out, after Maimonides, philosophers excluded simple belief from the domain of certainty. Moses Narboni stands out as a defender of the rationalist interpretation of *'emunah*.[96] In his commentary on the *Guide*, in part I, chapter 50, Narboni stresses the rational character of *'emunah* in such a way that the distinction between it and demonstrative knowledge disappears. According to Narboni, there cannot be such things as "true and false *emunah*" because *emunah* is a cognitive act that "takes place when a cognizer *assents and affirms* a correspondence between a mental concept and extra-mental reality."[97] Clearly, Narboni here alludes to the second condition for certainty stipulated by al-Farabi and Maimonides. By associating this condition with *'emunah,* Narboni obviously deems *emunah* methodologically and qualitatively akin to *yedi'ah.*

The Double-Faith Theory

The discussed characteristics of certainty raise many inquiries about authority-based belief that involves no rational verification: what is the epistemic quality of this type of belief? What degree of certainty can be attributed to knowledge passed down by Scripture and the sages? Is the religious authority of the biblical text and rabbinic exegeses sufficient to accord certainty to the believer? These questions preoccupied intellectuals of the three Abrahamic religions and stimulated varied views of the nature and epistemic value of religious belief. According to Wolfson, the views of medieval philosophers with

Tradition of Epistemology" and " Hebrew Philosophy in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries: an Overview," p. 355. See also Hava Tirosh-Rothschild, "Jewish Philosophy on The Eve of Modernity," *History of Jewish Philosophy* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 505.

[96] Rosenberg, "The Concept of *Emunah* in Post-Maimonidean Philosophy" p. 278.

[97] Moses Narboni, *Be'ur le-sefer Moreh nevukhim*, edited by D. J. Goldental (1852) [my translation]

respect to this issue rest on the Aristotelian twofold meaning of the term "faith": "faith in the sense of the acceptance of the truth as self-evident and faith in the sense of the acceptance of the truth of a proposition as established by demonstration."[98] Based on this twofold meaning of faith, Wolfson groups the views of medieval religious philosophers into three theories: the "double faith" theory, the "single faith theory of the authoritative type," and "the single faith theory of the rationalist type."[99] He includes the views of Saadia Gaon, Averroes, and St. Thomas in the first theory, according to which the teachings of religion are to be accepted as both "self-evident truths and as rationally demonstrated truths." Knowledge imparted by Scripture and tradition may be accepted on the basis of authority and as true in the same way that one accepts primary premises. But it may also be accepted as true on the basis of speculation, in the same way that one accepts conclusions of syllogistic reasoning. Both modes of faith, Wolfson argues, are "equally perfect," especially insofar as Saadia's conception of faith is concerned.[100]

Yehudah Ha-Levi and Maimonides, respectively, represent the other two single-faith theories, the authoritarian and the rationalist.[101] Considering Maimonides' criteria for certainty and the rational sense of *'emunah*, the authoritative type of faith is obviously inferior to reason-based faith. As Wolfson remarks, the rational sense of belief was picked up by philosophers such as Narboni, but its implication for the conventional conception of faith created tension for other thinkers who thought that such a conception of *emunah* removed authority-based faith from the realm of certainty. It was specifically this concern

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[98] H. Wolfson, "the Double Faith Theory in Saadia, Averroes, and St. Thomas," *Studies in The History of Philosophy And Religion* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1973), 583-584.
[99] Ibid
[100] Saadia considers the fourth source of knowledge, tradition, as unqualifiedly true. In the same time, the truth of tradition may also be accepted based on speculation. Book *of Doctrines and Beliefs*, Book II, p. 7 for a discussion on Saadia's theory of knowledge see Israel Efros, "Saadia's Book of Beliefs and Opinions," *The Jewish Quarterly Review*, New Series, Vol. 33, No. 2 (Oct., 1942), pp. 133-170
[101] H. Wolfson, "the Double Faith Theory in Saadia, Averroes, and St. Thomas," *Studies in The History of Philosophy And Religion* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1973), 583-584

that led some thinkers, such as Joseph Albo, to reinstate the traditional connotation of *emunah* by liberating it from the rational restrictions imposed by Maimonides. In *Sefer ha-'Ikkarim*, Albo writes:

> Belief applies in relation to things, which the believer himself did not observe with his senses, which someone else—a popular or reliable person, or a number of prominent persons observed at a given time, and which has come down to the believer from the man or men who observed them, by a continuous tradition from father to son—this is worthy of belief almost as much as that to which the believer's own senses testify, though he cannot prove it by reason.[102]

In the same vein, Abravanel, in his commentary on the *Moreh Nevukim (*I:50*)*, insists that belief is an acceptance of a transmitted religious doctrine on the basis of its prophetic or miraculous origin. He further criticizes Maimonides and Narboni for rationalizing *'emunah*:

> I have not found in the Holy Scripture that *'emunah* is said of a thing comprehend by reasoning and speculation, as being equal in meaning to knowledge and comprehension. However, *emunah* is received (*meqûbelet*) rather than being apprehended (*mûseget*) by means of investigation (*ḥiqqûr*) or speculation *('Iyyun*)" [103]

Turning to the *Tiqqun*: Although Albalag does not formally engage in the debate, his writing reflects a profound tension between the two senses of *'emunah*. Usually, where *emunah* is mentioned, it signifies authority-based acceptance of prophetic teachings. Religious doctrines, Albalag states, must be accepted as they are "without [seeking] a rational support."[104] The context of this statement is Albalag's critique of Maimonides' treatment of eternity versus creation.

In his critique, Albalag maintains that (1) the philosophers' arguments for the sake of the eternity doctrine are "demonstrative" (*mofti,*), and (2) that Maimonides was aware of and accepted the demonstrability of the eternity doctrine, hence he secretly adhered to it.

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[102] Joseph Albo, *Book of Principles,* Treatise I: 19, edited and translated by Isaac Husik (1946), 166.
[103] Isaac Abrabnel, *Perush 'al sefer Moreh Nevukhim* (I:50), edited by Prague M. Landa (1831) [my translation].
[104] *Tiqqun*, note. 30, p. 51

Maimonides' opposition to the philosophers and defense of the creation doctrine, in Albalag's view, are not motivated by scientific convictions but rather by religious and public ones.

> Why didn't *ha-rav ha-moreh* reveal his view on this issue [the eternity doctrine]? Sometimes, he speaks in symbols, indirectly hinting and bringing attestation that this [the eternity doctrine] is his conviction (*emûnatô*)…but sometimes he refutes the philosophers and uses *specious arguments* (*taʿanōt ʿiyyūniyyōt mezūyyafōt*). [He] tries his best to disprove their syllogistic reasoning, claiming that the creation of the world is one of the foundations of the Torah that can't be refuted…. Because ha-Rav was faithful, he concealed the issue [the truth about the eternity doctrine] that he thought was not [convenient to] reveal.[105]

The critique that Albalag raises against Maimonides, is not specifically directed against the latter's motivations for hiding his scientific convictions. Indeed, Albalag shows a similar consideration with respect to religion and the masses. As he elaborates, although the *Tiqqun* is not "religious in nature," it agrees with the *Guide* on the necessity of preserving religion and caring for the public welfare. The *Tiqqun,* however, follows a different approach, one that takes into consideration the religious and social needs of the masses without having to compromise philosophical doctrines. This approach, Albalag explains, consists in accepting the doctrines of the Torah at face value without rational justification "*miblī re'ayah.*"[106] Unlike Maimonides and Averroes,[107] who confine this type of belief to non-philosophers, Albalag addresses philosophers and the masses alike. He thus presents himself as simple believer who accepts the literal meaning of the Torah without seeking a rational justification of its doctrines:

> I could have followed Maimonides' approach, but there are three reasons that [made me] deviate form his way: First, he wanted to establish (*le-qayem*) the literal meaning of the

[105] *Tiqqun*, note. 30, p. 50
[106] *Tiqqun*, note. 30, p. 51
[107] In *The Decisive Treatise* Averroes prohibits philosophers from trying to profess beliefs such as those professed by the multitude, pp. 8, 10.

> Torah and refute the philosophers' doctrines…whereas *I acknowledge* (*môdeh*) the literal meaning of the Torah by simple belief without [supporting it with] a rational proof.[108]

The distinction between Albalag and Maimonides regarding the nature of *emunah* is closely tied to their respective approaches to religion and philosophy. Within the framework of his philosophical approach to religion, Maimonides, in discussing the origin of the world, seeks to provide a rational justification for the belief in the creation doctrine. Taken literally, the Torah definitely conflicts with philosophy as represented in Aristotle's teachings. Whereas the conflict could, as Maimonides admits, be resolved through allegorical interpretation, he refrains, for religious and scientific reasons, from interpreting the account of Creation in terms of the eternity doctrine.[109] For Maimonides "the belief in the creation of the world" overrides the belief in the eternity doctrine, not only because it lies at the "foundation of the entire Law,"[110] but also because it proves to be more logically probable.[111]

Maimonides still holds that the answer to the question of the origin of the world is inconclusive but he thinks that the scientific discoveries in his time tip the scale to the creation doctrine. Aristotle too, according to Maimonides, thought that neither the eternity nor the creation doctrine is demonstrative, but he considered the eternity doctrine to be more plausible based on the insufficient scientific data available to him.

The way Maimonides deals with the conflict between religion and philosophy on the origin of the world might have seemed to Albalag as an instantiation of the rational sense of belief which he opposes and suggests, instead, that the creation doctrine should be accepted by way of simple belief. Unlike many of his contemporaries, Albalag refrains

[108] *Tiqqun*, note. 30, p. 51
[109] *Guide*,
[110] Ibid, II: 27
[111] Ibid, II: 23-27

from rationally justifying the creation doctrine. A similar approach was adopted by the Jewish Averroist, Elijah Delmedigo (d. 1493). Delmedigo argued that in cases of "clear conflict" between religion and philosophy, one should not seek to scientifically prove the Torah's position by engaging with "syllogistic disputes" but accept it on the authority of tradition, i.e. according to "the meaning generally admitted among the adherents of religion."[112] With respect to the conflict on the origin of the world, as Fraenkel elucidates, Delmedigo does not follow Maimonides's way because it would set the creation doctrine at risk in case new scientific discoveries that testify to the validity of the contrary proposition should appear.[113]

Perhaps, Albalag too might have advocated "simple belief" due to his concern for the validity of Scripture. The difference between Albalag and Delmedigo, however, is not insignificant. Albalag refrains from engaging in syllogistic dispute not because he thought that scientific progress *might* in the future provide evidence against the doctrine of the Torah. Rather, the issue is scientifically resolved in the here and now in favour of the eternity doctrine. Syllogistic reasoning, as Albalag admits, yields no evidence that might permit us refute the eternity doctrine. [114]As such, if religion enters in a dispute with philosophy it would definitely lose validity. For Albalag, Maimonides' attempt to rationalize the belief in the creation doctrine would seem to do harm to religion than support it. The most feasible alternative is, as Albalag proposes, to accept what scripture imparts by way of simple belief.

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[112] Carlos Fraenkel, "Reconsidering the Case of Elijah Delmedigo's Averroism and Its Impact of Spinoza," *Renaissance Averroism and Its aftermath: Arabic Philosophy in Early Modern Europe*, edited by A. Akasoy and G. Giglioni (Dordrecht; New York: Springer 2013), 233.
[113] Ibid
[114] *Tiqqun*, note. 30, p. 51

While the simple sense of '*emunah* removes one difficulty, it gives rise to another. In the absence of a rational justification, what would be the basis for the authority of Torah? Oddly enough, Albalag appeals to "miracles" to support the truth of the Torah. Let's put aside explaining what Albalag means by miracles with respect to prophecy and the Torah—this subject will be discussed in the next chapter—to draw attention to the weakness of Albalag's appeal to miracles. For my purpose here, it is important to note that the doctrine of miracles has no ground in the *Tiqqun*. Throughout his treatise, Albalag displays an uncompromising commitment to Aristotelian naturalism and therefore he denies miracles, affirming that nature functions according to an immutable order determined by the eternal wisdom of God. Corresponding to the immutability of divine wisdom, the natural order is immutable; "nothing is to be added or to be subtracted" from the universe.[115]

Is it not self-contradictory that a staunch defender of Aristotelian naturalism relies on supernaturalism in supporting the Torah? But even if one assumes that miracles are not naturally impossible they hold no strong value in substantiating prophecy. Medieval Aristotelians, including Maimonides and Averroes, considered miracles an unsubstantial basis for faith.[116] Maimonides specially advises against supporting the Torah by appealing to miracles. Why then would Albalag deviate from this philosophical assessment without presenting a convincing argument? Eventually, we have many reasons to believe that Albalag's appealing to miracles is insincere. Consequently, the ground for simple belief is annulled.

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[115] *Tiqqun*, note. 30, p. 47

[116] *Sefer ha-Mada', hilcot yesodi ha-torah*:8, translated by H.M. Russell and J. Weinberg. For Averroes see *Faith and Reason in Islam: Averroes' Exposition of Religious Argument*s, translated by Ibrahim Y. Najjar (Oxford: Oneworld, 2001), 92-100.

Now, one can imagine the reader of the *Tiqqun* caught in a perplexing situation: either to follow Albalag's alleged acceptance of unsubstantiated religious doctrines, or put religion aside in favour of reason. Both possibilities are problematic on, respectively, philosophic and social levels. Albalag might have anticipated his reader's frustration, as seen in the fact that he averts possible criticism by partially retrieving the rational sense of '*emunah*. In one context, Albalag maintains that when a religious doctrine is found to conform to a demonstrative doctrine, "we believe in that doctrine on account of speculation (*'eyon*) and on account of belief ('*emunah*)."[117] According to this statement, reason is not a substantive criterion for '*emunah* and seems to pertain to it only accidentally. '*Emunah* is not essentially rational, but in some occasions it happens to be so. Surprisingly, Albalag does not give preference to one type of '*emunah* over the other, which implies that both types are equally perfect.

The mention of two equal types of '*emunah* echoes the double-faith theory, which according to Wolfson's exposition, maintains that the teachings of Scripture are to be accepted "both as self-evident truth and as rationally demonstrated truth." That Albalag advocated the authoritative type of faith is clear. In addition, as we have seen, Albalag comments about the rational type of faith. This might raise the assumption that Albalag adopted the double-faith theory. Before affirming or denying this assumption, one must first determine what Albalag means by truth, or true knowledge, and its criteria and examine whether *emunah* actually meets Albalag's understanding of truth.

In the *Tiqqun,* true knowledge is characteristically associated with certainty to such an extent that certainty emerges as a criterion for truth. One who accomplishes scientific understanding of a given proposition comes to the affirmation that it is true and involves

[117] *Tiqqun*, note. 30, p. 43

no doubt. Could *emunah,* allegedly a source of truth, induce a similar affect in the believer? My view is that Albalag's implicit answer to this question is distinctive from his contemporaries and predecessors, especially insofar as reason-based '*emunah* is concerned. As I will demonstrate in the concluding chapter, certainty hardly attaches to religious beliefs, be they accepted on account of authority or supported by rational investigation. For now, I will elaborate on the concept of truth and its association with certainty.

3. Truth, Certainty, and Intellectual Perfection

Among the many Aristotelian views that played a major role in defining man's ultimate goal in medieval philosophy is the view that "happiness must be a form of contemplation." [118] According to Aristotle, the pleasure of the intellect is superior to any other kind of pleasure. Intellectual activity is the highest activity on account of its "self-sufficient" and "self-rewarding" character.[119] Contemplation, moreover, is the essential characteristic of God's essence, a view that goes hand-in-hand with Aristotle's inclination to identify God with "*nous*" or "contemplation."[120] This identification became the notion upon which medieval Aristotelians based their philosophical doctrines about God.

These two Aristotelian views are featured in the *Tiqqun's* epistemology and analysis of human happiness. In a note that alludes to Maimonides' "fifth type of perfection," *imitatio Dei,* [121] Albalag maintains that "the type of servitude befitting the wise man is seeking the imitation of these attributes [God's attributes]: the intellect (*ha-*

[118] *NE* 1178b 32
[119] Oliver Leaman, *An Introduction to Classical Islamic Philosophy* (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 176. For the designation of God as *nous* see for instance the *Guide* I:1, 2, 60 where Maimonides refers to God as Intellect.
[120] *Metaphysics* XII 7, 8
[121] Maimonides refers to this type of perfection in the last chapter of the *Guide*, III: 54. For a discussion of the different types of perfection in Maimonides see T. M. Rudavsky, *Maimonides* (Chichester : John Wiley & Sons, 2010), 184-198.

sekhel) and the actions that follow therefrom."[122] Intellect, accordingly, is sought for its own sake as well as for the sake of accomplishing practical perfection.

While this conception of happiness involves both intellectual and practical ideals, the intellectual is more important to Albalag. The emphasis on the close connection between human happiness and intellectual perfection is found in many places in the *Tiqqun*. For example, Albalag states that the happiness of the wise consists in acquiring the "the intellect" (*ha-sekhel)* by means of which "intelligible forms" (*ha-muskhalot*) are contemplated. [123]

The choice of the word *sekhel* (Arabic*: 'aql)* is significant. In translating the *Guide,* both Qafih and Pines distinguish *sekhel* from *maḥshavah* (Arabic: *dihn*), which is usually translated as "mind,"[124] a term that generally refers to mental functions and the "place of various human faculties."[125] The term "intellect" is specific; it refers to the intellectual faculty through which one perceives forms whereupon a union between the *sekhel* (intellect), *maskīl* (an intellectually cognizing subject), and *muskal* (intellectually cognized object) occurs. The distinction between *sekhel* and *maḥshavah* is most reflected in the fact that these terms are associated with different objects of perception. Whereas intellect perceives only abstract concepts, the mind perceives imaginative thoughts and opinions. When we examine Albalag's concept of happiness and its epistemological underpinnings, we should keep in mind the characteristics that distinguish *sekhel* from *maḥshavah*, a matter discussed later.

From another context, we learn that:

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[122] *Tiqqun*, note. 66, p. 93
[123] *Tiqqun*, Introduction, p. 2-3
[124]Abraham Nuriel, "Remarks on Maimonides' Epistemology," 1986, pp. 38, 39.
[125] Ibid

> The essence of the intellect (*ha-sekhel*) is nothing but the perceived intelligible, for this is the true reality of the intellect in *actu*.[126]

Without intellect, one cannot apprehend the "true reality" (*amitat*) of what is intelligible. To elucidate this idea, Albalag offers an analogy between a blind man and a non-philosopher. Both possess certain epistemological deficiencies: The blind man is ignorant of the quiddity of colors because he lacks the instrument of apprehending them, vision, while the non-philosopher is ignorant of the quiddity of what is intelligible because he lacks the instrument of apprehending intelligible things, the intellect.[127] Commenting on this analogy, Albalag offers a terse statement that contains the requirement for actualizing one's intellect thereby arriving at the ultimate happiness of man:

> [The philosophers'] happiness…. is nothing but the happiness of the perfect individuals, which is dependent on knowing (*yedi'at*) all (*kol)* the existence according to its true reality (*al emetato*).[128]

What exactly does Albalag mean by knowing all the existence according to its "reality," and how does one achieve this state of knowing? Significantly, the cognitive process involved in knowing things this way is described as *yedi'ah*, which, as noted, was commonly used by Jewish Averroists in rendering the Arabic term *'ilm,* knowledge in the Aristotelian sense. [129] Thus, when Albalag speaks of knowing the existence according to its reality, he means knowing it scientifically according to the method and standards stipulated by the Arab Aristotelians for *'ilm*; most specifically, according to the criterion of certainty (*yaqīn*). Albalag makes this point clear by emphasizing that the knowledge required for accomplishing the ultimate goal of man must, in addition to the truth

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[126] *Tiqqu*, note. 42, p. 65
[127] Ibid, Introduction, p. 3-4
[128] Ibid, p. 4
[129] *Yedi'ah* became the technical term in translating scientific knowledge. See Charles Manekin, "Hebrew Philosophy in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries: An Overview," 1997, 354.

condition, be obtained in a manner that "dispels all doubt."[130] That is to say, obtaining true knowledge is not alone sufficient for actualizing the human intellect. Rather, one must be absolutely *certain* that the obtained knowledge is true, a cognitive state in which the cognizer, according to the Medieval Aristotelians, holds an affirmation of the absolute correspondence between the mental representation and the object of cognition.[131]

The reason for associating intellectual perfection with the state of certainty may be found in a note made by al-Farabi, who posits that one who knows with certainty, "the state of the intellect with respect to intelligibles comes to be similar to the state of vision with respect to the visible object as the time of vision."[132] Charles Manekin takes this note to define the unbreakable "psychological/epistemological" bond between the knower and the object of knowledge: "in certainty, not only has the mind acquired an intelligible, it has a reflexive awareness of this acquisition and the necessity of the intelligible obtaining, which prevents it from doubting or disbelieving." [133] As such, certainty allows for the retention of the acquired knowledge and thus the realization of intellectual perfection and immortality.

Noticeably, Albalag stresses the ideal of certainty through the negation of doubts rather than by using the technical term for certainty (*vada'ut*). This substitution of terminology may arguably be interpreted as a critique of the *Guides'* epistemic achievements. In the introduction to the *Guide*, Maimonides writes: "I do not say that this Treatise will remove all difficulties for those who understand it. I do say, however, that it

[130] *Tiqqun*, Introduction, p. 3
[131] See D. Black " Knowledge and Certitude," 2006. Black discusses the development of early medieval philosophical literature and examines the factors that led Arab Aristotelian accord certainty a pivotal place in the Aristotelian epistemology.
[132] Quotation is taken from Charles Manekin, "Maimonides and the Arabic Aristotelian Tradition," 2012, p. 86.
[133] Ibid

will remove most of the difficulties."[134] Although Maimonides' stated goal is to provide a remedy for doubt and perplexity—and specifically that that arises from the apparent contradictions between Torah and science—he falls short of eliminating all doubt about every question treated in the *Guide.* The clearest example, again, pertains to the question of the origin of the world where Maimonides follows Alexander Aphrodisias' method of weighing doubts and choosing from among rival theories the theory that raises "less grave doubts."[135] When Maimonides applies this methodology, he particularly intends to undermine the demonstrative character of the Aristotelian theory of eternity and thus goes to great lengths to promote doubt about Aristotle's philosophy. Ultimately, however, Maimonides' methodological choice hardly manages to establish certainty regarding the contrary doctrine. Its foremost aspect is limited to dispelling most, but not all, doubts.

For Albalag, who would not give up doubt-free knowledge, the epistemic achievements of the *Guide* would seem unsatisfactory. The remedy of doubt, as Albalag repeatedly advises, is found in Aristotle's scientific works, which, we might add, include a demonstration of the eternity doctrine. We can thus understand Albalag's employment of the formula of "dispelling all doubt" instead of the technical term of "certainty" as part of his challenge to Maimonides' unjustified attempts to attach doubts to Aristotle. The unmatchable value of Aristotle in removing doubts can be discerned in many statements, such as:

> If you wish to know the truth and dispel all doubt, acquire wisdom from its founder, that is, Aristotle.[136]

Elsewhere, he writes:

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[134] *Guide*, Introduction, p. 6
[135] Ibid, II: 22
[136] Ibid, note. 29, p. 27

> As we follow Aristotle and his method regarding the mover and the object of motion, it will become clear that the Prime Mover is neither a body nor composite. We will then dispel all doubt without any doubt. [137]

The Aristotelian method that guarantees dispelling all doubt is demonstration. Albalag follows the general tendency of medieval Aristotelians in associating certainty with demonstration. Al-Farabi and Avicenna, for instance, define demonstration as a "certain syllogism" or a syllogism that "produces certainty."[138] Before reviewing the details and implications of Albalag's theory of demonstration, I will offer a reconstruction of his understanding of two important logical tools: definition and syllogism. This involves an elaboration of two concepts that are central to the formal definition of scientific knowledge in the medieval Aristotelian tradition: conceptualization and assent. [139] By examining Albalag's theories of definition and syllogism we will discern the contours of the *Tiqqun's* epistemology with its focused search for certainty.

Theory of Definition

The Correspondence Condition

As pointed out, happiness, according to Albalag, consists in "knowing all the existence according to its true reality."[140] This is a very full statement, one that calls for elucidating its major components: 1) the cognitive processes involved in acquiring knowledge, and 2) the truth condition. In elucidating these two components, I follow the general medieval epistemological framework in dividing knowledge into conceptualization

[137] Ibid, note. 33, p. 53
[138] J. Stern, *The Matter and Form of Maimonides Guide* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2013), 142-43.
[139] *Guide* I: 50. Maimonides states: there is no belief except after definition. Assent is the act of affirmation that what has been represented is outside the mind just as it has represented in the mind," p. 111.
[140] *Tiqqun*, pp. 2-3. Cf. The logical part of the *Tiqqun*, note. 5, p. 11

and assent; the former is acquired by definition and the latter by syllogism. Albalag quotes al-Ghazali's explanation of these two cognitive states and the methods leading to them:

> Scientific knowledge … is divided into two basic parts: representation and assent. Representation consists in apprehending the particular things that are referred to by single utterances for clarification and explanation such as apprehending the required meaning of the words "body" [and],"trees." … Assent is [a cognitive state] such as [when] you know that the world is created and that there is reward and punishment. All assents must be preceded by representations… Representation is acquired through definition, whereas assent is acquired through a proof.[141]

At the level of representation, knowing things according to their reality requires that a correspondence between mental concepts and extra-mental objects should hold.[142] For Albalag, this is a key epistemological condition for intellectual perfection and therefore, in his view, philosophers are more capable of achieving intellectual perfection and happiness than the masses. In one place, Albalag distinguishes philosophers and non-philosophers on account of their respective ability to "represent" (*ẓiear*) things in accordance with their true reality. In Albalag's view, the ability to form representations as such is a "virtue" (*midah*) that distinguishes philosophers.[143]

Mental representations are not immune to error and often happen to be false because they might arise in the mind due to unsound definitions. In the logical part of the *Tiqqun*, Albalag quotes al-Ghazali's remarks on the implications of unsound definitions for mental representations and highlights the merit of logic in helping distinguish between sound and unsound definitions.

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[141] *Tiqqun*, Logical Part of the *Maqasid*, p. 11. Cf. *Maqasid*, p. 12. Cf. Ibn Sina, *The Deliverance*, translated by Asad Q. Ahmed and Tony Street (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2011), p.1. Cf. Al-Farabi, "*Book of Demonstration,*" p. 63. Maimonides too accepts this division of knowledge into conception and assent. However, he reverses the standard order of the discussion. Instead of discussing conceptualization before assent, he starts the treatise by discussing assents; see introduction to the treatise on logic by Israel Efros, 1938, 30.

[142] D. Black, "Knowledge and Certitude" 2006, 16.

[143] Ibid, p. 2, 3

Moreover, in the context of refuting Avicenna's theory of the essence-existence distinction, Albalag advances an epistemological view that attaches no substantive epistemic value to cognitive concepts that are ontologically independent of concrete existents. The objectivity of mental representations is contingent on the extra-mental existence of the object of cognition.

> Essence/quiddity (*ha-mehût)* is an equivocal term, predicated of two things: 1) the particular object, which is the concrete thing existing in external reality, and 2) the universal essence, which exists in the soul, and which constitutes the definition or part of it. The universal essence [as represented in the soul] is true (*mahût ẓodeq*) only if it corresponds and relates to an external concrete one. If there were no external concrete reality to which it corresponds, it would be a false essence (*mahût kozev*). Furthermore, if it is impossible (*im 'īe 'efshar*) that, at any time, there will ever be a concrete object to which the universal essence corresponds, it will be a false essence. As such, it can neither be called essence nor definition (*geder*) but an explanatory phrase.[144]

Apart from the essence-existence issue, this passage notes certain conditions for a sound definition; only when these conditions are satisfied is a definition, in turn the mental representation, true. A sound definition is linked to the definer grasping a certain universal quiddity, provided that it has a concrete instantiation at some time.

1- S perceives the universal quiddity X
2- X corresponds to extra-mental object x
3- x must exist in actuality at some time

Albalag derives these conditions from Averroes' discussion of the different senses of existence and their implication for the acquisition of knowledge. According to Averroes, "knowledge of the quiddity of a thing cannot be asked for unless it is known that it exists."[145] This view can be traced back to Aristotle's stipulation in *Posterior Analytics* that the scientific definition of a thing must be preceded by knowledge of its existence.[146]

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[144] *Tiqqun*, note. 2, p. 6. Here Albalag follows Averroes' argument against Avicenna, Cf. *TT*, Fifth discussion, p. 180.
[145] *TT*, p. 180
[146] Stephen Menn, "The Reception of Avicenna's Metaphysics: Averroes Against Avicenna on Being and Unity," *The Arabic, Hebrew, And Latin Reception of Avicenna's Metaphysics,* edited by Dag Nikolaus Hass & Amos Bertolacci (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012), 64. Cf. Catarina Belo, "Essence and Existence in Avicenna and Averroes," *AL-QANARA*, XXX 2, julio-diciembre de 2009, pp. 403-426. According to Belo, Averroes advanced a theory of existence as truth.

But this stipulation raises the following rejoinder: How can we know whether X exists without knowing what X is? Averroes considers this rejoinder and argues, in response, that things are known through tentative concepts that exist in the mind preceding the knowledge of their actual existence. These concepts are not definitions proper, but mere "explanations of the meanings of the thing."[147] When we have knowledge that something exists in reality, we can formulate its definition, which represents its true quiddity.

What, then, would be the status of mental concepts that never coincide with external reality? According to Albalag, such concepts provide no true knowledge; they are "numerous in number" and can best be described as "false thoughts," (*maḥshavôt kôzvôt*.)[148] Based on this understanding, Albalag attacks al-Ghazali for arguing that since "knowledge (*yedi'ah*) attaches only to the essence that exists independently in thought rather than the extra-mental object…one may know the quiddity of a thing without apprehending its concrete existence."[149] Assuming that this were the case, Albalag contends, then all thoughts arising in "mind" (*maḥshavah*) would represent real essences, including essences of things whose existence has been proved to be impossible, such as the "void" (*requt*).[150]

I pointed earlier to the significance of Albalag's specific choice of the term *sekhel*, rather than *maḥshvah*, in referring to the instrument of apprehending "the true reality of intelligibles." Noticeably, Albalag situates thoughts in the "mind" (*maḥshavah)* rather than *sekhel*. From the discussion above, it is clear that thoughts and mental representations can

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This theory has a twofold meaning, one of which refers to "the agreement within the soul between a proposition and a state of affairs," 418.

[147] *TT*, p. 180

[148] *Tiqqun*, note. 2, p. 7

[149] Albalag here is criticizing al-Ghazali's view as mentioned in *Tahāfut al-Falasifa*. Cf. *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut*, Fifth Discussion. p. 179.

[150] *Tiqqun*, note. 2, p. 7

be subjective and are susceptible to truth and falsehood. This accounts for their being located in the mind rather than the intellect (*sekhel,*) the instrument through which the cognitional unity between the subject and the object of knowledge takes place.

Albalag's distinction between philosophers and the masses includes emphasis on the latter's inability to acquire intellectual discernment, which indicates that their cognition is entirely located in the mind. But isn't Scripture instructed to the multitude specifically due to the same reason, i.e. the multitudes' inability to acquire intellect? Albalag explains:

> Due to their [the multitude's] deficient knowledge and apprehension, they have no capacity to apprehend or *conceptualize* the true reality of intelligibles except by means of the corporeal attributes to which they are so accustomed that they lost any ability to conceptualize any existent except through temporal and spatial attributes…They can be compared to a blind [man] whose lacking of the instrument of [vision] prevents him from apprehending the quiddity of color. Similarly [the multitude] have no capacity to apprehend the quiddity of intelligibles because they lack the instrument (*klī*), that is the intellect *(ha-sekhel*). For this reason, the Torah cunningly made things palatable to the multitude and comforted them through what they have capacity to understand.[151]

This passage implies that the instructions given to the masses in the form of corporeal representations are spoken to the mind rather than the intellect. Religious beliefs, in this way, appear at risk of subjectivity, since the mind is not immune to falsehood. Albalag's explicit statement that Scripture sometimes mention things in a manner "deviating from truth" (*nôṭeh min ha-emet*) [152] maximizes this risk. Furthermore, when the mind conceptualizes religious doctrines that deviate from truth, the condition of a sound definition, the correspondence-condition, can not be satisfied, which poses implications for the rank of assents to follow. We will come back to discussing religious assents and their character in the concluding section.

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[151] *Tiqqun*, Introduction, p. 2
[152] Ibid, p. 3

Skeptical Implications of the Correspondence Condition

We have seen that with respect to the cognitive process of conceptualization, Albalag is very emphatic on the correspondence-condition. Mental representations that arise in the "mind" (*maḥshavah*) are not necessarily true, and unless they exactly map on to things as they are in reality, we fall short of adequately completing the primary step toward true knowledge. This is all but a small part of the epistemological standards of the *Tiqqun*, but it stands in tension with Albalag's dogmatic assertion of some biblical beliefs. Another tension is worth highlighting, one that concerns the limitation of man's mental conceptualizations. If intellectual perfection requires apprehension of all the existence in its true reality, can human beings conceptualize the true quiddity of other intellects, let alone God? Indeed, the answer is in the negative. The reason, as Albalag states clearly, is that the human intellect cannot form intellectual "representations of divine beings," which prevents us from apprehending "their true quiddity." [153]

In line with Maimonides' preparatory notes to the negative theology,[154] Albalag presents a strong representational constraint on human knowledge of divine beings. The cause of this problem is matter. Mental representations, which are primary functions in cognition, rely on two things: bodily organs and imagination. Ultimately, a philosopher can only know about the existence of divine beings and infer information about the

[153] *Tiqqun*, note. 11, p. 16

[154] In *Guide*: 1:50, Maimonides argues against the possibility of arriving at correct mental representation of God: " for there is no oneness at all except in believing that there is simple essence in which there is no complexity or multiplications of notions, but one notion only; so that from whatever angle you regard it and from whatever point you consider it, you will find that it is one, nit divided in any way and by nay cause into two notions; and you will not further find any multiplicity either in the thing as it is outside of the mind or as it is inside the mind," p. 113. For a comprehensive study on Maimonides' skepticism see J. Stern, *The Matter and Form of Maimonides' Guide,* 2013. Shlomo Piness, "The Limitations of Human Knowledge According to al-Farabi, Ibn Bajja, Maimonides," *Studies in Medieval Jewish History and Literature*, edited by Isadore Twersky and Jay M. Harris (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979).

attributes of their actions as they are manifested in the universe. But formulating a "definition" (*geder*) in the strict sense, i.e. where the correspondence-condition is fulfilled, is impossible.[155]

The real implication of this view of Albalag is that the ideal of intellectual perfection seems unachievable. So long as one is embodied, there seems to be no hope for arriving at complete knowledge of all existents. The philosophical framework of the *Tiqqun* offers no resolution to this problem. In fact, as will be discussed below, the *Tiqqun* underlies another fundamental skeptical motif that stands against the realization of full actualization of the intellect.

Syllogisms and Assents

We have seen that, with regard to the first cognitive process involved in the acquisition of knowledge, i.e. definition, Albalag emphasizes a condition of correspondence that arguably challenges the objectivity of religious beliefs. In this section, I reconstruct Albalag's view regarding the second cognitive process involved in knowledge (assent) and its tool (syllogism) based on a number of notes in the *Tiqqun* and in relation to theories of knowledge in medieval philosophy. In the last section, I will return to determine how the Torah fits in the *Tiqqun's* schema of assent.

In one brief note in the logical part of the *Tiqqun*, Albalag relates assent to syllogism and defines syllogism as a statement

> … composed of [two premises]. No syllogism could be formulated without two premises… ach premise is formed of a subject and predicate. [156]

[155] *Tiqqun*, note. 11, pp. 16-17

[156] *Tiqqun*, Logical part, p. 11. It should be mentioned that Albalag includes in the *Tiqqun* a discussion about the fourth figure of syllogism in which the definition of syllogism centers particularly on a definite *quaesitum* rather than a syllogistic conclusion (i.e. a sentence that follows syllogistically from the premises). This definition marks a point of divergence from the standard definition of syllogism in the medieval Aristotelian tradition. The authorship of this discussion is debated, but it seems that Albalag approved the main points in the discussion, since he does not present

Albalag does not define what assent is, but there is no reason to assume that he deviated from the fairly standard definition in the Arab-Aristotelian tradition. Assent is commonly defined as "apprehension, or affirmation, of the relation of these essences—essence of individual things—to each other, either affirmatively or negatively."[157] In this respect, assent is fundamental not only to scientific knowledge, but also to belief, specifically if we take belief to be of the rational type, i.e. reason-based belief. The defining feature of assent, as Deborah Black points out, is that it is "always accompanied by a judgmental act, as manifested in the acceptance of propositions possessed of determinate truth-values." [158]As such, certain assent is hardly dependent on the congnizer's subjective acceptance of a proposition, although there seems to be a close connection between assent and the truth-value of that proposition, on the one hand, and the accuracy of the congnizer's judgment regarding its truth or falsehood on the other. Al-Farabi presents these ideas clearly in his *Book of Demonstration*:

> By way of summary, assent is for someone to have a conviction about something to which a judgment can apply, by judging that what the thing is outside the mind accords with the object of conviction in one's mind, where the truth is that the thing outside the mind does in fact accord with the object of conviction in the mind…. *only the assent to something that is true can be certain*.[159]

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any objection (see Vajda. *averroïste juif, traducteur et annotateur daḷ-Ghazâlî* p. 275, 279). For a discussion of the fourth figure of syllogism in medieval Jewish philosophy see Charles Manekin, "Some aspects of the assertoric syllogism in Medieval Hebrew Logic." *History and Philosophy of Logic*, 17, no. 2, (1996): 49-72. Gersonides stands out as one of the few Jewish philosophers who defended the fourth figure of syllogism; see Gersonides, *sefer ha-heqesh ha-yashar,* edited and translated by Charles Manekin Dordrecht; Boston : Kluwer Academic Publishers,1992), 147. For the definition and debate over the validity of the fourth figure of syllogism see Paul Henle, "On the Fourth figure of Syllogism" *Philosophy of Science*. Vol. 16, No2 (1949) pp. 94-104. Nicholas Rescher, "New Lights From Arabic Sources on Galen and the Fourth Figure of Syllogism." *Journal of the History of Philosophy* Vol. 3, N. 1 (1965) pp. 27-41.

[157]*al-Ghazali, Maqasid al-Falasifa*, p. 29
[158] D. Black, *Logic And Aristotle's rhetoric and Poetics in Medieval Arabic Philosophy* (Leiden; New York: E.J. Brill, 1990), p. 75.
[159] Al-Farabi, "Book of Demonstration," p. 64.

Based on this objective connotation of assent, medieval philosophers examined the functional relation of different logical tools, specifically syllogisms, to certain assents. Following a tradition of philosophical thought that stretches back to Aristotle, the philosophers identified four types of syllogisms in relation to assents: demonstrative, dialectical, rhetorical, and poetics. In the *Treatise on Logic* Maimonides enumerates types of syllogism and explains their constructions:

> You should know that we call every syllogism both of whose premises are apodictic a demonstrative syllogism. The use of these syllogisms and knowledge of their conditions we call the art of demonstration. When one or both of the premises of a syllogism is based on what is generally accepted opinions, we call it dialectical syllogism…. When one or both of the premises of syllogism is based on tradition, we call it rhetorical syllogism. The art of rhetoric is the use of syllogisms and knowledge of the ways they are used.[160]

In medieval philosophy, "the syllogistic art comprises a hierarchy of cognitive ends."[161] Philosophers generally agreed that assents that arose from different syllogisms are not on an equal footing with respect to certainty. Of the four types of syllogism that comprise the logical art, as defined in the medieval version of the *Organon*, only demonstrative syllogisms are deemed productive of certainty in the strict sense.[162] Averroes stresses this advantage of demonstration in many places, describing the state of certainty resulting therefrom as that when

> We are convinced, with respect to the thing to which assent has been granted, that the existence of what we are convinced about with respect to that thing cannot possibly be different from our conviction. Moreover, we are convinced that this conviction about it cannot be otherwise, to the point that when one reaches a given conviction concerning his initial conviction, he maintains that it also cannot be otherwise, and so indefinitely.[163]

The other types of syllogism accord inferior assents. Dialectical syllogisms, despite the "appearance of certainty," accord "approximate certainty" in the sense of

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[160] Maimonides, *Treatise on Logic*, Ch. 8.
[161] D. Black, *Logic And Aristotle's Rhetoric and Poetics in Medieval Arabic Philosophy*, 1990, p. 15.
[162] For the contextualization of the rhetorical and poetics in the *Organon* see D. Black. *Logic and Aristotle's Rhetoric*. Cf. Kemal, Salim, "Arabic Poetics and Aristotle's Poetics." *British Journal of Aesthetics* 1986, 26 (3): 112–23.
[163] Al-Farabi, "Book of Demonstration," 2007, p. 64.

> Believing that something exists in a particular kind of way, while it is possible for it to be different than it is believed to be. Therefore, its peculiar characteristic is that it may be eliminated through opposition.[164]

Assents resulting from rhetorical syllogisms, or other rhetorical devices, are far removed from certainty. They provide persuasions, that is, "a kind of probable supposition that the soul trusts."[165] Rhetorical assents involve one's awareness that what has been assented to could in truth not be the case and that its contrary could turn out to be the truth.

Regarding poetical syllogisms, the degree of certainty arising from them is meager. This explains why Averroes, as Charles Butterworth notes, omits the technical term "assent" altogether from his discussion of the poetical art.[166] In fact, Averroes admits that poetics is "potentially deceptive" because of the nature of the speech it uses. The poet might compose his speech in a marvelous and rhythmic way to move the souls of listeners, but this comes at the expense of truth and certainty:

> Even though this art is syllogistic, the syllogism is not actually used in it, nor is there any kind of syllogism peculiar to it; rather, when a syllogistic argument is actually used in it, it is in the manner of deceit and in order to make it similar to another art.[167]

Following this tradition, Albalag identifies different types of syllogisms and evaluates them according to their respective capacity in leading to truth.

> This erroneous doctrine about the angels of good and evil is not a new one. In the time of our sages there were men who believed in similar things in relation to angels and stars…One group—of our community—came to hold the demonstrative doctrine (*ha-da'at ha-mofti*), which maintains that no evil descends from God, whereas the other group held the dialectical view (*ha-sevara ha-vikhuḥīt*) according to which evil comes from God. Furthermore, [among this latter group some] held the doctrine of the astrologers according to which there exists in heaven a star whose name is evil… There is no doubt that the one who advocated this view was an astrologer, whereas the one who advocated the former doctrine, which maintains that no evil descends from above, was a

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[164] Averroes, *Three Short commentaries on Aristotle's' "Topics," "Rhetorics", and "Poetics*," edited and translated by Ch. Butterwoth (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1977), 57.
[165] Ibid, p. 63
[166] Ibid, p. 35
[167] Ibid, p. 84

> philosopher who agreed with Aristotle's view that there is no evil in the divine world. They are good and all their deeds are good.[168]

This passage proffers a number of what Albalag regards as doctrinal errors about the nature of divine agency. People mistakenly believe that human actions and fate are caused by divine agents and that whatever good or evil befalls man follows from the willful operations of the angels of good and evil. Some even went to claim that for each individual there are two accompanying angels that direct him or her toward either evil or good deeds.

> The people of our community believed…. that [among] angels there is a class that desires and performs what is good (*tôv*) and another class that desires evil (*ra'*) and causes what is evil.[169]

In accounting for theses doctrinal errors, Albalag differentiates between two types of syllogism: demonstrative and dialectical. Unlike a dialectic syllogism, the conclusion of a demonstrative one conforms to truth. This evaluation goes in line with Albalag's repeated praise of Aristotle's teachings for being immune to error on account of their demonstrative foundation. In the present context, Albalag further claims that the epistemological merit of demonstrative syllogisms was so widely known that the ancient sages of Israel sought to acquire knowledge by their means. Their efforts, however, were not always successful. Because they were not experienced in the science of logic, they often mistook dialectical syllogisms for demonstration. They were eventually led to many doctrinal errors and misconceptions.

> The reason for this [error regarding the cause of good and evil] is that our sages sought [to obtain] syllogistic knowledge (*da'at heqeshī*). [Due to] their insufficient education and lack of experience in the science of logic, they did not recognize the distinction between demonstrative and dialectical syllogisms. All this led them to follow the people

[168] *Tiqqun*, note. 37, p. 59
[169] Ibid, note. 37, p. 56

> of speculation of other nations and adopt the commonplace doctrines among them, regardless of their truthfulness or falsehood. [170]

The dialectical method has given rise to many "false notions" about angels and God. All these notions, Albalag specifies, are grounded on the doctrine advocated by the ancient "dialecticians," [171] namely that "from the One only one action proceeds." In accounting for "the multiplicity observed in the universe," they argued that God couldn't be the direct cause of existents and events in the universe because His essence is absolute unity. They thus attributed the multiplicity in the universe to the separate intellects emanating from Him, wrongly thinking that this wouldn't clash with the conception of Divine unity.

"Theologians of the Israelites" and the "Ishma'elits" fell prey to this doctrine and thus attributed good and evil to the numerous divine entities which they identified with angels in order to avoid impugning Divine unity. For Albalag, this and similar incorrect doctrines are consequent upon the theologians' reliance on dialectical syllogisms which are formed of widely-shared premises. In the course of his refutation of dialectical arguments regarding the cause of evil, Albalag follows the custom of medieval philosophers and logicians of assigning different types of premises to different types of syllogisms. Al-Farabi, for instance, mentions a variety of propositions that serve as premises in syllogistic arguments. He associates primary and widely accepted premises with demonstrative and dialectic syllogisms respectively.[172] The same association can also be found in Averroes' short commentary on Aristotle's *Topics*

> The dialectical argument is a syllogism composed from widespread, generally accepted premises. Now assent about the widespread, generally accepted premise results from the testimony of all or most people, not from the matter being like that in itself—contrary to

[170] Ibid, 59
[171] Literally, "those who followed the dialectic method," p. 56.
[172] D. Black, *Logic And Aristotle's Rhetoric And Poetics in Medieval Arabic Philosophy*, 1990, p. 95.

> the way it is with demonstration. Indeed, with demonstration, we arrive at assent which is certain through our assenting to premises because to our minds they appear just as they are externally, not because they are in someone else's opinion. *Since that is the case, dialectical premises are often partially false*. If they are found to be entirely true, that occurs by accident, that is, because it happens that what is generally accepted is the same outside the mind as it is inside the mind.[173]

In line with this classification of premises and syllogisms, Albalag explains that dialectical syllogisms are less capable of yielding truth than demonstrative ones because they are grounded on widely-shared premises (*mefurshamot*), unlike demonstrative syllogisms which are grounded on primary premises.[174] In his view, widely-spread premises are not always true and therefore syllogisms composed from them usually risk yielding unsound conclusions. That is the case with the theologians' conclusion regarding the cause of evil which follows from two widely-spread premises: 1) "from the One only one action proceeds" and 2) "evil requires an agent (*po'el*)."[175]

For Albalag, then, dialectics and other non-demonstrative methods are incapable of establishing scientific knowledge and indubitable truth. His evaluation of dialectics comes close to that of Aristotle, who, as António Pedro Mesquita illustrates in a recent study, didn't assign dialectics a role in discovering principles. Since no reasoning based on dialectics "can truthfully establish anything at all," Aristotle limited the role of dialectics to discussing "given propositions in order to confirm or refute them."[176] This limited role of dialectics is contrasted in the Metaphysics with philosophy's role in knowing *beings qua beings* through examining the essence of things.

> Dialectic is merely critical whereas philosophy claims to know, and sophistic is what appears to be philosophy but is not.[177]

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[173] Averroes, *Three short commentaries on Aristotle's' "Topics," "Rhetorics", and "Poetics*," 1977, p. 47.
[174] *Tiqqun*, note. 37, p. 55-56. Cf. Aristotle, *Topica* I. 100a30.
[175] Ibid, note. 37, p. 56
[176] António Pedro Mesquita, "Aristotle on Dialectic and First Principles" *Unisons Journal of Philosophy*. 18 (1): 57, Jan/ 2017
[177] *Metaphysics* IV 1004b25

Compared to Averroes, Albalag expresses himself as less tolerant of non-demonstrative methods. As shown above, although Averroes admits the possibility of falsehood in dialectical syllogisms, in some works he views dialectics more positively. In his Long Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics, Averroes offers a remarkable passage that testifies to a generous degree of tolerance of dialectics; he accords a high value to dialectical syllogism to the extent that it appears as "a suitably philosophic method"[178] "that goes on an equal footing" with demonstration.[179]

Such an attitude toward dialectics can hardly be found in the *Tiqqun*. Even though Albalag does not formally deny that dialectical syllogisms could in some cases yield true conclusions, his attack on the theologians, to whom the dialectical method is attributed, indicates that dialectical syllogisms can hardly serve as a means for establishing true knowledge. That Albalag links dialectical syllogisms to a view that he strongly opposes and dismisses as "false," namely that "from the One only one action proceeds," illustrates what for him is the distance separating dialectics from truth.

Given this evaluation of the truth-value of dialectics, it can reasonably be concluded that, in Albalag's opinion, dialectics could hardly accord certain or near-certain assents. The rank of assents, as discussed, is objectively tied to the truth-value of a given proposition or doctrine. Bearing in mind the mediocre epistemological value assigned to dialectical syllogisms in the *Tiqqun*, whatever assents they produce would be far removed from certainty. Other non-demonstrative methods, such as rhetorical arguments and poetics, would obviously accord more inferior assents.

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[178] Yehuda Halper, "Dialectician and Dialects in Averroes' Long Commentary on Gamma 2 of Aristotle" *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* v26, n1 (2016 02 02): 161-184.

[179] Ibid. Halper draws a contrast between Averroes' views on dialectic in *The Decisive Treatise* and in the Commentary. He maintains that in the *Decisive Treatise* the philosophical method is exclusively demonstrative, whereas in the latter both dialectic and demonstration are equal, p. 165.

Absolute certainty is the most significant ideal of the *Tiqqun's* epistemology. Albalag repeatedly emphasizes that one's ultimate goal must be obtaining true knowledge, while ensuring that the knowledge obtained dispels *all* doubts. When this emphasis is made, Albalag usually mentions the logical tool of demonstration, specifying not only its epistemological value but also its psychological role in "dispelling *all* doubts." Thus, even if it is assumed that some non-demonstrative methods might produce assents that approximate certainty, they would lack significant utility in realizing man's ultimate epistemological goal; for whatever assents they evoke would still involve varying degrees of doubt.

Warning against the implications of doubt constitutes an essential part of the medieval epistemological ideal of certainty.[180] For instance, Maimonides addresses the dangers of doubt in the *Guide,* where he criticizes efforts of speculation in matters beyond human intellectual limitation.[181] To the extent that mainstream Aristotelians highly regarded the advantage of certain assents, they considered certainty to be a fundamental condition for intellectual perfection.[182] Despite that, they approvingly considered near-certain assents, specifically in regard to issues that fall beyond the limitation of human reason. Maimonides refers to varying degrees of certainty arrived at by individuals engaged in speculation about metaphysical issues. Among those is one:

> Who has achieved demonstration, to the extent that it is possible, of everything that may be demonstrated, and who has ascertained in divine matters, to the extent that is possible, everything that may be ascertained, and who has come close to certainty in those matters of which one can come close to it.[183]

[180] Charles Manekin, "Maimonides and the Arabic Aristotelian Tradition of Epistemology," 2012, pp. 91-93.
[181] *Guide* I:32
[182] Charles Manekin, "Maimonides and the Arabic Aristotelian Tradition of Epistemology," 2012, pp. 91-93.
[183] Ibid, p. 80

While Maimonides emphasizes demonstration, he admits that there are complex issues for which demonstration cannot be pursued. Regarding these issues, he is content to accept the view that "dispels the gravest doubts," i.e. provide near-certainty.[184] Unlike Maimonides, [185] Albalag does not allow for varying degrees of certainty. He constantly emphasizes the standard of "dispelling all doubts" to such an extent that he ties intellectual perfection to "true" and "doubt-free" knowledge (*'in bah safeq.*)[186]

In sum: The *Tiqqun's* epistemology centers on the ideal of absolute certainty. Albalag deems certainty a criterion for "knowing things in their true reality," i.e. true knowledge, and he therefore commits himself to demonstration and marginalizes other non-demonstrative tools. Based on this ideal of certainty, Albalag recommends that men of learning stick to demonstrative assents: "a wise man (*ḥakham*) assents to what he gathers from philosophical investigation *only* when his investigation is based on "demonstration."[187] The reference to philosophical investigation indicates that there could be other different standards with respect to religious assent—I'll return to this issue in the concluding section. For now, I will identify the epistemological implications arising from Albalag's unyielding commitment to demonstration.

Skeptical Implications of Demonstration

The ideal of certainty poses a question about the possibility of arriving at complete, true and certain knowledge. Considering that certainty is exclusively tied to demonstration,

[184] *Guide* II: 22, 23
[185] See for instance *Guide* III: 51
[186] *Tiqqun*, Introduction, p. 3
[187] *Tiqqun*, note. 30, p. 44

is the domain of demonstration broad enough so that to allow us obtain certainty reading all subjects of inquiry? To answer this question one needs to first identify what Albalag means by a "demonstration."

Unfortunately, Albalag does not provide a systemic exposition of the technical aspects of demonstration, and therefore we rely on a number of notes to reconstruct the main features of his theory of demonstration. Most of these notes have to do with Avicenna. In one significant note, which is based on the *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut*, Albalag considers Avicenna's claim for proving the existence of God demonstrably, [188] arguing that Avicenna's proof does not meet the conditions of demonstration. [189] Albalag does not specify what these conditions are, but since his critique to Avicenna is obviously indebted to Averroes, we can assume that he agrees with Averroes on these conditions. I have consulted Averroes to supplement the *Tiqqun's* missing details.

Albalag's critique of Avicenna is based on the Fourth and the Fifth Discussions of the *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut* where Averroes responds to al-Ghazali's claim that the philosophers failed to demonstrate the existence and unity of God. Although al-Ghazali and Averroes proceed from separate sets of metaphysical premises, they agree on the standards of the tool they employ: logic.[190] In fact, Al-Ghazali's method of refutation throughout the *Tahāfut al-Falasifa* centers on turning the weapon of logic against the philosophers by simply revealing the points of weakness in their application of its rules in many metaphysical questions.[191]

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[188] Albalag quotes Averroes, *TT,* Fifth Discussion, p. 170.
[189] *Tiqqun*, note. 38, p. 61
[190] Michael Marmura, *The Conflict Over the World's Pre-eternity in the Tahāfut of al-Ghazali and Ibn Rushd* (University of Michigan diss, 1959), 3-5.
[191] Ibid

A primary critique of al-Ghazali against the philosophers derives from their inability to fulfill the conditions of demonstrative proof as mentioned in their acknowledged works; including the *Isagoge*, the *Categories*, *Prior* and *Posterior Analytics*:

> In order to drive away this nonsense and uproot this ruse of leading astray, we see [it fit] to set aside discussing the "cognitions of the Intellects" in this book, forsaking in it the terminology of the theologians and the lawyers, but will express it in the idiom of the logicians, casting it in their molds, following their paths expression by expression, and will dispute with them in their language—I mean their expressions in logic. We will make it plain that when they set down as a condition for the truth of the matter of the syllogism in the part on demonstrating their logic, and what they set forth as a condition for its form in the book of the syllogism, and the various things they posited in the *Isagoge* and the Categories which are parts of logic and its preliminaries, [are things] none of which they have been able to fulfill in their metaphysical sciences.[192]

Demonstrative proof requires the fulfillment of certain conditions with respect to (1) the content of the syllogism (*mādat al-qiyās*), and (2) its form (*sūrat al-qiyās)*. Al-Ghazali's attacks on the philosophers mostly relate to the matter of syllogism; the validity of their premises. For his part, Averroes does not constantly side with the philosophers against al-Ghazali and he agrees with al-Ghazali that the philosophers fail to fulfill the conditions of demonstration in some cases.

In the Fifth Discussion of the *Tahāfut* Averroes points to a case where Avicenna fails to satisfy the standards of the matter of the demonstrative syllogism:

> This method of proving the unity of God is peculiar to Avicenna, and it is not found in any of the ancient philosophers; its premises are common-sense premises, and the terms are used in a more or less equivocal way.[193]

Avicenna's proof is discredited for being dependent on equivocal premises; equivocality being a result of the indeterminate nature of the terms comprising the premises. But this default does not necessarily invalidate the entire proof of God's unity.

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[192] *TT*, p. 9
[193] Ibid p. 171

In fact, Averroes neither denies the potential soundness of the premises nor argues against the proof's validity. Although Avicenna's proof does not qualify as demonstrative, it functions as a "near demonstration."[194] This, of course, provided that that "the terms and the aim they—the premises—intended are properly distinguished."[195]

Following Averroes, Albalag considers the validity of *mādat al-qiyās* as a necessary condition for a demonstration. The centrality of this condition can be recognized in a number of notes wherein Albalag highlights technical flaws in Avicenna's philosophical arguments. After quoting Averroes' critique of Avicenna's proof of God's unity, Albalag adds, "he—Avicenna—did not know that his proof does not follow the method of demonstration, because its premises are not sound."[196] Albalag obviously has in mind Aristotle's stipulation that the premises of demonstration must be true and necessary. A syllogism cannot be said to form a demonstration unless its premises meet these criteria. Premises that approximate them do not comprise a demonstration. This explains why Albalag fully disregards Averroes' acknowledgement of the potential validity of Avicenna's premises and the near-demonstrative character of his proof. Instead of endorsing Averroes' assessment of the premises as "equivocal," he straightforwardly dismisses them, in turn the proof, as unsound. This deviation from Averroes marks Albalag's unyielding commitment to demonstration and its necessary conditions.

What then does Albalag mean by a *demonstrative* proof of God's existence—and is such a proof possible? Against those who deny the possibility of demonstrating God's

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[194] Ibid
[195] Ibid
[196] *Tiqqun*, note. 38, p. 61

existence such as Themistius, Avicenna argues that God's existence is demonstrable.[197] Avicenna's and Themistius' opposing positions as to the demonstrability of the existence of God underlie two different views on what a demonstration of God's existence must consist of. Medieval philosophers identified two types of demonstration: factual and explanatory. In his *Book of Demonstration*, al-Farabi explains the difference between them as follows:

> There are three types of demonstration. One is the demonstration of existence, which is called the demonstration that a thing is. The second is the demonstration why a thing is. The third is the demonstration that combines both of these, namely, the absolute demonstration. Certain knowledge about existence and cause is called, in an absolute sense, "demonstrative knowledge." So, the absolute demonstration is the certain syllogism that, on its own and non-accidentally, provides knowledge of the existence and cause of something.[198]

The distinction between the demonstration-*that* and the demonstration-*why* corresponds to Aristotle's distinction in *Posterior Analytics* between two types of demonstration: knowing the fact and knowing the causes for it. [199] For Aristotle the latter is superior because it produces *episteme*, scientific knowledge. For al-Farabi, as well as for the majority of philosophers, explanatory syllogisms are superior to factual ones. With this type of syllogism, one achieves "absolute certainty."

The implication of this division and evaluation of demonstration can be recognized in inquiries about God's existence. Because explanatory demonstrations proceed from cause to effect, it is hard to assume that an absolute demonstration of God's existence, in terms of absolute certainty, is possible. Themistius' denial of the demonstrability of God's existence proceeds from the assumption that the only proof that deserves to be called demonstration proper proceeds from cause to effect, a view also

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[197] Charles Manekin, "Maimonides and the Arabic Aristotelian Tradition of Epistemology," 2012, p.85.
[198] Al-Farabi, "Book of Demonstration," 2007, p. 68.
[199] *Posterior Analytics* 89b23-25

maintained by Alexander Aphrodisias. [200]Contrary to Themistius and Alexander, as Charles Manekin points out, in the Arabic philosophic tradition, philosophers—namely al-Farabi, Avicenna, and Maimonides—argue for the demonstrability of God's existence. They proceed from the assumption that factual demonstrations are true demonstrations and that they provide sufficient certainty about the existence of God.[201]

When Albalag dismisses Avicenna's proof as "un-demonstrative," one might conclude that in his view, like that of Themistius and Alexander, only a proof that proceeds from cause to effect can be regarded as a demonstration. In fact, Albalag provides supporting evidence for this in the context of his discussion of prophetic knowledge. There, he describes the highest possible metaphysical knowledge that man can arrive at by rational means, the existence of separate intellects and God, as syllogistic knowledge (*heqeshī*).[202] This knowledge, Albalag emphasizes, proceeds from effect to cause rather than vice versa, which explains why Albalag does not call it demonstrative knowledge. Obviously, Albalag reserves the term *mofet* to demonstrations from cause.[203]

Albalag's critique of Avicenna's approach of proving God's existence in the science of metaphysics rather than physics brings further evidence about the particular explanatory function of demonstration. In his critique, Albalag draws upon the following note made by Averroes:

> It is impossible for any science to *demonstrate* the existence of its own subject matter but that it concedes its existence either as something which is self-evident or as something which has been demonstrated in another science. [204]

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[200] J. Stern, *The Matter and Form of Maimonides*, 2013, p. 162, note 46.
[201] Charles H. Manekin "Maimonides and the Arabic Aristotelian Tradition of Epistemology," 2012, p.85.
[202] *Tiqqun*, note. 58, p. 82
[203] This approach is not peculiar to Albalag. In his commentary on the *Guide*, Ibn Tibbon announces that he would reserve the term *mofet* to strong proofs: The proof about things are of two types: strong proof about whose truth there is no doubt and proof lower than it with respect to truth. I reserved the name *mofet* for the strong proof." This quotation is taken from J. Stern, *Maimonides' Matter and Form*, 2013, pp. 162-3.
[204]The passage is cited by Wolfson in "Averroes' Lost Treatise," *Hebrew Union College Annual* v23 n1 (19500101): 683-71.

For Averroes the distinction between the two proofs, that of physics and that of metaphysics, is tantamount to a distinction between regular proof (*dalīl*) and demonstration (*burhān)*.[205] Following Aristotle, Averroes elaborates that the task of metaphysics is to investigate the "dispositions and essences" of incorporeal beings, rather than their existence. A given science must accept the existence of its own principles from a different science and therefore it is not possible to formulate a demonstration of the existence of the subject matter of metaphysics, i.e. incorporeal beings. As Averroes elucidates, demonstrative syllogism proceeds from *cause* to *effect*, which implies that the principles of metaphysics have to be framed from a prior science, one that investigates entities that supposedly are the causes of the principles of that science. Because Averroes conceives of the class of incorporeal beings as having no cause, he concludes that no *demonstration* of their existence can be formulated within the same science; instead, their demonstration has to be based on a lower since, i.e. that of physics.

Note that this conclusion is specific to demonstration. Any science, including that of metaphysics, can establish the existence of its own principles by means of proof, because proof, as opposed to demonstration, proceeds from the posterior to the prior.[206] There is no doubt that Albalag too adopts this view, since he approvingly refers to Averroes.

But this conclusion is quite problematic because it reveals the limitation of demonstration. Giving that *true* knowledge is dependent on demonstration, and that demonstration, as it appears in the *Tiqqun*, is meant in the strong sense (i.e.

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[205] H. Davidson, *Proofs For Eternity, Creation, And The Existence of God in Medieval Islamic and Jewish Philosophy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 315.

[206] Ibid, p. 316

demonstration-*why*,) could one still stake a claim for true metaphysical knowledge? Assumingly Albalag held that such knowledge is still possible, but it is obvious that it would not always meet the criterion of dispelling all doubts. This we can infer from Albalag's treatment of the question of the identity of God, whether He is the Prime Mover or another transcendent being, a question that is closely related to proofs of the existence of God. This question, to which we will return in chapter four, was a subject of debate in the medieval philosophical literature. Avicenna and Averroes provide different answers. Whereas Avicenna affirms that God transcends the Prime Mover, Averroes identifies God with the Prime Mover. Albalag engages with these two answers in different places. In one place, he offers the following skeptical note.

> This approach [Avicenna's] of proving God is strange. [In addition, its premises] are not all correct and therefore it raises many doubts…. [Regarding Averroes' identification of the Unmoved Mover with God] I spent several days investigating Aristotle's book of physics (*sefer ha-Shema'*), but I found that Aristotle's proof proves the existence of a First Mover that is not a body or a force (*kôaḥ*) in a body. It is not proved, however, whether this Mover is God (*ha-Elôah*) or another being (*zulatô*).[207]

This note throws light on Albalag's skeptical stance toward the available *undemonstrative* knowledge regarding God. Whether God is the Prime Mover or another transcendent being is a question that cannot be resolved demonstratively, and hence Albalag seems to suspend judgment.[208]Here the implications of Albalag's uncompromising commitment to demonstration become evident. In case demonstration should be absent, doubts regarding fundamental principles like who God is arise. This consequently leads to further implications with respect to man's ultimate goal, which, accordingly, would be unrealizable due to the inability of obtaining *certain* knowledge of all existents.

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[207] *Tiqqun*, p. 14

[208] I am thankful to Professor Zev Harvey for clarifying to me the skeptical purport of this passage.

Could there be another way to obtain certain answers to the questions that lie beyond the domain of demonstration? The alternative would seem to be prophecy, as Maimonides once suggests in dealing with the existence of God.[209] The concluding section of this chapter investigates whether this alternative is feasible or not.

4. Certain Assents to Scripture: True or False?

In *The Decisive Treatise*, Averroes differentiates between three types of syllogism and the epistemic rank of their assents.[210] "Assent" in this work is linked to the question of faith and the understanding of religious doctrines. In the Treatise, demonstrative, dialectic, and rhetoric syllogisms are reintroduced as methods of reasoning through which different types of assents with regards to *Shari'ah* are obtained. People thus are classified into three groups based on their diverse psychological and intellectual excellences, which determine the kind of assent they are suited for.

> Since all of this has been determined and we, the Muslim community, believe that this divine law of ours is true and the one alerting to and calling for this happiness—which is cognizance of God (Mighty and Magnificent) and of his creation—therefore that is determined for every Muslim in accordance with assent of his temperament and what nature requires. This is because people's nature varies in excellence with respect to assents. Thus some assent by means of demonstration, some assent by means of dialectical statements in the same way the one adhering to demonstration, there being nothing greater in their natures; and some assent by means of rhetorical statements, just as the one adhering to demonstration assents by means of demonstrative statements. That is because when, this divine law of ours called people by means of these three methods, assent to it was extended to every human being—except to one who denies it obstinately in speech or for whom no method have been determined in it for summoning to God (may He be exalted) due to his neglect of that.[211]

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[209] *Guide* II:25: "The general conclusion that could be drawn from them, namely that they prove the existence of their Mover, is a matter the knowledge of which cannot be reached by human intellects…. Let us then stop at a point that is within our capacity, and let us give over the things that can not be grasped by reasoning to him who was reached by the might divine overflow" See Warren Zev Harvey's discussion of this crucial passage: "Crescas Versus Maimonides On Knowledge and Pleasure," *A Straight Path*, *Studies in Medieval Philosophy and Culture: Essays in Honor of Arthur Hyman*, edited by Jeremiah Hackett et al (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1988)

[210] Averroes, furthermore, considered that it is a religious obligation to learn types of syllogism and be able to distinguish between qualified and unqualified syllogistic reasoning; see *The Decisive Treatise*, p. 3

[211] Ibid, p. 6

Averroes' goal here is to stress that the Quran presents doctrines in a manner accommodating all classes of assents. As explained, assent comes after concepts have been formed in the mind. Since highly abstract and spiritual matters are hard for all classes of people to conceptualize, the Quran represents these matters in a way that can be conceptualized and assented to by most people. Assenting to these representations varies according to individuals' psychological and intellectual character.

Philosophers, being cognizant of things by means of demonstration, should not assent to religious doctrines in their plain sense. Indeed, they may feel an aversion to scriptural representations, which in their views clash with the true teachings of philosophy. But this does not imply that philosophers should steer away from assenting to religious doctrines.[212] On the contrary, Averroes denies contradiction between the Quran and philosophical truth, for "truth does not contradict truth."[213] He thus suggests that interpreting Scripture figuratively, in terms of teachings known by demonstration, resolves the difficulty arising from the apparent gap between religion and philosophy and grants philosophers demonstrative assents of the *Shari'ah*. As such, philosophy serves the demonstrative class to understand the Quran and hold certain assents to religious doctrines.

In philosophical matters, Albalag shows considerable faithfulness to Averroes' thought. When it comes to the issue of the relationship between religion and philosophy, Albalag, unlike many of his contemporaries, shows a stark deviation from Averroes. [214]

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[212] Catarina Belo, *Averroes and Hegel on Philosophy and Religion*. (Burlington, VT : Ashgate, 2013), 41.
[213] *The Decisive Treatise*, I here follow R. Taylor's translation, see his "Truth Does Not Contradict Truth: Averroes and The Unity of Truth" *Topoi*, *An International Review of Philosophy* v19 n1 (20001): 3-16.
[214] Scholars have drawn attention to the deep impact of Averroes' philosophical religious outlook on the school of Jewish Averroism. See for example S. Harvey's study of Falaquera's *Epistle of The Debate* in which he addresses the influence of Averroes on Falquera and many other philosophers of his chronological and territorial borders. S. Harvey, *Falaquera's Epistle of The Debate: An Introduction to Jewish Philosophy* (Cambridge, Mass. : Harvard University Center for Jewish Studies, 1987), 83-99.

For him the Torah does not stand in full concordance with philosophy, but contradicts it. Albalag states this explicitly while maintaining that none of these sources of knowledge should override another because both are simultaneously true. Furthermore, unlike Averroes who formulates the differentiation between types of syllogisms and assents into a systematic "*Shari'ah*-based" epistemology, Albalag's differentiation between demonstration and dialectics is devoid of Averroes' religious interest.[215] When Albalag highlights the epistemic gap between demonstration and dialectics his concern is truth *per se* rather than religious truth. As a general conclusion, Averroes' philosophical approach to religion has little correspondence in the *Tiqqun*—but we should not conclude that Albalag abandoned this approach altogether for, as will shortly be apparent, Albalag is far from being consistent.

A tension between Albalag's approach to religion and the philosophical approach of Arab Aristotelians such as al-Farabi, Maimonides, and Averroes, is seen clearly in a number of contexts. Indeed, it would not be an exaggeration to say that challenging Maimonides' philosophical approach to religion constitutes one of the *Tiqqun's* main goals. There is no better attestation to this than Albalag's inclusion of Maimonides in the group of hasty thinkers who did harm to both philosophy and religion by their attempts to substantiate religion by means of reason.

> I [offer this explanation] so that you do not become like those hasty thinkers (*ha-nimharīm*) who refute and deny demonstrative knowledge on account of their understanding of what appears to them from Scripture and seek to establish (*le-qayēm*) and strengthen (*le-ḥazzēq*) this doctrine (*da'at*) [that appears to them to be the doctrine of the Torah] through speculative arguments (*te'anôt ʿiyyūniyyōt)* which they think are stronger than the arguments of the philosophers…Followers of this path were numerous in all nations. Also, in our nation they are numerous, and Rabbeynu Mosheh belongs to them. Those ignorantly acted (*hiskīlū ʿasōh*)[216] in two ways: they refuted demonstrative knowledge, claiming that

[215] For a discussion on this epistemological framework see R. Taylor, "Truth Does Not Contradict Truth: Averroes And the Unity of Truth"
[216] Cf. Genesis 31:28

> [the doctrines the philosophers advocate] are undemonstrative, and affirmed that their understanding conforms to the intention of the prophet.[217]

If Albalag does not sympathize with the philosophical understanding of religion, how, in his view, should we assess religion against the criterion of certainty? Can we say that our simple assents to religious doctrines are as certain as demonstrative assents? To answer this question, let me first provide an overview of how Albalag describes the Torah.

Layers of the Torah

The Torah is a multilayered text that comprises an exoteric and two esoteric layers. The first consists of the Torah's surface meaning, whereas the other layers include prophetic and philosophic knowledge respectively. The prophetic layer is exclusive to prophets; "there is no advantage of a philosopher over a non-philosopher with respect to it. Both are equally ignorant of the meaning of prophecies."[218] Whether the two esoteric layers are harmonious or not is a question to which Albalag offers conflicting answers. On the one hand, he emphasizes complete harmony between the "truth" of philosophy and the "truth" of the Torah—no exclusion is made of the prophetic truth, which implies that this layer corresponds also to philosophy.

> The majority of the Talmudists and large number of our people are pseudo-Jews (*mityahdīm*) who hold the view that philosophers undermine the basis of the Torah and disprove the principles of faith…. Furthermore, those composed many works in which they attributed wrong doctrines to the philosophers. [Therefore] my heart dictated me to translate this book, *de'ot ha-filosofim*, from Arabic to the holy language, hoping that one of the skeptics about philosophy would gain benefit from my book and overcome his doubt upon learning that the *truth of the Torah and the truth of philosophy are identical and that there is no distinction whatsoever between them.*[219]

On the other hand, Albalag consistently differentiates prophets from philosophers not only with respect to their mode of apprehension, but also with respect to the content of

[217] *Tiqqun*, not. 30, p. 44
[218] Ibid
[219] *Tiqqun*, Introduction, p. 2

their knowledge. The distinction between prophetic and philosophic knowledge is not one of rank but of kind. Albalag's view on this distinction culminates in the affirmation that their respective doctrines are sometimes contradictory.

The third layer, the exoteric meaning of Scripture, is addressed specifically to the masses. Like Averroes, Albalag explains that the Torah employs a "rhetorical"[220] style that suits their limited cognitive capacity. Maimonides too had identified the Torah's rhetorical style, though his view on its utility is difficult to determine. In the introduction to the *Guide*, Maimonides explains the utility of the surface meaning of the Torah through the rabbinic parable of the pearl and *Proverbs* 25:11. His interpretation itself comes as a parable that raises conflicting evaluations of the surface meaning of Scripture. On the one hand, Maimonides takes the phrase mentioned in the parable of the pearl, the "parable itself," to refer to "the surface meaning of all parables," that is, worth nothing."[221] On the other, he considers the external meaning to be "as beautiful as silver."[222] Albalag seems to side with the former evaluation that assigns no intellectual utility to the surface meaning of Scripture. This is obvious from the fact that Albalag distinguishes Scripture's literal from its internal meaning based on the difference between their respective intended addressees: the masses, whose intellectual limitation puts them on one footing with "animals," and philosophers.

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[220] Literally: *derekh sippur* (way of story). I translate it as rhetorical. In Klatizqin's *Otzar Ha-munahim ha-filosofiyim*, *sippur* includes rhetoric (Vol. 2, p. 109). Also, *derekh militsah* and *sippur* refer to rhetoric (Vol. 1, p. 154). It is obvious from the contrast that Albalag draws between this style (*derekh sippur*) and *derekh mofet* (the demonstrative style) that he has in mind the types of arguments or statements—demonstrative, rhetorical, and poetic—on account of which Averroes differentiates between the styles of philosophy and *Shari'ha*. The features of the *derekh sippur,* as descried by Albalag, accord with what Averroes states regarding the features of the rhetorical style of the *Shari'ha*. *Derekh sippur* consists of examples, imaginative representations, and statements that evoke assent in the listeners by means of passion. For Averroes' exposition of rhetoric see *Averroes' Three short Commentaries on Aristotle's "Topics," "Rhetorics," and "Poetics,"* pp. 63-73.

[221] J. Stern, "The Maimonidean Parable, The Arabic Poetics, and The Garden of Eden," *Midwest Studies in Philosophy*. XXXIII (2009)

[222] Ibid

> The words of the Torah are either external or internal. The heart suits the wise, whereas the external details suit the fools… It's meaning— [the internal] is deeper than the external [layer.] Thus, it is not possible to teach it to the multitude, for they are veiled in materiality just like irrational animals.[223]

Another attestation to the limited utility of the literal meaning of Scripture can be found in Albalag's exposition of the Torah's strategy of concealment and restrictions on revealing truth to the masses.

> [In accomplishing this goal—the wellbeing of the society—the Torah [employed the following strategy] in determining what ought to be revealed or concealed from the multitude:] (a) The Torah states explicitly any true doctrine that can contribute to the accomplishment of that goal, (b) the Torah does not state explicitly any doctrine that could possibly undermine it, (c) the Torah did not mention (*lô zakhrah*) any doctrine that has the capacity to do harm to it, (d) the Torah mentions in a manner that deviates (*nôṭah min ha-'emet)* from truth any doctrine that is necessary for accomplishing it.[224]

The extent and manner in which doctrines are revealed to the masses vary according to their anticipated contribution or harm to social welfare. Because the power of truth may negatively affect society, some true doctrines were omitted from Scripture, whereas others were delivered in a manner that deviates from truth. Albalag finds an application of this schema in the Torah's presentation of doctrines about God, in specific doctrines about the manner and the features of His agency. *The* truth about this issue, namely that God is neither "a willful" nor "a natural" agent, is not mentioned in the Torah.[225]

When Albalag refers to the Torah's deviation from truth, he does not simply mean representation of truth according to the parabolic theory of Maimonides or "likeness of truth," according to Averroes' religious epistemology. This viewpoint follows from two linguistic considerations. Firstly, Albalag constantly uses the word *nôṭah* to connote

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[223] *Tiqqun*, note. 30, p. 45
[224] *Tiqqun*, p. 3
[225] Ibid, note. 25, p.25

deviating from what is correct. [226] Secondly, whenever Albalag refers to the Torah's parabolic reformulation of truth, he uses the specific formula *himshīlah ha-Torah* or *ramzah ha Torah*. The word *nôṭah* then seems to be reserved to instances of real deviation.[227]

Albalag is unclear as to what extent or how the Torah deviates from truth. As it appears, the deviation is not limited. In some cases, it may be so significant as to extend to contradicting demonstrative truth, as with the issue of the origin of the world. So overall, it is obvious that the surface meaning of Scripture offers little, if any, access to truth. Curiously, it is precisely to this layer that Albalag attaches simple belief "*emunah peshutah*.

Rhetorical and Demonstrative Assents to Scripture

The epistemic value of simple belief is perhaps clear by now. Although Albalag does not openly associate simple belief with low-ranking assents, the characteristics he attaches to its subject—Scripture's surface layer—renders the assents evoked by it weak. This layer is grounded exclusively on rhetorical statements, which means that Scripture evokes only rhetorical assents.

Rhetorical assents, as we have seen, are far removed from certainty. At best, they provide persuasion, which Averroes defines as "a kind of probable suppositions that the soul trusts, despite its awareness of an opposing consideration."[228] With this in mind, it becomes clear that simple belief is not a type of belief that Albalag would truly appreciate. When Albalag states that he embraces the doctrines of the Torah by way of "simple belief"

[226] For example when he criticizes Maimonides and al-Farabi on deviating from the adequate method of Aristotle, p. 5.
[227] Examples *Tiqqun*, note. 30, pp. 46, 47
[228] Averroes, *Three Short Commentaries on Aristotle's' "Topics," "Rhetorics", and "Poetics*," p. 57.

and deems them true, this has nothing to do with his actual opinion on the epistemic value of the external layer of Scripture. For a philosopher like Albalag the weak psychological role of the literary device of Scripture could hardly satisfy his epistemological objectives.

But what about rational belief? We recall that both Averroes and Maimonides advocated a conception of rational belief according to which religious doctrines might be accepted as true on the basis of speculation in the same way we accept conclusions of syllogistic reasoning. In Averroes' *The Decisive Treatise*, this conception of belief implies the possibility of attaining certain assents of Scripture. Averroes makes this point clear as he interprets the Quran's reference to the faith of "those who are well-grounded on science." As he states, the faith of this group of people comes about "by means of demonstration" "along with the science of interpretation."[229] In view of Averroes' scheme of assents, this faith amounts to a certain assent.

At some point, Albalag too speaks of "reason-based belief" (*'emunah mi ẓad ha 'iyyun*.) But whether this type of *'emunah* accords with certain assents or not is a question that Albalag leaves open. To answer this question a number of key points regarding the purpose and style of the *Tiqqun* should be noted.

Concerning the *Tiqqun*, Albalag states explicitly "unlike the book of *ha-rav ha-moreh* this book is not religious."[230] So, although Albalag occasionally offers interpretive notes on Scripture, the motivation behind these notes cannot be equated with that of Maimonides. In most cases, I argue, they aim primarily to defend philosophy and philosophers against accusations of unbelief by highlighting the *possibility* of the Torah's

[229] Ibid, p. 10
[230] *Tiqqun*, not. 30, p. 51

inclusion of doctrines that accord with philosophy.[231] Radical as he may appear, Albalag would certainly be keen on preserving the view of himself as religious in order to avoid clashing with the Jewish community. His reinforcement of simple belief derives mostly from this socio-political concern.

Albalag introduces the *Tiqqun* as a philosophical treatise whose *raison d'être* is the growing skeptical tendency about traditional sources. As Albalag relates, in his time, many Jews lost confidence in the kabbalah, which refers to the body of theoretical knowledge that was revealed to the prophets, going back to Abraham, and transmitted throughout generations. [232] Because of distrust in the transmitted sources, Jews who sought knowledge beyond doubt gave up on prophetic knowledge and turned to philosophy instead. These skeptical inclinations led Albalag "to "follow the method of the philosophers in interpreting Scripture in terms of philosophy," and to translate the "demonstrative" teachings of Aristotle.

But what is the specific end that Albalag seeks to fulfill by implementing this twofold approach? Albalag does not explain, but the answer might be found in a note that describes the main pedagogical feature of the *Tiqqun*. As Albalag states, the *Tiqqun* is formulated in accordance with the progressive way of learning, from easy to difficult. It introduces rhetorical doctrines, namely those of "the Torah" and "the *Maqasid*," accompanied by doctrines grounded on the Aristotelian demonstrative method, so that the

[231] Ibid, p. 2

[232] We may reasonably connect kabbalah in this reference to what Maimonides states in the *Guide* (III: 54) regarding "wisdom": the body of transmitted knowledge that includes the sayings of the prophets and sages regarding "rational matter" in the Law and provides "a verification for the opinions of the Torah." In his note on this statement of Albalag, Vajda refers to a sort of esoteric tradition to which *Sefer ha-yitzirah* belongs (*averroïste juif, traducteur et annotateur daḷ-Ghazâlî* p. 20 note 2). Whereas Albalag in other places uses the term kabbalah in the sense Vajda describes, it is obvious that in this context he is not specifically referring to the esoteric or the mystic tradition, but to the transmitted tradition in a board sense. This seems to be the way Guttmann interprets Albalag, see Guttmann, "Mishnato Shel Isaac Albalag." In other places, Albalag lays down strict conditions for determining the authenticity of transmitted knowledge. These conditions include certainty that the transmitted knowledge is received from the prophet and that no change in vocabulary, phrasing (*lashon*), or in the content ('*inyan*) has occurred. Obviously, these conditions are almost impossible to fulfill. See *Tiqqun*, note. 30, p. 38.

reader might learn the truth, which accords with "the internal meaning of Scripture." [233] Assumingly, this approach would lead the skeptical reader to recognize the harmony between Scripture and philosophical truth, thereby overcome his skepticism.

This assumed objective of the *Tiqqun*, however, is not realized. Indeed, a careful reading of the work shows that Albalag's interpretive notes serve to accomplish another unannounced goal: to separate religion and philosophy. Together with his interpretive notes, Albalag emphasizes the impossibility of knowing the true intention of Scripture. We might interpret Scripture according to philosophy, but there is no guarantee that our interpretations will accord with the text's true meaning. After all, Scripture's internal meaning is known exclusively to prophets. By sowing the seeds of doubts on the possibility of arriving at the exact meaning of Scripture, Albalag makes it clear that the tension between religion and philosophy cannot be resolved.

A thorough reading of Albalag's proposed approach to interpreting Scripture confirms this notion:

> All this [the interpretations I made] is known to me based on what I learned from demonstration. The esotericists (*ba'ali ha-nistar*) have different interpretations, all of which *Scripture could bear* (*sôvel.*) However, there is no evidence regarding the veracity of the views [that they attribute to Scripture]. For one who seeks the truth, it is not adequate to offer a conclusion based on what appears from Scripture without previously learning from demonstration. One should learn from demonstration first and then bring a support from Scripture.[234]

In this passage, Albalag highlights the merit of approaching Scripture with a scientific background. One who interprets Scripture based on demonstrative knowledge would certainly guard it from being associated with false doctrines. Still, Albalag clarifies that this approach does guarantee discovering the Torah's *true* meaning and that whatever meanings we attribute to Scripture remain conjectural.

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[233] *Tiqqun*, p. 4.
[234] Ibid, note. 30, p. 37

> *I cannot hold with certainty that the demonstrative doctrine* [that seems to] correspond to the biblical verse reflects its [the verse's] real meaning or that [it's meaning] is something else. Ultimately, my intention in all what I have interpreted is not to inform you about my belief … My aim has been to prove to you that it is *possible to read demonstrative doctrines into scripture and that scripture may bear what opposes them (hofkhan)* and many other [doctrines][235]

By stressing the polyvalent nature of Scripture, Albalag raises a difficulty with respect to assents. If the Torah's meaning cannot be determined, how can it evoke certain assents? These assents, as noted, are concerned with what cannot be otherwise. In order to obtain certain assents of Scripture, one must first identify the doctrines it contains and affirm that they cannot be otherwise. Obviously, both conditions are not realizable. The most certain fact about Scripture, according to the *Tiqqun*, is that its true meaning cannot be determined with exactness. With this state of indetermination, it seems beside the point to speak of certain assents to Scriputre. It makes no difference whether the interpreter is adept in wisdom, as Averroes stipulates with respect to certain assent to Scripture, or unlearned. Rational interpretation of Scripture might ostensibly narrow the gap between it and demonstrative knowledge but it hardly affirms their agreement, let alone supports one's religious beliefs.

Conclusion

The *Tiqqun*'s distinction between the concepts *yedi'ah* and *emunah* has provided the context and main elements for my examination of Albalag's epistemology. I have aimed to prove that the *yedi'ah-emunah* distinction pertains to considerations of certainty. In my analysis, I illustrated the epistemic gap separating *emunah* and *yediah.* On the spectrum of certainty, *emunah* ranks low, and thus does not qualify as a means for the

[235] Ibid, note. 30, 44

knowledge required for intellectual perfection. The skeptic is indirectly reassured in his turning to philosophy for the sake of certainty.

In the beginning of this chapter, I pointed to two problematic passages that involve the *yedi'ah-emunah* distinction. In one, Albalag designates prophetic knowledge as *yedi'ah* with respect to the prophet and *emunah* with respect to the recipient. Because this passage seems to posit that prophetic knowledge depends on syllogistic reasoning, it clashes with the methodological distinction between prophecy and philosophy that Albalag repeatedly emphasizes. In solving this clash, I argued that the distinction between *yediah* and *emunah* bears on qualitative aspects rather than methodological ones; it is meant to highlight the gap in their respective relations to certainty. *Yedi'ah* defines the state of certainty realized by the prophet through his prophetic experience; regardless of the type of the experience, be that rational, supra rational, or imaginative. What a prophet sees in a vision or apprehends rationally or supra-rationally is in his opinion certain and indubitable. This reading accords with Maimonides' assessment of the epistemic value of prophetic vision. In his interpretation of the *Akedah*, Maimonides states that what a prophet sees in a vision is "in the opinion of the prophet, certain and true, that the prophet has no doubts in any way concerning anything in it."[236]

In the second passage, Albalag claims that his *yedi'ah* (based on demonstration) contradicts his *emunah* (based on simple acceptance of the literal meaning of Scripture) yet both are true. The most problematic implication of this passage, as seen, is that it clashes with the essence of the scientific method of demonstration lying at the very heart of the *Tiqqun*. This implication can be resolved without resorting to the double truth claim if we consider the functional relation of *yedi'ah*, as opposed to *emunah*, to certainty.

[236] This quotation is taken from J. Stern, *The Matter and Form of Maimonides' Guide,* p. 145.

Based on the medieval Aristotelian scheme of assents we elaborated that *yedi'ah* and *emunah* evoke different types of assents that vary in the degree of proximity to certainty. Whereas *yedi'ah* accords the cognizer certainty about the truthfulness of the perceived proposition and the *impossibility* of its contrary, *emunah* produces persuasion of a given proposition accompanied by awareness of the possibility of its contrary doctrine. It is this feature of "opposability"[237] that removes the difficulty arising from Albalag's statement. Now we can understand *emunah* and *yedi'ah* as referring *not* to simultaneous and contradictory truths, but to complementary *possible* and *certain* truths respectively. One accepts the doctrine of the Torah as true while being aware that its opposing doctrine might be true. When demonstration is brought in, certainty about the veracity of the opposing doctrine is affirmed. *Emunah* continues to be true, however, for those who did not arrive to demonstrative truth.

Finally, although Albalag's ideal of certainty goes in harmony with the *Tiqqun*'s overall scientific outlook, it gives rise to many skeptical arguments that render the ultimate goal of man, intellectual perfection, unachievable. Do these skeptical implications have an impact on Albalag's commitment to philosophy? Albalag's answer is clear: the door of investigation should not be shut down; one must continue even when it is known that human reason is limited.[238]

[237] I borrow the terminology form D. Black, p. 109
[238] *Tiqqun*, note. 11, p. 17

Theory of Prophecy: Naturalism or Supernaturalism?

In the previous chapter, I examined the concepts of *yedi'ah* and *emunah* and concluded that, when considering the epistemological ideal of certainty, the distinction between the two does not provide evidence for the double-truth claim. In the present chapter I consider this claim from another perspective: Albalag's theory of prophecy.

Scholarly analyses of Albalag's adoption of the double-truth doctrine have generally been based on his theory of prophecy. Vajda,[239] Touati,[240] and Guttman,[241] proceed in their analyses from a number of statements in which Albalag stakes a claim for a prophetic supra rational mode of apprehension. According to this mode, prophets arrive at knowledge that is quantitatively and qualitatively superior to that of philosophy. Indeed, Albalag suggests that both prophetic apprehension and knowledge are divine; in the sense that they are equivalent to the mode of apprehension and quality of knowledge of the separate intellects. Just as separate intellects perceive truth differently from human beings, prophets apprehend it in such a manner that sometimes results in a contradiction between prophetic and human knowledge.

One can only settle the debate over the double-truth hypothesis on the basis of a correct and comprehensive understanding of these notes. The present chapter proposes to attain such an understanding. In doing so, I propose to examine Albalag's notes on prophecy against the key metaphysical and epistemological premises of the *Tiqqun* and in light of medieval Jewish and Islamic theories of prophecy.

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[239] G. Vajda, Isaac Albalag: *averroïste juif, traducteur et annotateur da'l-Gazali*

[240] Ch. Touat, "Vérité Prophétique et Vérité Philosophique Chez Isaac Albalag," Revue des études juives 121, 1962, p. 35-47.

[241] J. Guttmann, "Mishnato Shel Isaac Albalag" [la doctrine d'Isaac Albalag], dans Louis Ginzberg Jubilee Volume, partie hébraïque, New York, 1946, p. 75-92

This chapter, following upon a preliminary observation, will be divided into three sections. The first section examines what Albalag means by miracles when they are associated with prophecy. The second investigates the qualification required for an individual to reach the state of prophecy and raises the question as to whether this qualification is attainable. The third is devoted to the concept of divine faculty.

General Observation

Only a very small amount of space is allotted to discussing prophecy in the *Tiqqun*, and this discussion is not presented in any systematic fashion. Rather, it takes the form of a small number of interspersed notes that, in most cases, can be described as sketchy and imprecise. Indeed, it is difficult to discern a serious engagement on Albalag's part with the general themes involved in the philosophical interpretation of prophecy common in his intellectual milieu, with the result that the concept of prophecy appears of secondary, if not peripheral, interest to Albalag.

Albalag presents the concept of prophecy only by means of a number of statements that, despite their crucial implications for the *Tiqqun*'s philosophic outlook, are not accounted for. Some of these impart intriguingly unusual ideas, such as that regarding the angelic nature of prophets and the anti-natural concepts comprising their knowledge. But if these ideas truly represent Albalag's philosophic understanding of prophecy, why would he not exert any effort to explain or logically support them?

Throughout the treatise, Albalag applies a rigorous scientific method to support whatever doctrines he considers to be true. As a faithful Aristotelian, he does not accept unsubstantiated assertions; therefore, he frequently criticizes dialecticians as well as philosophers, such as Avicenna, for advocating doctrines that have no logical

foundation.[242] One thus wonders why Albalag deviates from his scientific standards and presents many unsubstantiated assertions regarding prophets and prophetic knowledge. It takes no effort to recognize that the depth, clarity, and fullness of Albalag's discussions of different topics are proportionate to their respective significance and centrality to the *Tiqqun*. This is readily apparent from his deep and exhaustive discussion of the eternity doctrine, the proof of which occupies the largest space of the treatise. Can it be argued that Albalag's interest in proving the philosophical doctrine of eternity, whose negative implications for religion were well known to philosophers, exceeds his interest in establishing prophecy, the central doctrine to religion? Indeed, it can! In the first section, I will discuss the implication of this conclusion.

1. Prophecy and Miracles

For some scholars, Albalag appears to be "a confused mind" whose work is packed with numerous inconsistencies.[243] This evaluation, which in my view is inaccurate, follows mostly from literal and decontextualized readings of many of Albalag's statements. To understand Albalag correctly, one has to consider the multifaceted signification of his statements that arises from his allusive style. Most of these are interpreted in isolation of the general philosophical outlook of the *Tiqqun* and are taken to represent an integral whole, despite their unsystematic construction, contradictions, and random nature.

In two statements, Albalag associates prophetic knowledge and prophecy with miracles.

> I believe, based, on the authority of the prophets, that the opposite of my knowledge is true by way of miracle (*nes*).[244]

[242] See for instance note. 11, p. 16 where he rejects Avicenna's theory of essence and existence because it involves many unsubstantiated assertions.
[243] Israel Zinberg, *A History of Jewish Literature*, 1972, p. 107.
[244] *Tiqqun*, note. 30, p. 43

> The [demonstrative] doctrine [that] the philosophers [uphold] is my opinion (*da'atī*) and the prophetic doctrine of the Torah is my belief (*'emûnatī*) the former [is established] by way of nature and the latter by way of miracle.[245]

Guttmann interprets these statements in terms of the double truth doctrine, but he shows that Albalag's employment of the double truth doctrine is eclectic and raises doubts regarding his sincerity. [246] Schweid emphasizes the role of miracles in Albalag's theory of supra-rational prophecy.[247] Touati offers a psychological perspective and thus links this element to the prophet's cognitive capacity that enables him to grasp the causal connections underlying the ostensibly supernatural events that the masses call miracles.[248]

To better assess Albalag's standpoint, I read the above statements against the *Tiqqun*'s metaphysical framework. I start by investigating the question: What exactly does miracle refer to when it is associated with prophecy and prophetic knowledge?

There are two possible lines of thinking with which we can answer this question. The first tends to understand the phenomenon of prophecy itself as a miracle through which the prophet obtains access to a body of knowledge that contains doctrines that oppose to the laws of nature. This line can be divided into two views. One understands prophecy in the light of the Avicennan conception of imaginative and intellectual revelation. As Kogan points out, these are considered by Avicenna as forms of miracles, yet they are not "so much interruptions of the course of nature as they are extraordinary extensions of it." [249]

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[245] Ibid, note. 30, p. 52
[246] Julus Guttmann "mishnato shel Isaac Albalag"
[247] Eliezer Schweid, *The Classic Jewish Philosophers*, 2008, p. 323. Cf. Eliezer Schweid, *Ta'am ve haqasha,*1970, pp. 191-193.
[248] Charles Touati, "Vérité Philosophique Et Vérité Prophetiqu Chez Isaac Alblag," p. 37.
[249] B. Kogan, *Averroes And The Metaphysics of Causation* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1985), 74.

The other considers Albalag's conception of prophecy to be more or less in conformity with the traditional and popular conception of prophecy, which views prophecy as a merit granted to a given individual by way of direct divine communication. This approach regards miracles and prophecy as separate phenomena. Yet, they are related inasmuch as the former serves to verify the validity of the latter.[250] Here, since divine intervention is not a necessary condition for prophecy to occur, a naturalistic conception of prophecy may be admissible. However, verification of the truthfulness of prophetic knowledge becomes dependent on the occurrence of miracles, and thus, from this standpoint, the admission of miracles is necessary.

It seems to me that none of these views represents Albalag. The irrelevance of the first view to Albalag's conception of prophecy will unfold from the discussion in the next sections, which focuses on examining the prophet's psychological features. The latter two views share a similar motif, namely that prophecy either depends on or involves an extraordinary divine act. With respect to these views, two basic questions arise: 1) Are miracles possible? 2) To what extent can miracle be trusted as a means for supporting prophecy?

Albalag does not provide a systemic discussion of miracles, but two conflicting conceptions could be discerned from a number of his statements. On the one hand, from the statements quoted above, we get the impression that Albalag means miracles in the real sense, as a form of events that contradict the law of nature. He does not suggest anything along the line of the naturalistic conception of miracles advocated by Jewish Averroists

[250] This was the approach of theologians in accounting for and verifying prophecy. For example see al-Ghazali, *Tahāfut al-Falasifa,* Third Discussion. p. 73. Saadia Gaon holds a similar position; see *The Book of Belief and Opinions,* translated by Samuel Rosenblatt (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1948), pp. 147-157. For a discussion of Saadia's and the theologians' arguments for prophecy see Sarah Stroumsa, "The Signs of Prophecy: The Emergence and Early Development of a Theme in Arabic Theological Literature," Harvard Theological Review 78 (1985): 101–14.

such as Gersonides, who brought the miracles reported in Scripture close to the idea of natural occurrences.[251]

In another passage that deals also with prophecy, Albalag sets this conception more straightforwardly as he posits that what might appear impossible from "the point of view of nature" could be possible on account of "the power of the God."[252] On the other hand, he denies the existence of miracles in another purely philosophical context. In defining the ontological features of prime matter and form and their causal connection, Albalag presents a radical theory of causation that allows no ground for speaking of divine agency outside of the necessary cause-effect relationship. At the end of the discussion, he points to miracles recounted in Scripture such as the transforming of the staff into a serpent and the creation of man out of dust. Albalag denies the miraculous status of these events, arguing that they occurred due to remote possibilities inherent in matter. What is responsible for the actualization of these possibilities in matter "is not a miracle," but "nature."[253]

As the two competing views go against Albalag's theory of Divine Will, which will be thoroughly examined in chapter four, the conflict between them is settled in favor of the latter. In accordance with the Aristotelian conception of Divine perfection, Albalag conceives of Divine Will as an eternal power whose existence is necessary for the continuation of the universe, but which does not act in a direct manner on subjects. Divine Will is immutable. It does not change by the transformation of events in the universe because it does not follow from a desire.

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[251] Sarah Klein-Braslavy, "Gersonides' Use of Aristotle's Metrology in the Account of Some Biblical Miracles*." Aleph*: *Historical Studies in Science and Judaism* v. 10 n2 (2010): 241-313

[252] *Tiqqun*, note. 30, p. 44. Literally, (*ha-manhig*)
[253] *Tiqqun*, note. 70, p. 100.

This, however, is not the sole meaning of immutability that Albalag seeks to emphasize. In addition, the immutability of Divine Will is related to the fact that God does not will a thing that transgresses the laws of nature. The world in its current shape is the best of all possible orders. God causes this order to be fixed and His Will constantly attaches to it. In fact, it cannot be claimed that a change in the natural order could happen, if we wish to attribute the causation of the universe to God. All that exists, including the natural order, is the manifestation of the eternal Divine Will, which itself is dictated by the immutable Divine Wisdom. Any change in nature would imply that a change in the Divine Will has occurred, which would contradict the notion of Divine perfection. Thus, concludes Albalag, inasmuch as God is "eternally good" (*tôv tamīd*), He eternally wills the same thing: the natural order. The universe is fixed so that things follow their natural course. "Nothing could be added to it or subtracted from it."[254]

In view of this strict naturalistic system, it is hard to imagine the possibility of miracles, whether we take "miracle" to signify a supernatural event or an act of divine intervention upon which a specific individual is selected and granted a revelation. But if miracles have no scientific ground and therefore must be discounted, they cannot be considered as evidence for prophecy.

Undoubtedly, Albalag does not believe in miracles and thus it comes as a surprise that he anchors the doctrine of prophecy on a phenomenon whose occurrence he denies. Can one really believe that Albalag fails to notice the inconsistency arising from his appealing to miracles in supporting prophecy? Albalag's discussion throughout the treatise testifies to his philosophical competence in, and mastery of, scientific methods. It is thus hard to imagine that such a basic inconsistency resulted from a confusion or carelessness

[254] *Tiqqun*, note. 30, p. 47

on Albalag's part. The alternative suggestion would be that he intentionally formulated this inconsistency.

To understand how this inconsistency functions and what purpose it serves, I propose to read it against the background of Maimonides' link between prophecy and miracles, which he explores from both epistemological and cosmological angles. Epistemologically, the link is one of concomitance. Maimonides considers miracles as a means for verifying prophecies and examines the validity of basing the verification of prophecy on co-occurring miracles. This comes in a context where he criticizes people whose faith in the Torah and in the truthfulness of prophets is mainly dependent on the occurrence of miracles. In particular, Maimonides is concerned with testimony for the prophecy of Moses that considers the Israelites' observation of God's revelation at Mount Sinai, more than the miracles Moses performed, to be the fundamental testimony and foundation of faith. Maimonides deems miracles to be the least reliable testimony for the truthfulness of prophets, inasmuch as they cannot in all occasions be distinguished from illusions. He holds that, one who believes in another person because of signs has doubts and suspensions and his heart is full of apprehension.[255]

Arguing against miracles as a means of verifying prophecy is also found in Averroes' writing. Like Maimonides, Averroes denies that *Mutakalimun's* "strange and extraordinary action that everybody regards divine" could prove beyond doubt the existence of prophets or verify the validity of prophecy. [256] He openly deems miracles an unsubstantial basis for prophecy and labels the arguments advanced by the *Mutakalimun* in

[255] *Hilachot Yesodei ha-Torah*: 8. Maimonides, however, does not object to believing in prophets who perform miracles.
[256] Averroes, *Faith and Reason in Islam*: *Averroes' Exposition of Religious Arguments,* 2001, pp. 92-98

this regard as "ignorance." By appealing to miracles, then, Albalag appears to be carelessly subjecting his faith to suspensions.

From the other angle, Maimonides elaborates on the manner in which miracles can be involved in prophecy. In this regard, he presents three views of prophecy in relation to their corresponding cosmological structure. For our discussion, it is very important to recall these views since, as we shall argue, the contradiction present in the *Tiqqun* seems to engage indirectly with Maimonides' discussion of the three thematic correspondences between theories of Creation and prophecy. Maimonides explains:

> The opinions of people concerning prophecy are like their opinions concerning the eternity of the world or its creation in time.[257]

These opinions are as follows:

> 1. The first opinion is that of the multitude of those among the pagans who consider prophecy as true and also believed by some of the common people professing our Law—is that God, may He be exalted, chooses whom He wishes from men, turning him into a prophet and sends him with a mission. According to them it makes no difference whether this individual is a man of knowledge or ignorant, aged or young. However, they also posit as a condition his having a certain goodness and sound morality
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> 2. The second opinion is that of the philosophers…. When in the case of a superior individual who is perfect with respect to his rational and moral qualities, his imaginative faculty is in its most perfect state and when he has been prepared in the way you will hear, he will necessarily become a prophet, inasmuch as this is a perfection that belongs to us by nature. According to this opinion, it is not possible that an individual should be fit for prophecy and prepared for it and not become a prophet.
>
> 3. The third opinion is the opinion of our law and the foundation of our doctrine. It is identical with the philosophic opinion except in one thing. For we believe that it may happen that one who is fit for prophecy and prepared for it should not become a prophet, on account of the divine will. To my mind, this is like all the miracles and takes the same course as they take.

[257] Maimonides offers three theories on creation: 1) creation ex nihilo; "the opinion of all who believe in the Law of Moses, 2) the Platonic position, 3) the Aristotelian position, *Guide* II: 13.

It is with respect to the third opinion that controversy arose, whereas the first two opinions are quite clear.[258] The thematic correspondence of former opinions with cosmological theories is: The vulgar and the ignorant pagans who believe in the creation of the world identify prophecy as a miraculous event brought about by God's direct intervention. Philosophers who confirm the eternity theory understand prophecy as a natural phenomenon. The third opinion, as mentioned, is debated, and we need not examine its details. For our purpose, it suffices to highlight the intrinsic thematic correspondence between theories of creation and prophecy to which Maimonides points.

Now, let us return to Albalag to examine his assertions in light of this thematic correspondence. That Albalag is committed to the eternity theory is unquestionable. Throughout the treatise, he straightforwardly and unambiguously argues in favor of this doctrine, and, moreover, criticizes Maimonides for not having the audacity to explicitly affirm it. According to Maimonides' correlation, then, Albalag's position on prophecy would correspond to the second opinion, i.e. prophecy is a purely natural process. It follows that the involvement of miracles, either for prophecy's occurrence or verification, is impossible. It comes as a shock, then, that Albalag relates prophecy to miracles in the very context where he goes to great length to defend the eternity doctrine.

Jewish Aristotelians strongly acknowledged the incompatibility of the idea of miracles with the eternity doctrine;[259] therefore it is exceptionally hard to imagine that Albalag would unconsciously commit such a basic logical contradiction. Again, we

[258] The controversy over Maimonides' precise view started in the post-Maimonidean era in the commentarial literature on the *Guide*. Modern scholarship too has engaged with the controversy. Different solutions have been offered by many scholars. See for example Lawrence Kaplan, " Maimonides on the Miraculous Element in Prophecy," *The Harvard Theological Review*, Vol. 70, No. 3/ 4 (Jul. 1997), pp. 233-256. Warren Zev Harvey, " A Third Approach to Maimonides' Cosmonogy-Prophetology Puzzle", *The Harvard Theological Review,* Vol. 74, No. (Jul. 1981), PP. 287-301

[259] E. Schweid, *Ta'am ve haqasha,* 1970, pp.181-85.

suggest that he is being intentionally self-contradictory in order to allow for different interpretations of his account for prophecy, as will shortly come clear, while upholding on the surface the popular supernatural character of prophecy, which is a key factor in the preservation of the masses' belief in the Torah: the foundation of social order.

Recall that Maimonides draws attention to the implications of the eternity doctrine for the Law: "the belief in the eternity the way Aristotle sees it... destroys the law in its principle, necessarily gives the lie to every miracle, and reduces to inanity all the hopes and threats that the law has held out."[260] Such consequences, in Albalag's view, explain the rationale behind Maimonides' effort to conceal his adoption of the eternity doctrine. But Albalag is also convinced that Maimonides' ostensible refutation of this doctrine is no longer capable of protecting the Law and the masses' faith against the threats of the Aristotelian doctrine of eternity. Both philosophers lived in different historical and intellectual milieus. In Albalag's time, as he himself notes, "the eternity doctrine became more widespread and known"[261] to the masses than it was during the time of Maimonides, to such an extent "that some even went as far as to adopt the Epicurean doctrine of eternity."[262] Considering this alarming situation, we can now discern the socio-political considerations behind Albalag's substantiating of prophecy on the basis of miracles. Viewing Albalag's statement regarding the connection between prophecy and miracle as being politically motivated rather than being dogmatic might help clarify his goals and resolve his many contradictions without the need to evoke the double truth hypothesis. It is thus apparently a political concern for the law and its civic function, rather than the

[260] *Guide* II:25
[261] *Tiqqun*, note. 30, . 45, 58
[262] Ibid, note. 30, p. 51

double-truth assumption that led Albalag to appeal to miracles in supporting prophecy and its correlative doctrine, the Creation of the world.

We can thus see Albalag as a faithful Averroist since he does not *openly* deny miracles, but maintains them for their benefit in undergirding the faith of the masses.[263] To consider Albalag's reference to miracles as an indication of his adoption of the double truth doctrine thus proves groundless; for Albalag here seems addressing the masses rather than the philosophers.

2. Prophets and Separate Intellects: Two Fundamental Claims

At the center of Albalag's theory of prophecy lies a claim that prophets are extraordinary individuals whose psychological and intellectual features are equivalent to those of separate intellects. Indeed, the prophet's mind *is* a separate intellect. An individual who arrives at the state of prophecy apprehends things supra-rationally such that his or her apprehension of the truth occurs by way of self-thinking and independently of tools of cognition. Thus, Albalag claims that prophets, contrary to ordinary human beings, including philosophers, apprehend martial objects from the standpoint of separate intellects; that is " they apprehend sense objects (*ha-murgash*) through intelligibles (*bi-muskal*)."[264] This statement, as Guttmann explains, indicates that the imaginative faculty plays no role in prophecy. [265]

The double truth doctrine derives its justification from this conception of prophecy because it connects prophetic knowledge to what is beyond reason and nature, i.e., with the domain of separate intellects. If separate intellects have, as Albalag suggests, access to knowledge that differs from human knowledge in both the degree of intelligibly and

[263] Averroes, *TT,* Eleventh Discussion
[264] *Tiqqun*, note. 30, p. 44.
[265] Juluis Guttmann, "Mishnato Shel Isaac Albalag"

content then prophetic knowledge is different from human knowledge in such away that it may contradict nature-based and demonstrative knowledge: "If there exists in the universe a separate intellect…its knowledge would be in a complete opposition (*be-takhlīt hahefekh*) to human knowledge."[266]

In his notes on the *Tiqqun*, Vajda raises questions regarding this conception of prophecy and maintains that Albalag's fideist declarations seem ironical.[267] He, however, does not provide a comprehensive analysis of Albalag's conception of prophecy or provide a conclusive opinion. In this section, I aim to fill this lacuna. I shall demonstrate that Albalag's declarations regarding the extraordinary nature of prophecy do not represent his actual scientific conviction of the phenomenon. In truth, Albalag provides a number of hints that impels the reader to investigate and eventually reject this conception of prophecy.

The central consideration that undergirds my discussion is the state of intellectual perfection required for the occurrence of prophecy. Albalag does not discuss this requirement in detail, but mentions it only in passing in the middle of a discussion of the hierarchical structure of separate intellects:

> As the material intellect of man reaches a limit where it does not need to engage in demonstrative methods in order to derive unknown objects from their known causes or from their effects; instead the intellect knows things by itself (*me'aẓemô*), since all knowledge exists in the soul in actuality. As [man reaches this stage] *his knowledge will be elevated from the level of human knowledge to divine knowledge*. This mode of apprehension is called prophecy, which is the ultimate perfection of man (*takhlīt shlemût ha-adam*).[268] (Emphasis added)

This passage lays down two essential claims: 1) prophecy requires that man attain complete intellectual perfection, and 2) When this requirement is accomplished, the humans' intellect and knowledge are transformed into a transcendent (divine) state in

[266] *Tiqqun*, note. 11, p. 16
[267] Georges Vajda. *averroïste juif, traducteur et annotateur daḷ-Ghazâlî,* 1960, p. 195.
[268] Ibid, note. 42, p. 67

which they become equal to, respectively, separate intellects and divine knowledge. In my view, these two claims are questionable. In light of Albalag's epistemological framework and conception of man, can man really attain complete intellectual perfection? Assuming this is possible, can an individual really overcome what separates him from the divine realm and acquire a new ontological status, transformed into a separate intellect, or at least attain the cognitive qualities characterizing separate intellects? I start examining the claim regarding the attainability of complete intellectual perfection, then move to investigating the second claim.

2.1. *Intellectual Perfection: Means and Limitations*

In medieval philosophy theories of prophecy are closely related to an analysis of human intellect. In the *Tiqqun*, Albalag never systematically describes the structure of the human intellect. He either neglects or touches upon only cursorily the basic concepts, customarily addressed in medieval philosophical treatises, concerning the ontological status of the soul, its division, as well as the faculties and the precise function of each. In addition, Albalag offers some minimal notes on the function of senses, the imaginative faculty, and memory. In all, reconstructing Albalag's psychology is a difficult task, inasmuch as all the notes at our disposal are very general and can accordingly be interpreted variably in terms of different doctrines of the intellect.

Yet some general features can be identified. The scheme of intellect in the *Tiqqun* is similar to the twofold Aristotelian one. It describes only two states of intellect—material or potential intellect (*sekhel ḥomrī* or *sekhel bekoaḥ*), and actual intellect (*sekhel be-fo'al*). There is no mention of an intermediary, i.e. acquired, or higher (emanated)

intellects described in the medieval Aristotelian tradition.[269] Perhaps Albalag omitted mentioning those categories of intellects for the sake of brevity. But one might wonder why Albalag is so careless about details that would serve to elaborate and reinforce the proposed conception of prophecy. One would expect him to propose a threefold scheme, which would emphasize the higher, emanated intellect. Since Albalag provides no instruction on how to supplement the missing details, we are compelled to limit our assessment of the intellectual merit of prophets on the twofold scheme that he offers. We face further difficulties because of lack of information concerning the elements of this scheme: the material and actual intellects. The terms "material" and "actual" are used unsystematically; they are sometimes replaced by the general term "human intellect" (*sekhel ʾeônshī*).

There is no lucid description of the ontological features and precise activities of each intellect. Only in one note does Albalag consider Averroes' account of the nature of the material intellect as an intellect shared by all individuals, a stance he rejects because it clashes with the doctrine of reward and punishment.[270]

> We, the believers in the Torah, do not accept the doctrine of Ibn Rushd. The doctrine offered by Abu Hamid is more in concord with the Torah than that of Ibn Rushd, for in view of the latter, there is no reward or punishment and there is no advantage of the wise over the ignorant.[271]

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[269] Philosophers described fourfold and fivefold schemes. Al-Farabi for instance offers a fourfold scheme in his *Letter Concerning the Intellect.* They go as follow: potential intellect, actual intellect, Emanated intellect, and active intellect. Al-Farabi's *Letter Concerning the Intellect* is translated by Arthur Hyman in *Philosophy in the Middle Ages*, edited by Arthur Hyman and J. Walsh, (Indianapolis: Hackett Pub, 2010), 215-221. Avicenna offers a fivefold scheme: potential intellect, intellect in *habitu*, actual intellect, acquired intellect, active or prophetic intellect. This scheme is designed to serves his theory on the prophetic intellect. See Fazl Rahman for further discussion, *Prophecy in Islam* (London, Allen & Unwin, 1958), 15-16.

[270] Averroes theory of the material intellect developed in throughout his various works. The culmination of this theory can be found in *The Long Commentary on De Anima* 3.4-8. For the history of the development of this theory see H. Davidson, *Al-Farabi, Avicenna, Averroes on the Intellect* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 258-298. It is to be noted that Averroes too, in *The Decisive Treatise*, held that the afterlife of the individual soul is a religious doctrine that must be affirmed.

[271] *Tiqqun*, note. 20, p. 22

Whether Albalag truly rejects Averroes' theory of the material intellect or secretly subscribes to it cannot be determined with exactness due to the paucity of notes on this topic. But there is one brief note in which he defines the material intellect, as opposed to a the separate intellect, as "a disposition to become an intellect in *actu*."[272] Following this note Albalag states: "therefore it [the material intellect] requires for its existence matter, just as all material forms require matter for their existence." This view of the material intellect can be understood in terms of different theories of intellect, but certainly deviates from that of Averroes. In its fullest development, Averroes' theory of material intellect moved away from "the physicality of the individual human":

> What is called 'material intellect' has only the sole nature of possibility and disposition since it is mixed neither with matter nor any sensible natures. That is why this disposition is not anything existing in a subject...'"[273]

Ironically, Albalag claims to have rejected Averroes' theory of intellect due to its implications for the doctrine of reward and punishment, while he implies a more radical standpoint as he associates the material intellect with individual material subjects. Averroes' theory of intellect apparently was proposed as an attempt to fill a number of lacunae in Aristotle's theory of intellect, and at the same time to solve epistemological and metaphysical difficulties that resulted from the long history of commentaries on Aristotle. Relevant to our discussion here is Alexander's account of the material intellect, which, as in Albalag's note, focuses on the association of the material intellect with individual subjects.[274] Along with this emphasis, Alexander posits the corruptibility of the

[272] *Tiqqun*, note. 60, p. 86. Cf. Aristotle's statement concerning the receptive intellect in *De anima* 430a15 which has the capacity to "becoming all things"
[273] *Epistle on Conjunction.* Quotation is taken from Richard Taylor, 2004, 119.
[274] See discussion by Richard Taylor, 2004, 110.

intellect with the body.[275] Whereas Albalag does not openly posit this doctrine, the context in which he emphasizes the grounding of the material intellect in material subjects posits the general rule that things attached to matter must perish.[276]

This brings us to the other part of the intellect, the intellect in *actu*. Again, Albalag's notes are very scanty but are sufficient to permit us to connect the state of prophecy with the intellect in *actu*. Both are described as the ultimate perfection of man. The passage on prophecy quoted above explicitly defines prophecy as "the complete intellectual perfection of man," a state arrived at gradually, after learning and engagement with syllogistic reasoning. Prophecy, accordingly, is an absolutely natural process relying above all on man's cognitive activities and aptness for learning.

The account of prophecy at our disposal accords with the standard naturalistic explanation of prophecy advocated by medieval Aristotelians. Like al-Farabi, Avicenna, and Maimonides, Albalag deems intellectual perfection the crucial requirement for prophecy. This very requirement, however, turns out to be the key evidence against the possibility of prophecy. Note that it is specifically on account of realizing intellectual perfection that a given individual gains an angelic mode of apprehension whereupon "his knowledge transforms from the degree of human knowledge to the degree of divine knowledge."[277] Whether complete intellectual perfection is possible is thus the most crucial question that needs to be verified in Albalag's theory of prophecy.

In a brief statement, Albalag explains that the ultimate goal of man, intellectual perfection, consists in acquiring knowledge of "*all"* the existence in a scientific way, namely by way of demonstration. As we explained in the previous chapter, this knowledge

[275] Ibid
[276] *Tiqqun*, note. 60, p. 86. Cf. Aristote *De Caelo* 2: 12
[277] Ibid, p. 67

must fulfill the condition of "dispelling all doubt." Thus, an individual becomes fully perfect, and hence a prophet, once he attains *complete* certain knowledge of all concepts and truths. Both the correspondence and certainty conditions characterizing scientific knowledge must be completely fulfilled in the fields of physics, metaphysics, and cosmology. In my view, this is not realizable.

A number of strong, skeptical motifs regarding the limitation on the intellectual capacity of human beings emerge in the *Tiqqun.* The main one pertains specifically to the scientific knowledge of metaphysics and cosmology. As stated in the previous chapter, the standards of scientific knowledge, definition and demonstration, are impossible to fully satisfy in the metaphysical realm, which means that obtaining *certain* knowledge of God and separate intellects remains an unachievable goal.

These skeptical motifs are not peculiar to Albalag and seem to be inspired by a number of significant remarks made by Maimonides in the *Guide* regarding the limitation of the human intellect. Shlomo Pines considers these remarks, whose main motifs, as he argues, go back to al-Farabi, to provide the key to understanding the esoteric message of the *Guide*. In Pines' view, Maimonides was concealing "a critical (in the Kantian sense) attitude," which considered the human intellect to be fundamentally limited with respect to metaphysical and cosmological knowledge because it could only recognize objects perceived by sense and images derived from sense data. No genuine knowledge about the incorporeal or celestial realm can be attained. [278]

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[278] Shlomo Pines, "The Limitation of Human Knowledge According to Al-Farabi, Ibn Bajja, and Maimonides" *Studies in Medieval Jewish History and Literature,* edited by I. Twersky (Cambridge, MA : Harvard University Press, 1979), 82-108. The same thesis can also be found in Shlomo Pines "The Philosophical Purport of Maimonides Halachic Work and the Purport of the Guide of the Perplexed," *Maimonides and Philosophy,* edited by Pines and Yovel, 1986. Pines' thesis has been challenged by many scholars. See for instance Herbert Davidson, "Maimonides On Metaphysical Knowledge," B. Kogan, "What Can We Know And When Can We Know It?," "Maimonides On the Active Intellect And Human Cognition," *Moses Maimonides And His Time*, edited by Eric Ormsby (Washington, D.C. : Catholic University of America Press, 1989)

One fundamental point in Maimonides' remarks on the limitation of human knowledge, which obviously informs Albalag's thought, concerns the processes of abstraction, through which human knowledge is derived.[279] In his essay, Pines argues that metaphysical knowledge, according to Maimonides, is impossible because human knowledge is substantially based on the abstraction of sensory objects, whereas immaterial beings cannot be derived in this way.[280]

Joseph Stern identifies another essential cause of man's epistemic limitation: the process of representation. He cites the following passage, which in his view embodies the essence of Maimonides' skeptical critique of the human intellect:

> Matter is a strong veil preventing the apprehension of that which is separate from matter as it truly is. It does this even if it is the noblest and purest matter, I mean even if it is the matter of the heavenly spheres. All the more is this true for the dark and turbid matter that is ours. Hence, whatever our intellects aspire to apprehend concerning the deity or the intellects, there subsists this great veil interposed between the two… the apprehension of His true reality is impossible for us because of the dark matter that encompass us and not Him. [281]

Arriving at "scientific and metaphysical truth about immaterial beings" is not possible, in Stern's view, due to "the veil of matter, the representations that function in cognition that are formed in part by our matter and in particular our imagination."[282] Apparently, Albalag recognized this skeptical message from the *Guide* and applied its key features in the *Tiqqun*, though without mentioning Maimonides. The *Tiqqun*'s epistemological outlook reflects Albalag's deep concern for the implications arising from the composite nature of man. The primary cause of man's epistemic limitation, as Albalag

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[279] For Maimonides' critique of the human intellect's limitation with respect to representations of incorporeal beings see J. Stern, *The Matter and From of Maimonides*, Chapter 6.
[280] Shlomo Pines, "The Limitation of Human Knowledge According to Al-Farabi, Ibn Bajja, and Maimonides" in *Studies in Medieval Jewish History and Literature,* 1979, pp. 82-108.
[281] Quotation is taken from J. Stern, *the Matter and Form*, 2013, 191.
[282] Ibid, p. 192.

complains, is matter which constantly poses a hindrance to man's endeavor to obtain the knowledge required for intellectual perfection.

What exactly is the nature of this hindrance? First, our natural needs constitute a crucial source of distraction that sets us apart from pursuing intellectual perfection to the utmost. Albalag unambiguously states that as long as man is alive, his intellect exists in constant affinity with matter and therefore it can never be fully actualized:

> Man *is composed of two faculties*: natural and intellectual. These two faculties are the two angels that accompany man and rule him…. both faculties are responsible for ruling each human being, however the *ruling of one hinders* the ruling of the other…The natural faculty completes the first perfection, which is the life by virtue of which body subsists. The intellectual [faculty] brings the second perfection, which is the knowledge by virtue of which the soul subsists. Because the second perfection is more sublime than the first, and *the first hinders (me'akev) it and prevents (monea') man from completing it* [*the second perfection*], they called the natural part that exists in man evil. (Emphasis added)[283]

There is yet another crucial difficulty associated with man's composite nature: because human intellect exists in constant affinity with matter, it has no capacity to apprehend immaterial beings. Albalag assigns a fundamental role to the process of representation in obtaining knowledge.[284] Knowledge is divided into representation and assents, the former being a prerequisite for the latter. Regardless of the veracity of our judgments, any process of knowledge perforce involves representation. The centrality of representation to Albalag's understanding of the limits and quality of human knowledge can be recognized in the way that he differentiates philosophers from the ignorant masses on the one hand, and, on the other, separate intellects from human beings in general,

[283] *Tiqqun*, note. 37, p. 58. Cf *Guide* III: 9
[284] For the division of knowledge into representation and assent see *Avicenna's Deliverance: Logic*, translated by Asad, Q. Ahmed (Oxford University Press, 2011), 1-4.

based on their respective abilities to form representations of things according to their true reality. [285]

The cognitive process of representation results in a significant epistemological constraint. As Albalag repeatedly emphasizes, mental representations lead to true knowledge only when the mental concept corresponds to the true reality of the object. One obtains true knowledge of the quiddity of what a thing is, its *whatness,* only when this condition is fulfilled. The problem that comes to the fore here is that this condition can hardly be fulfilled in all cases. Because our mental representations depend primarily on sensory and imaginative tools, we cannot form purely intellectual representations of immaterial beings, and hence grasping their true reality lies beyond our capacity:

> What is important for you to know is that a philosopher could learn about the existence of the *hyle* and some of its features, but apprehending its quiddity (*mahûtô*) and its truthness (*ʾamitatô*) so that it is to be represented (*yeẓayyer*) in his soul according to its true reality, this is not possible. The reason is that the *hyle* has no form and therefore representing its quiddity is prevented [from] us from its side, not from our side. This is not the case with divine matters, for *representing their quiddities* is prevented [from us] from our side. The reason is that our intellects are acquired through imagination, and imagination is derived from senses…. This [lack of knowledge regarding immaterial things] … is due to the *deficiency inhering in the human intellect, which is inescapable on account of matter.* [286]

Albalag acknowledges the fact that the obstructing impact of sensory and imaginative data cannot be completely eliminated and therefore he rules out the possibility of achieving complete knowledge of metaphysical issues. Although we can infer the existence of God and separate intellects through their actions, it is impossible to grasp the quiddity of their attributes, specifically because we cannot *intellectually* represent them.[287] With this limitation, it seems unlikely that a given individual would be

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[285] *Tiqqun*, p. 2
[286]Ibid, note. 11, p. 16
[287] Ibid

capable of fully actualizing the material intellect. To be sure, knowledge of existence, knowledge-*that*, is alone insufficient. Since complete intellectual perfection is associated with knowing things according to their true reality, it is obvious that knowledge-*what*, i.e. the quiddity of things, is an essential component of the knowledge required for actualizing the intellect.

Albalag fully expresses his profound conviction about the limits of human knowledge, a fact that he acknowledges forthrightly. In his view, man's limitation with respect to metaphysical knowledge is not a deficiency *per se,* for this limitation is part and parcel of the composite nature of human beings. The true deficiency, he contends, consists in being incapable of admitting the limitation of the human intellect, resulting from its "inescapable"[288] attachment to matter.

On one occasion, Albalag sets forth this argument in defense of the philosophers against the mockery directed at them for falling short of scientifically arriving at conclusions on the reality of incorporeal beings. In response, Albalag states that those who mock philosophers are ignorant of the nature of the human intellect and its intrinsic reliance on physical organs and sensible objects. To emphasize this fact, Albalag presents a hypothetical statement, whose primary purpose is to contrast the material aspect of human intellect, the primary cause of man's intellectual limitation, with the absolutely immaterial nature of separate intellects, whose cognitive activities are completely independent of materiality.

> If there exists (*ʾim yesh*) in the world a separate intellect whose apprehension does not rely on physical tools, this intellect would indubitably apprehend [immaterial] existents

[288] Ibid

> not through their effects and according to their absolute reality [in a manner that is] completely devoid of any accidents. [289]

This statement can be read in two different ways: either in the conditional or the indicative mood. My view is that Albalag intended the first because he ends this part by emphasizing man's inability to detach himself from matter. Man, Albalag states, cannot apprehend things in the same way as "angels," for "after all he is flesh."[290] On the other hand, if it were read in the second mood, it should not in any sense be taken as an argument for the existence of a human being, say a prophet, who possesses a separate intellect. Arguably, Albalag avoids causing this possible confusion by citing the very verse from Isaiah (55:8)—"for my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways"—that Maimonides uses in distinguishing God from human beings in terms of apprehension.[291] The separate intellect alluded to in this verse is nothing but God. Either way, it seems obvious that Albalag recognized and admitted the constraints of the human intellect and its limitations with respect to metaphysical knowledge.

Metaphysical knowledge is not the only domain with respect to which human intellect is limited. Though not subject to the same degree of limitation, human intellect cannot arrive at *certain* conclusions with regard to several key cosmological questions. A case in point is the number of celestial spheres and their corresponding movers. According to Albalag, "ancient" and "contemporary" philosophers proved the existence of celestial spheres and the separate movers. However, philosophers have not arrived at a conclusive answer to the question of the number of the spheres and intellects. Albalag,

[289] Ibid
[290] Ibid, p. 17
[291] *Guide* (III: 20)

thus, admits that the answer to this question lies beyond the capacity of reason and that one must seek the answer in the kabbalah, which includes a body of theoretical knowledge inaccessible to the ordinary man. This knowledge is "bequeathed (*mûrash*) from Moses."[292]

Is Albalag contradicting himself and arguing in a circular manner? Putting aside the historical and textual problems associated with the kabbalah, to which Albalag himself refers in the *Tiqqun*, it is unclear how kabbalah, as a form of transmitted prophetic knowledge, came into existence. Prophecy must be proved to exist first if we are going to speak of a transmitted body of prophetic knowledge. We have seen that the primary, if not the only, requirement for prophecy is the full actualization of the intellect. Yet Albalag shows that this condition cannot be completed due to man's composite nature, which is the primary and ever existent cause of our epistemic limitation. To compensate for this limitation, one must resort to the kabbalah. Is there a way out of this circular trap?

A number of suggestions might be made in order to resolve this circularity. I consider the following, which I have determined based on the characteristic elements associated with theories of knowledge and analyses of the phenomenon of prophecy in the medieval literature. In what follows I examine the applicability or inapplicability of these suggestions to the *Tiqqun*.

It might be that there exist alternative modes of cognition that allow access to metaphysical knowledge without employing sensory and imaginative data. This

[292] *Tiqqun*, note. 68, p. 94-5, 101. In this context, Albalag refers to and praises a number of kabbalists (Isaac ha-Kohen de Cabestan, Rabbi Todros ha-Levi, and Moses ben Simon). As Vajda notes, Albalag's praising of these Kabbalists clashes with his evident critique of the Kabbalah and the kabbalists throughout the treatise. Indeed, as Vajda rightly points out, the kabbalah left no impact on Albalag and he continued to pursue scientific knowledge; see Vajda. *averroïste juif, traducteur et annotateur daḷ-Ghazâlî*, p. 168.

suggestion, however, has no basis in the *Tiqqun*. Conversely, Albalag emphasizes that human cognition operates *exclusively* through the medium of sensory and imaginative data. Intelligible thoughts can only be arrived at in an upward way after abstraction and by means of the bodily faculties of sensation and imagination. Albalag affirms this in one note in which he criticizes al-Ghazali's theories of human and divine knowledge. He explicitly states that the highest degree of universal knowledge a man can obtain follows upon progressive processes of mental abstractions and syllogistic reasoning. Assuming otherwise would raise the obscure view that all human beings could obtain this degree of knowledge without learning.

> This universal form [of simple knowledge] … is nothing but a form in the soul acquired in an accumulative way…after learning all premises…. Knowledge of particular objects must precede universal knowledge…[otherwise]…. all human beings would have had obtained this universal form and [they] would have been able to answer any question without previous knowledge.[293]

While it is true that medieval philosophers generally agreed that human knowledge is progressive and based on abstractive and sensory data, they recognized other ways of obtaining intelligible thought: either directly from or by the aid of the Active Intellect. [294] Even philosophers with skeptical inclinations, arguably like Maimonides, refer to another non-empirical way of obtaining intelligibles. As Davidson remarks, Maimonides determines in his commentary on *Pirqei Avot* two ways of cognition of intelligibles: "by abstracting the form and having intelligible thought of it" and by "having cognition of the forms that are incorporeal in their being without the need to transform them into intellect since they are already intellect in their being." In the *Tiqqun*, we encounter a repeated emphasis that

[293] *Tiqqun*, note. 46, p. 73.
[294] H. Davidson, "Maimonides on Metaphysical Knowledge," p. 97.

> … the soul requires external (*ḥûẓ*) objects[295] from which it can extract (*teqqaḥ*) intelligibles. Were it not for these patterns, it *wouldn't have been possible for intelligibles* to arise in the soul.[296]

Moreover, Albalag rejects the assumption that man can obtain metaphysical knowledge in a mystical way, independently of sense perception and empirical data. He criticizes the Sufi interpretation of the ancient maxim "know yourself" which admits of a transcendent mode of apprehension through which man becomes acquainted with truths about the divine realm. Medieval Muslim and Jewish thinkers knew of several variants of this maxim, and each interpreted it differently in line with his own particular metaphysical commitment.

In the Sufi tradition, to which Albalag seems to respond, interpretation of the Delphic maxim was grounded in the metaphysical idea that man's soul constitutes a microcosm of the divine macrocosm.[297] As man reaches a high degree of self-contemplation, he apprehends profound realities of the divine realm. Al-Ghazali acknowledges this interpretation of the Delphic maxim and refers to a connection between God and the soul of the righteous man. Upon self-intellection a righteous man recognizes this connection and the hidden attributes of the Creator so that divine secrets manifest to him.[298]

Albalag rejects this interpretation and offers instead an alternative, naturalistic one. He argues that the maxim "know yourself and you will know your God" urges man to

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[295] Here Albalag uses the word *meshalīm* which means metaphor or allegory. From the context, it is clear that Albalag is referring to sensible objects that correspond to the forms of things as existing in the mind.
[296] *Tiqqun*, note. 44, p. 71
[297] For the different formula of this maxim, the history of its development, and its usage in Jewish philosophy see Alexander Altmann "The Delphic Maxim in Medieval Islam and Judaism," *Studies in religious philosophy and mysticism* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1969), 1-41. A brief discussion of the epistemological significance of this maxim can be found in Lenn E. Goodman, *Jewish And Islamic Philosophy* (New Brunswick, N.J. Rutgers University Press, 1999), 15-25.
[298] In the *Maqasid,* al-Ghazali briefly refers to this maxim, p. 115. Cf. *Ihyaa Ulom Eldin*, edited by Halabi, IV, 1933, pp. 215-216.

consider and reflect upon the order inhering in the physical world. From this order, one can infer the existence of the First Cause of the universe. In criticizing al-Ghazali's interpretation of the maxim he states:

> This analogy [analogy between human and divine knowledge that al-Ghazali uses] is based on the saying of the *ḥakham,* "know yourself and you will know your God"[299] and the saying of Job, "from my flesh I behold God."[300]… These sayings …teach that… the features of our souls and bodies and their natural order indicate the wisdom of their Maker; [that is,] in the sense the effect leads to knowledge of the cause… Do not be misled by what he [al-Ghazali] said.[301]

2) It might be suggested that prophecy itself is a miracle. In the former section, we concluded that miracles are not possible. Here, I use the term "miracle" not in a supernatural sense. The present suggestion still considers prophecy to be a naturalistic process that requires learning and syllogistic reasoning. Divine intervention takes place only to complete the actualization of the human intellect, which is the prerequisite for prophecy. But this suggestion too should be discounted. Let us consider Albalag's understanding of the nature and limits of the God-world relationship. For a faithful Aristotelian like Albalag, the Supreme Agent of the universe is not an omnipotent agent acting spontaneously. God does not act according to an unlimited power. His actions, if we are going to identify any, are limited to bringing to be "what is possible" (*ha 'efsharī*.) Although the concept of possibility (*'efsharôt*) in the *Tiqqun* is broadened, ostensibly to avoid impugning God's omnipotence, Albalag still emphasizes that God has no power over what 1) is "logically impossible," or 2) lacks "the possibility of being acted upon."[302] In another context he stresses the same premise and also includes the separate intellects in this framework of possibility-based causation. Explicitly stated, the power of the agent

[299] Medieval philosophers attributed different formula of this maxim to Aristotle. See Altmann for further discussion.
[300] Job 19:26
[301] *Tiqqun*, note. 45, p. 72
[302] *Tiqqun*, note. 6, p. 12-13

alone "is not sufficient" to bring forth an act unless the recipient has the capacity to be acted upon. Both the power of the agent and the passive power of the recipient of the act, "the capacity to be acted upon," are necessary for the coming-to-be of a specific act.[303]

As we relate this notion of causation to our discussion, the conclusion looms evident that the actualization of the human intellect is not possible. The reason can be found in one crucial note where Albalag affirms that man is intellectually limited by nature. According to Albalag, man was not given "the natural capacity" (*yekhôlet ṭiv'ī*) to perceive metaphysical concepts.[304] We can thus conclude that since man lacks the disposition to grasp all concepts, the actualization of the intellect cannot be completed, not even through a divine act. The miracle of prophecy would, accordingly, be barred from man's side.

3. A third suggestion goes as follows: the actualization of the human intellect is basically dependent on naturalistic means. An individual must go through the gradual stages of intellectual development and engage with learning and syllogistic reasoning. But since human intellect cannot obtain knowledge of all concepts, due to the veil of matter, the process of actualization is completed by emanative overflow from the Active Intellect. This suggestion, however, finds no support in the *Tiqqun*. A very surprising fact about the passage under discussion is that it does not assign any tangible role to the Active Intellect. Indeed, Albalag *completely* omits the Active Intellect from all his notes on prophecy. To understand the significance of this omission, I offer a brief overview of theories of the Active Intellect in medieval philosophy.

[303] Ibid, note. 64, p. 91
[304] Ibid, note. 45, p. 72

Medieval philosophers assigned various cosmological and epistemological roles to the Active Intellect, the most important of which is actualizing the human intellect and bringing about prophecy.[305] The Active Intellect, philosophers argued, is the agent responsible for transforming the potential intellect into intellect in *actu*. In fact, the very existence of the Active Intellect is proved based on the assumption that the actualization of the human intellect, like all the actualizations of the Aristotelian account of motion, cannot be explained except through an agent that carries out this task.[306] Aristotle relates this role to the active intellect, which he likens to "light."[307]

Philosophers embraced this understanding of the role of the Active Intellect but they differed from Aristotle by considering it to be a transcendent rather than an imminent agent, the lowest of the emanating separate intellects.[308] The manner and the extent of the Active Intellect's intervention in the process of knowing, and in turn the actualization of the human intellect, differ from one philosopher to another, but their diverse views can

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[305] The exact role of the Active Intellect in the perfection of human intellect is debated in Arabic philosophy. R. Taylor explains that unlike Averroes and al-Farabi who viewed the role of the active intellect as more or less limited to preparing the human intellect to abstract forms from the outside world and process the necessary knowledge for its actualization, Avicenna, in several occasions, argues that the active intellect emanates abstracted forms directly to the mind; see "Averroes Philosophical Conception of Separate Intellect and God," *La Lumier de l'intellect*, edited by Ahmed Hasnawi, 2011, pp. 391- 404. This explanation of Avicenna's theory of abstraction is, however, debated. For an alternative explanation of Avicenna's theory of abstraction see Dag Nikolaus Hasse " Avicenna on Abstraction," *Aspects of Avicenna*, edited by R. Wisnovsky (Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener Pub., 2001), 39.

[306] See for instance al-Farabi, *al-Siyasha al-Madaniyyah*, edited by Najjar (1964), 32. Cf. Al-Ghazali, *Maqasid,* p. 211. Cf. Maimonides, *Guide* II:4

[307] *De Anima*. III.5, 430a17–18. In Aristotle, the Active Intellect is imminent rather than transcendent, a sort of "a positive state" of the mind that resembles "light." This is how Averroes understands the constitution of the human intellect, though, unlike Aristotle, he didn't locate the passive and active intellects in the human soul, but considered them to be independent eternal substances. He says: "These two differentia—namely, an agent and a passive—have to exist in the intellect, and thus there will be an intellect in us which is intellect with respect to [its ability to] receive every intelligible, and an intellect in use with respect to [its ability to] actualize every intelligible" Averroes' *Middle Commentary on Aristotle's De anima,* edited by Alfred L. Ivry (Provo, Utah : Brigham Young University Press, 2002), 116.

[308] See the *Maqasid* where al-Ghazali's restates Avicenna's view on the epistemological role of the Active Intellect, pp. 211-13.

generally be summarized in two models, as pointed out by Barry Kogan, whose analysis I paraphrase below.[309]

The first is represented by al-Farabi. According to him, the Active Intellect illuminates the human intellect by casting light on it, thereby enabling it to abstract universal concepts from particular objects. The role of the active intellect is confined to two ends: the beginning and the end of the process of learning.

The second model is advocated by Avicenna. According to him, the Active intellect is the primary cause of the intellect's abstractive thought. The process of abstraction that our minds pursue through the medium of sense perception and imagination only predisposes the intellect to receive abstracted forms and universal concepts by way of emanation from the Active Intellect. For Avicenna, the human intellect cannot by itself obtain all concepts and intelligibles. Its actualization is wholly dependent on knowledge emanating from the Active Intellect.[310]

The epistemological role of the Active Intellect culminates in prophecy, which medieval philosophers expounded primarily in terms of the specific relation of the Active Intellect to the different faculties of the human soul. The mainstream philosophical paradigm describes prophecy as part of a process by which an individual characterized by moral and intellectual excellences attains the highest form of knowledge through the mediation of the Active Intellect.

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[309] Barry Kogan, "What Can We Know And When Can We Know It? Maimonides On the Active Intellect And Human Cognition," *Moses Maimonides And His Time*, 1989.

[310] Of the two models, Averroes commits himself to the former, comparing the Active Intellect to "light." It functions in a certain sense to render "individual impressions in the imaginative faculty… actually intelligible." See H. Davidson, *Al-Farabi, Avicenna, Averroes, on The Intellect*, 1992, p. 316. Maimonides, on the other hand, sides with the Avicennan model, see *Guide* II: 4.

This paradigm, first formulated by Al-Farabi, dominated the majority of naturalistic interpretations of prophecy in the Jewish philosophic literature.[311] Al-Farabi's paradigm of prophecy and revelation is summed up in the *Siyasat*:

> The absolutely first chief of the good state is the one who is not directed by any other man in anything. On the contrary, he has actually attained all knowledge and gnosis and he is not in need of any one to direct him in any matter…. This happens only in the case of a man who is endowed with exceptionally great natural capacities when his soul attains contact with the Active Intelligence. This stage is reached only after this man has first achieved the actual intellect and then the acquired intellect. For it is by the attainment of the acquired intellect that a contact with the Active Intelligence is achieved, as has been shown in the book on the soul. It is this man who is really the king according to the ancients and it is about him that it is said that revelation comes to him. Revelation comes to a man when he has reached this rank, i.e. when no intermediary remains between him and the Active Intelligence.[312]

The core premise, as can be seen, is that the Active Intellect furnishes intellectually perfect individuals with theoretical knowledge. Philosophers varied as to the details of that paradigm, but they generally agreed on the involvement of the Active Intellect in the process of prophecy.[313]

Maimonides follows this tradition and defines prophecy accordingly. For him "the true reality and quiddity of prophecy consists in an overflow from the Active Intellect, which means that prophecy cannot take place without the overflowing of knowledge from God through the intermediation of the Active Intellect to the prophet's intellect and imagination. Of course, we should bear in mind the case of Moses' prophecy, which,

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[311] For instance, the influence of al-Farabi's model of prophecy is evident in Maimonides' writings, which in turn influenced the concept of prophecy in succeeding generations. The influence of al-Farabi on Maimonides has been examined by many scholars; See for example, L. V Berman "Maimonides the Disciple of al-Farabi," *Israel Oriental Studies*, 4 (1974): 144-178. Howard Kreisel, *Prophecy: The History of An Idea in Medieval Jewish Philosophy* (Dordrecht ; Boston : Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2001), 150-152.

[312] This quotation is taken from F. Rahman, *Prophecy in Islam,* 1958, 31.

[313] The discussion mostly centered on whether the emanation of the Active Intellect influences the intellectual or the imaginative faculty of the prophet, or the two faculties. Al-Farabi for instance offers different versions of prophecy, oscillating between the three views. For further discussion see Jeffery Macy, "Prophecy in al-Farabi and Maimonides," *Maimonides and Philosophy*, 1986, 185-201.

according to the exoteric message of the *Guide*, is so different that the term "prophecy" applies to it equivocally.[314]

> Know that the true reality and quiddity of prophecy consists in its being an overflowing from God, may He be cherished and honoured, through the intermediation of the active intellect, toward the rational faculty in the first place and thereafter toward the imaginative faculty.[315]

In the passage under discussion, Albalag presents the main elements of the naturalistic interpretation of prophecy; he states that prophecy occurs after an individual had fully actualized his intellect by obtaining all concepts and truth by syllogistic means. The note terminates without assigning any role to the Active Intellect. Could it be that this omission is meant for the sake of brevity whereas Albalag continued to subscribe to the philosophers' view on the Active Intellect's epistemological role? If this suggestion has merit, the skeptical notes that render prophecy unachievable would be counterbalanced. The truth is that Albalag's omission of the Active Intellect is not accidental, nor does it result from minor considerations. The fact that Albalag never attributes any substantial role to the Active Intellect in producing, or even facilitating, human knowledge supports this view.[316]Albalag's non-committal stance regarding the philosophers' idea of the Active Intellect is clearly reflected in his description of the descending hierarchal structure of intelligences according to the degree of purity of their respective knowledge. In this structure, Albalag neither mentions a precise number of intelligences nor points to the active intellect in the Avicennan fashion, i.e., as the lower separate intellect

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[314] *Guide* II: 33-35
[315] Ibid II: 36
[316] In this manner Albalag seems anticipating the innovative trend of philosophers like Gersonides who broke away with the view that the Active Intellect is the cause of all human knowledge. For Gersonides, all knowledge is derived from the empirical world. There is no such thing as "innate knowledge or illumination from above." See James Robinson, " Soul and Intellect," *The Cambridge Companion to Jewish Philosophy*, edited by Steven Nadler and T. M. Rudavsky (2009), 552.

responsible for motion in the sublunary sphere and for bestowing forms. Instead, he omits the Active Intellect altogether and introduces another concept: "nature" (*ṭeva ʿ*).

Nature, in Albalag's structure of intellects, seems to substitute for the Active Intellect. This view stems not only from the fact that the Active Intellect is not mentioned by name in the hierarchy of separate intellects, but also, and more importantly, from the very description and function assigned to *ṭeva ʿ*. Like the Active Intellect, *ṭeva ʿ* is said to contain all the forms of things existing in the physical world. The similarity between this description of *ṭeva ʿ* and the one commonly attached to the Active intellect is clear. Still, one distinction must be noted: whereas the philosophers viewed the Active Intellect as a super-mundane repository of forms, despite its low rank in the hierarchy of intellects, Albalag does not attribute this character to *ṭeva ʿ*. On the contrary, its association with the empirical world is clearly stated. As Albalag maintains, all forms exist in "the mind of *ṭeva ʿ*" (*daʿat ha- ṭeva ʿ*) in the lowest degree of purity, in a manner "similar to their actual material existence."[317]It is on account of the forms existing in the mind of *ṭeva ʿ* that material things come to be. In this manner, *ṭeva ʿ* admits a substantial causal role in the sublunary realm, technically replacing the Active Intellect in its cosmological function—the way that *ṭeva ʿ* causes sublunary things–is not, however, similar to the emanative way of the Active Intellect, an issue I will discuss in chapter five. [318]

This indicates that *ṭeva ʿ* similarly replaces the Active Intellect in its epistemological function. Since *ṭeva ʿ* constitutes the proximate repository of the intelligible forms of the world, it may be posited that apprehension of its content would lead man to his ultimate goal. Emphasis, however, should be placed on the fact that

[317] *Tiqqun*, note. 47, p. 66
[318] Ibid, note. 47, p. 67

although *ṭeva'* functionally parallels the Active Intellect, Albalag, departing from the Avicennan idea of the Active Intellect, avoids attributing direct agency to it in bringing knowledge of intelligibles to the human mind. In no place does Albalag claim that *ṭeva'* emanates intelligible forms or universal concepts upon human intellects. Indeed, the key epistemological element on which philosophers relied upon in accounting for human knowledge and prophecy—whether the Active Intellect, or its alternative, *ṭeva'* —is inexplicably omitted from Albalag's theory of prophecy.

There are a few contexts in which Albalag refers to the Active Intellect, but these show no sympathy for the idea of the Active Intellect as presented by medieval philosophers. On the contrary, they obviously aim to challenge the Avicennan conception of the Active Intellect as the "giver of forms" (*wāhib al-ṣūwwar*). [319] Avicenna generally used the term the giver of forms in the ontological rather than the epistemological sense. But as Dag Nikolaus Hass elucidates, Avicenna noticeably developed the epistemological sense of the term in his later work, *al-Ta'liqāt,* where he refers to the giver of forms, not only as a source of forms that unite with matter, but also as a source of intelligibles and intellectual perfection.[320]This epistemological sense of the term appears in a number of places in the in *Maqāṣid,*[321] and it is reasonable that Albalag too was familiar with it and had it in his mind while criticizing Avicenna.

In any event, Albalag's critique of the idea of the giver of forms constitutes a fundamental element in his systematic opposition to the emanation scheme.[322] The

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[319] Majid Fakhry, *Al-Farabi: Founder of Islamic Neoplatonizm*, 2002, p. 75.
[320] Dag Nikolaus Hass, "Avicenna's Giver of Forms in Latin Philosophy, Specially in the Works of Albertus Magnus," *Hebrew And Latin Receptions of Avicenna's Metaphysics*, 2011.
[321] Ibid
[322] Different views regarding the nature and function of the active intellect started to develop among Jewish Averroists in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Modification and critiques of the Farabian-Avicennan idea of the Active Intellect culminate in Gersonides' and Crescas' writings. See James Robison, "soul and Intellect," *The Cambridge Companion to Jewish Philosophy*, 2009, 545-549.

characteristic premise of this scheme maintains that "from the One only one act proceeds," the rule of uniqueness, to use Kogan's expression.[323] Albalag attacks this premise and provides a number of arguments against it. In one context, he discusses the role of the Active Intellect as a Giver of Forms and attempts to prove that the philosophers' system, obviously referring to that of Avicenna, is worthy of criticism. Albalag, like al-Ghazali and Averroes before him, thinks that the philosophers failed to maintain a coherent system.[324] By ascribing the multiplicity of the material world to the Active Intellect they obviously violate the rule of uniqueness, and thus the entire system of emanation, which essentially aims to avoid impugning God's simplicity, is rendered "doubtful."[325]

> I wish I could understand why [the philosophers] denied multiplicity of actions from the First Intellect and did not deny multiplicity from the other intellect which is also simple, and, as they think, from which all forms, and [therefore] they called it the Giver of Forms and the Active Intellect.[326]

One defining feature of the emanation scheme is the conception of causation as a kind of overflow or procession. In Avicenna's cosmology and metaphysics, this conception is associated with the idea of divine perfection. For Avicenna, God is perfect, in the sense that He is "self-sufficient" and above perfection, by which Avicenna means that, as Wisnovsky points out, "God is not simply full of existence and hence causally self-sufficient, but is also overflowing with existence, and hence a cause of others. [327] The process of overflow is not particular to God, though in God it has distinctively specific features, but characterizes the causal mode of the rest of the intelligences. The lower

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[323] For this terminology see B. Kogan, *Averroes and the Metaphysics of Causation*, 1985, 249.
[324] See *TT*, Third Discussion
[325] *Tiqqun*, note. 69, p. 97
[326] Ibid, note. 36, p. 55
[327] Robert Wisnovsky, *Avicenna's Metaphysics in Context* (Ithaca, N.Y. : Cornell University Press, 2003), 188.

intellect, the Active Intellect, carries on its ontological and epistemological roles, particularly by way of overflowing.[328]

In the *Tiqqun*, we come across a few contexts in which Albalag uses emanative terminology such as "*nishba*'"[329] and "*ni'ẓal*"[330] But none of these contexts assigns a clear ontological or epistemological role to the Active Intellect. In chapter five, we will discuss the explanatory role of such terminology in Albalag's treatment of the issue of eternity versus creation. In the meantime, it should be made clear that the emanative terminology is not indicative of Albalag's adoption of the emanation scheme.[331] His firm assertion that "forms *don't* proceed from the First Intellect" eliminates the emanation scheme altogether. [332] This also applies to all separate intellects, since, in Albalag's view, separate intellects are not distinct types from the First Intellect, but they differ from the First only by way of "priority and posteriority,"[333] which means that they all share the same features, including those related to the mode of causation but differ in rank and degree. Given these observations, it would be unjustified to rely on the epistemological premises associated with the theory of emanation and the Active Intellect to fill the lacunae in Albalag's account of prophecy.

Ironically, the only context in which Albalag associates prophecy with an act of emanation turns out to be evidence against prophecy. In this context, Albalag presents his view regarding prophecy in a highly metaphorical language, based on biblical verses and

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[328] For the significance of the idea of emanation in accounting for knowledge and prophecy see Mehdi Ha'iri Yazidi. *The Principles of Epistemology In Islamic Philosophy* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1992), 17.
[329] *Tiqqun*, p. 1,
[330] *Tiqqun*, note. 58, p. 82
[331] Albalag's dissatisfaction with the emanation scheme is inspired by Averroes. For Averroes' attitude to the emanation system see Harry Wolfson, "The Twice Revealed Averroes" *Speculum* V 36, n 3, pp 337-392. Barry Kogan, "Averroes and The Theory of Emanation," *Mediaeval Studies*, XLIII, 1981, pp. 384-404. It should be mentioned, however, that some scholars argue that Averroes continued to hold the emanation scheme, see for instance Simon Van Den Bergh's introduction to *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut*, 1954.
[332] *Tiqqun*, note. 44, p. 71
[333] Ibid, note. 42, p. 67

rabbinic dicta. The main theme of this context is angels.[334] According to Albalag, scripture identifies three classes of angels: "*mayim 'elyonim*," "*rûaḥ"*—which, as Albalag explains, is the equivalent of the word "*nefesh*," and "*esh*." [335] These respectively refer to the separate intellects (the highest class of angels), the souls of the spheres (a lower class of angels), and the thermal forces of nature that are derived from the spheres (the last class of angels).

The separate intellects, Albalag explains, constitute the highest rank of beings; therefore they attain knowledge directly from the First Cause. This rank of cognition is not shared by other beings, *including prophets.* Thus, Albalag explains that the apprehension of prophets occurs through the intermediary of *rûaḥ*,[336] which is "inferior to separate intellects."[337] This explanation raises a number of implications. The first implication concerns the rank the prophet's cognition, which, as Albalag elsewhere claims, is assumingly identical with that of separate intellects. But here, Albalag retracts this view and places prophets in a lower class. They are no longer linked to separate intellects or to their knowledge and cognition, "*mayim elyonim*," but to what is "inferior" to them.[338]

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[334] Albalag starts this context by a note on al-Ghazali's presentation of the philosophers' view on angels in the *Maqasid* (p. 133-144)

[335] *Tiqqun*, note. 58, p. 81-82

[336] Associating prophecy with *rûaḥ* is also problematic as we consider Maimonides' standpoint on the nature of prophecy communicated by *rûaḥ* in the *Guide* II:45. Maimonides commences his classification of the degrees of prophecy with a reference to the Holy Spirit, *rûaḥ*. The lowest rank of individuals who are included in the class of prophets is that of righteous judges, orators, and statesmen who by means of divine motivation, perform righteous actions and good judgements. The force responsible for their motivation is termed *rûaḥ,* "the Holy spirit." For Maimonides, these individuals are considered as merely "sub-prophets." It is surprising that Albalag relates prophecy to *rûaḥ* at the same time claims that prophecy involves a transcendent form of knowledge. For a discussion of Maimonides' usage of the term *rûaḥ* in relation to prophecy see Howard Kreisel, *Prophecy*, 2001, 271.

[337] *Tiqqun*, note, 58, p. 81-82

[338] Ibid, Here Albalag seems to follow Maimonides who also uses the term *mayim elyonim* in reference to Divine knowledge. For Maimonides' usage of this term see Joseph Stern. *The Matter and Form of Maimonides' Guide*, 2013. p. 90.

The second arises from the ontological status of *rûaḥ* as a celestial soul, a view that Albalag attributes to the later *falasifa,* namely al-Farabi and Avicenna. In describing *rûaḥ* as an intermediary for prophecy, Albalag would unconsciously be subscribing to Avicenna's understanding of prophetic, precisely predictive, knowledge as knowledge of contingent events communicated to prophets through the mediation of celestial souls.[339] But this concept of prophecy brings a major contradiction in Albalag's philosophical thought, because Albalag repeatedly argues against the theory of the spheres' animation by the soul. (We will discuss the objections Albalag raises against this theory in chapters four and five.) For our purpose here, it is important to highlight this default in Albalag's notes on prophecy. Ironically, Albalag criticizes this theory just in the same context he associates prophecy with the *rûaḥ* and states explicitly, in opposition to Avicenna, "the spheres have no souls."[340] By ascribing agency to *rûaḥ* in bringing about prophecy and simultaneously denying its existence, Albalag is raising a curious, perhaps intended, contradiction. From this contradiction, one draws the immediate conclusion that Albalag's statements about the nature and the scope of prophecy, not only lack scientific justification, but also clash with the key philosophical premises of the *Tiqqun*. [341]

What is more, the absence of the Active Intellect from Albalag's account of prophecy strongly indicates that Albalag intended a deeper message than what the surface meaning of the text imparts. This message can be understood by analyzing the epistemological and metaphysical frameworks of the *Tiqqun,* which provide much more evidence against, than support for the possibility of man's obtaining *complete* intellectual perfection: the condition for prophecy.

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[339] Michael. E. Marmura, *Introduction to the Metaphysics of the Healing,* 2005, p. xxii.
[340] *Tiqqun*, note. 58, p. 81
[341] In his analysis of Albalag's theory of prophecy, Touati mentions Albalag's referring to *rûaḥ* as a medium for prophecy, but he does not refer to the contradiction we just highlighted.

2.2 *Can Prophets Apprehend Like Separate Intellects?*

Suppose that an individual could attain complete intellectual perfection and hence became a prophet. Would this mean that his or her intellect become a separate intellect, and hence capable of apprehending truth in a divine fashion? Albalag claims that that is the case, though in this section, I shall show that this claim too is questionable.

The second central topic in the *Tiqqun*, after the proof of the eternity of the world, is divine knowledge, Albalag's discussion of which focuses primarily on emphasizing the transcendent nature of divine knowledge and its absolute distinctiveness from human knowledge. Throughout the treatise, Albalag relentlessly seeks to draw a sharp distinction between the divine and the mundane realms. The First Intellect and the separate intellects transcend human intellects to such an exaggerated extent that no attribute whatsoever can be predicated about intellects of the two realms except equivocally.

Albalag's differentiation between separate and human intellects can be viewed from two intertwined aspects: differentiation on the basis of the objects (intelligibles) of knowledge, and differentiation on the basis of the characteristics of knowledge of each species of intellect. Albalag acknowledges the fact that both human and separate intellects share the capacity of apprehending intelligibles. He indicates, however, that their apprehension relates to two different classes of intelligibles:[342] separate intellects apprehend essentially incorporeal intelligibles that are derived directly from the First Cause. In contrast, human intellects apprehend intelligible forms abstracted from sensory objects.

[342] See for instance al-Farabi, *al-Madina al-Fadilah* (chapters 22-5.)

In positing this, Albalag does not differ from the philosophers—for instance, from al-Farabi—for they too differentiate between these two classes of intelligibles. Nonetheless, as Davidson elucidates, al-Farabi,[343] like Avicenna, Ibn Bajjah, and Averroes,[344] held that the human intellect apprehends incorporeal intelligibles as 1) it conjoins with the Active Intellect, and 2) has the Active Intellect as the object of thought.[345]

Whether it is possible for the human intellect to conjoin with the Active Intellect—or the realm of intellects in general—and have It as an object of thought while still in affinity with the body is not clearly determined in the *Tiqqun*. But I believe that Albalag would deny this possibility. For him human knowledge remains limited to corporeal forms because of two considerations.

1) Albalag held fast to the Aristotelian rule that an intellect becomes identical with whatever it thinks.[346] He thought that this rule applies to both human and divine intellects, and repeatedly emphasized that "the knower is nothing but the known."[347] Assuming that

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[343] This is to the exclusion of al-Farabi's lost commentary on the *NE* in which he argues, as reported by Averroes, that the conjunction with the Active Intellect is impossible. See D. Black, "conjunction and the Identity of the Knower and Known in Averroes," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* v73 n1 (1999); 159-184.

[344] Perhaps, the most explicit expression of the idea of conjunction in Averroes is his statement regarding the Active Intellect becoming "a form for us." This formula appears in Averroes' latter works which include supportive arguments for the possibility of conjunction. For a survey of these works see H. Davidson, *Al-Farabi, Avicenna, and Averroes On Intellect*, 1992, pp. 325-8. For a different viewpoint regarding the signification of this formula in Averroes see R. Taylor, "Averroes on the Ontology of the Human Soul," *The Muslim World* 102 (2012); 580-596. Cf. "The Agent Intellect as From for Us And Averroes' Critique of al-Farabi," *Topicos* 29

[345] H. Davidson, 1992, p. 322. Maimonides too speaks of conjunction, especially in his account for prophecy in the Introduction to *Commentary on The Mishnah*.

[346] Aristotle *De Anima* III. 3, 4. In the medieval tradition, philosophers debated this rule. Avicenna for instance presents the following objection: "what some say, that the soul itself becomes the intelligibles, is impossible in my view, for I do not comprehend their saying that one thing can become another thing, nor do I understand how this could occur. For if it were by removing one form and then putting on another form, it being one thing with the first form and another thing with the second form, then in reality the first thing would not become the second thing, but instead, the first thing would cease to exist, and only its subject or a part of it would not become the second thing, but instead, the first thing would cease to exist, and only its subject a part of it would remain." Quotation is taken from D. Black, "Conjunction and The Identity of the Knower and Known in Averroes," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* v73 n1 (1999); 159-184, p. 163. Unlike Avicenna, Averroes accepted the rule, but he considered the nature of the cognitional identity in human knowledge to be different from it in divine knowledge. He presents a solution to the problem of conjunction based on his theory of the unity of the material and the separate intellects.

[347] See for instance *Tiqqun*, notes, 42, 44, 64

the human intellect would have as its object of thought a given separate intellect, they would both be identical. The question, of course, is whether Albalag would concede to this assumption. It seems to me that he would not. Albalag's cosmology draws a picture of a hierarchal system of intellects in which each occupies a specific ontological rank in relation to the First Intellect. These ranks, which vary in proximity to the First Intellect, are determined by and through the cognitional identity between each separate intellect and the knowledge exclusive to it. Because no intellect shares with another its knowledge, no intellect shares with another intellect its ontological rank. [348]

Albalag takes this idea to an extreme as he describes each separate intellect as a species of its own. As Touati rightly observes, the knowledge peculiar to each intellect is what causes diversity in the species of separate intellects. These species cannot be reduced to each other or overlap[349] because "no intellect can apprehend the content of the other intellect."[350]

Albalag denies the possibility of separate intellects apprehending each other's knowledge, arguing that were this to happen, the intellects would become identical, and hence their ontological ranks would be undifferentiated. For the same reason, we also assume that the human intellect cannot have any separate intellect as its object of thought. Indeed, when Albalag denies the possibility of the separate intellects' apprehending each other's knowledge and becoming identical, he immediately adds, "for this reason it is not possible for us to apprehend divine attributes."[351] We thus conclude that what prevents the human intellect form apprehending divine attributes, having cognitional identity with the object of knowledge, i.e. God, also prevents us from having any other separate intellect as

[348] Ibid, note. 44, pp. 66-7
[349] C. Touati, "Vérité Philosophique et Vérité Prophétique Chez Isaac Albalag"
[350] *Tiqqun*, note. 44, pp. 71-2
[351] Ibid

the object of thought. If the species of separate intellects cannot overlap or obtain the ontological rank peculiar to each other, it is unlikely that the human intellect could conjoin with the separate intellects, and hence obtain a complete ontological transformation. That being said, the human intellect cannot have access to the essentially incorporeal intelligibles that comprise the essences of separate intellects.

2) The second consideration has to do with the fact that Albalag is reluctant to identify any source of human knowledge other than the empirical world. As I concluded earlier, the omission of the Active Intellect from the *Tiqqun's* epistemological framework and the critiques Albalag raises regarding the emanation theory render it unjustified to speak of non-empirical sources of knowledge. For Albalag, human knowledge is obtained exclusively through abstraction and syllogistic reasoning. Almost in all the contexts devoted to discussing epistemological themes Albalag reminds the reader of the link between human knowledge and abstracted intelligibles:

> It has been logically proved that existence comprises two types. The first signifies individual objects existing outside the intellect, such as Reuben and Shimon; the second signifies the universal concept of all these individuals. It has also been proven that the second type exists only in the intellect and that the first type is conditional for the second; if the individual existence was not perceived by senses, it would not be possible to perceive the universal in the intellect. The reason is that the soul requires external [objects] from which it extracts intelligibles. Were it not for these external models, it would not be possible for the intelligibles to exist in the soul…. [Therefore,] one who does not perceive individual existents by means of external senses, does not internally (i.e., intellectually) perceive universal existents.[352]

The fact that our concepts are entirely based on empirical data has major implications for the quality of our knowledge. For, as Albalag admits, human knowledge can hardly break away from the features of materiality, even at the highest level of abstraction. At this level, the human intellect apprehends, without the aid of the senses,

[352] Ibid, note. 44, p. 71

"spiritual" (*rũ̃ani*)[353] "forms" (*ẓûrot*) that represent the exact "reality" of particular sensible objects.[354] As the intellect apprehends these forms, it obtains complete identity with them. Although at this level of abstraction, the material form becomes "an intellect," it remains inferior to the incorporeal forms apprehended by separate intellect which "are essentially intellects."[355] Moreover, the material forms we apprehend never obtain the degree of simplicity of these intellects because our abstractive faculty falls short of completely eliminating the accidental features of the perceived objects.

Over and above his differentiating in significant ways between the objects of apprehension of separate intellects and the human intellect, Albalag sharply contrasts the cognition of the two realms and the features of their knowledge.

> From this, you should understand that the essence (*mahût*) of the separate intellect is completely opposite (*hefekh*) to that of the human intellect, and therefore it is not possible to draw an analogy between them, their attributes, or modes of apprehension. If [it is known] apprehension of the human intellect falls within the domains of particularity, universality, and tenses, and is affected by the plurality of the apprehended object and the imagination, [it follows necessarily that] apprehension of separate intellects is not particular or universal. It does not fall under the domain of tenses, nor is it subject to plurality. Moreover, *it always exists in a state of actuality; that is to say, it does not transform from potentiality to actuality. All intelligibles exist in the separate intellect simultaneously* (*bat 'eḥad*). This is very unlike the human intellect in which knowledge exists at intervals, as it derives knowledge from particular material objects by the aid of senses and imagination, [and thus] *it is not possible (lo 'efshar) for the intellect to abstract things from matter and accidents in an absolute manner*.[356] (Emphasis added)

The gap between the divine and human intellect emphasized in this passage impels us to conclude that even if the human intellect becomes a separate intellect, such that it becomes a repertoire of all forms and apprehends them by way of self-thinking

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[353] Ibid, note. 42, p. 64. Apparently, Albalag appropriated the term *rũ̃ani* from Ibn Bajja and Averroes. For a discussion on this usage of that term in Ibn Bajja and Averroes see Alexander Altman, "Ibn Bajja on Man's Ultimate Felicity, *"Studies Religious Philosophy and Mysticism*, 1906, 55.

[354] Albalag here refers to particular rather than universal concepts since he offers an example of a particular object (the form of *Reubuen*)

[355] *Tiqqun*, note. 42, p. 65, 67

[356] *Tiqqun*, note. 42, p. 67

without the aid of physical faculties, its knowledge never becomes divine. Indeed, human and divine intellects are different with respect to "*essence*," not only with respect to characteristics, that the term "intellect" applies to them only equivocally.[357] It follows, then, that their modes of cognition and their knowledge belong to different realms and cannot transform to each other. [358] Even at the culmination of the development of the human intellect man is unlikely to see the world from the perspective of separate intellects.

Throughout the *Tiqqun*, Albalag provides many skeptical critiques of the human intellect. In one context, he clearly explains that the human intellect cannot apprehend truth in the same way that angels do. If man wishes to apprehend truth like angels, he has to become an angel. But this, as Albalag admits, is impossible due to the ever-present obstacle separating us from angels: matter.

> *One who wishes to apprehend like an angel is seeking to become an angel, not a human being.* [Thus,] whoever asks a philosopher to explain the true quiddity of every existent so that we might grasp it [the quiddity] in such a manner that transcends our capacity is mistaken, [for] he would be seeking something forbidden; something that we have no capacity to apprehend or explain. [This is] just as [the case] of a blind that is asking another blind to explain the difference between redness and blackness, whereas [in reality apprehending the nature of colors] is prevented from them, since they both lack the tools [for vision]… For this reason we should praise the philosopher for the knowledge he obtained instead of criticizing him for being incapable of apprehending what lies beyond the human capacity, for *after all the philosopher is a human being (basar)*.[359] (Emphasis added)

What, then, remains of a support for the purported angelic quality of prophets and prophetic knowledge? A prophet, if he happened to exist, is a wise man who obtained intellectual perfection by rational means, primarily through empirical data and syllogistic reasoning. A prophet becomes a prophet and his knowledge is transformed into "divine

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[357] Cf. *Guide*, III: 20

[358] Averroes too acknowledged this problem but he attempted to offer a solution through his theory of "monopsychisim." For a study of Averroes' solution see A. Ivry, "Averroes on Intellection And Conjunction," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 86 (1966), 97-85

[359] Ibid, note. 11, p. 17

knowledge" in a naturalistic manner (as the main passage on prophecy suggests). But if philosophers cannot reach a stage in which their knowledge obtains divine features, what would render a prophet more capable of joining the divine realm?

In conclusion: the discrepancies and lacunae we examined in this section imply that the idea of prophets as angelic human beings is a mere fancy. In the first place, the requirement for prophecy, complete intellectual perfection, is unachievable due to the veil of matter. Similarly, Albalag's second claim, that the prophet's mode of cognition and knowledge are equal to those of separate intellects, proves to be implausible. Thus, one can assume that Albalag's statements about the angelic features of the prophet are politically motivated, being exclusively addressed to the masses. This conclusion finds support in the concluding remarks of the discussion on divine knowledge, in which the two claims we discussed emerge. There, Albalag announces that all the arguments and doctrines he presents do not follow the way of demonstration and he thus recommends that one who seeks the truth about the subject discussed should consult Aristotle's works, namely the "Book of Soul" (*sefer ha-nefesh*) and "Metaphysics" (*ma she-aḥar ha-teva'*). In these books, however, one finds no support of the conception of prophecy presented in the *Tiqqun*. Indeed, to the exclusion of *Parva Naturalia*,[360] Aristotle does not discuss this topic in any of his extant works, and even this one provides no logical support for the phenomenon.

[360] The text was known to Muslim and Jewish philosophers. Although in the original text Aristotle doesn't mention any divine force in relation to predictive dreams, and in fact Aristotle labels this phenomenon as absurd, philosophers, including Averroes and Ibn Bajja, assign a role to the active intellect in these dreams. For further discussion see Shlomo Pines, " The Arabic Recession of *Parva naturalia*" *Israel Oriental Studies* 4 (1974).

3. Prophets and Divine Capacity

This section examines what Albalag describes as a "divine capacity" (*Kôaḥ 'ilāhi*) to which reference is made once in passing. In one note, Albalag maintains that the prophet is endowed with a faculty that allows him access to a domain of knowledge that nobody else has:

> … just as demonstrative knowledge is only accessible to those who possess the capacity of demonstration (*kôaḥ moftī*), divine knowledge (*ha-da'at ha-'ilahī*) is only known by those [prophets] who possess divine capacity (*kôah 'ilahī*).[361]

This quotation alludes to Judah Halevi's understanding of the phenomenon of prophecy. In Halevi's view, prophets are unique individuals who possess, in addition to their intellectual, physical, and biological qualities, a divine capacity that facilitates their contact with God and obtaining of metaphysical truth.[362] The knowledge to which prophets have access is absolutely superior to syllogistic knowledge in every possible respect. Halevi describes the divine faculty as follows:

> The level at which one may have contact with God and the spiritual beings also know the truth with their being taught, but rather with only the slightest thought.[363]

While the reference to a prophetic divine capacity in the *Tiqqun* suggests the influence of ha-Levi's conception of prophecy, the *Tiqqun* provides no real evidence for this. Ha-Levi's conception of prophecy is significantly rooted in many notions pertaining to claims of elitism and particularism of the Jews. But most characteristic of all are the notions of divine will and divine matter that ha-Levi employs to account for the

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[361] *Tiqqun*, Introduction, p. 4
[362] Howard Kreisel, *Prophecy: The History of an Idea in Medieval Jewish Philosophy*, 2001, 140.
[363] *Kuzari* I:95

exclusiveness of prophecy in Israel, the choicest of all humanities.[364] None of these notions emerge or even alluded to in the *Tiqqun*.

Moreover, although ha-Levi's conception of prophecy integrates some of the elements employed by the philosophers in accounting for prophecy, it generally posits many claims regarding God's direct and deliberate role in the choosing of prophets and the occurrence of prophecy.[365] The evident super naturalistic elements underlying ha-Levi's account of the divine capacity stand in a jarring contradiction to the *Tiqqun*'s naturalistic philosophical worldview and therefore we must exclude linking the divine capacity mentioned in the *Tiqqun* to that of the *Kuzari*.

How, then, should we understand the prophet's divine capacity? Albalag may reasonably have thought that the prophetic divine capacity is naturally achieved as an individual succeeds in fully activating his intellect by means of contemplation and learning. This understanding finds support in the passage we investigated in the previous section in which prophecy is viewed as the ultimate level of intellectual perfection arrived at by scientific means; after the intellect has contemplated all intelligibles, inferred causes from effects, and deduced unknown objects from the known. Assuming this level of perfection is actually attainable, prophecy can no longer be seen as uniquely peculiar to a certain class of people. Because it essentially relies on rational philosophic thinking, any intelligent individual gifted with aptitude for learning can, upon exerting sufficient effort, become a prophet and acquire prophetic divine capacity. In this manner, Albalag's concept of divine capacity may be seen as an extension to Averroes' definition of the divine intellect, which, according to him, is the highest rank of perfection a human

[364] Ibid, 1:42, 2:14
[365] Ibid, 4:3

intellect may realize. To reach this rank of perfection, the individual must acquire all universal concepts by learning and reasoning.[366]

But the quotation above and other passages in the *Tiqqun* indicate that the prophetic divine capacity is different from any grade of perfection that the theoretical intellect may achieve. The prophetic mode of apprehension not only surpasses intellectual apprehension but also belongs to a different domain. Distinguished as they may be, prophets apprehend "theoretical knowledge *only* through the part (*heleq*) of theoretical intellect they have, not through prophecy."[367] In stating this, Albalag seems to suggest that the prophetic divine capacity does not simply consist in the intellectual excellence of the prophet but that there is some extra capacity distinguishing the prophetic mind. On account of this, the distinction between the prophetic and philosophic minds is not one of degree of perfection but of type. Still, the question remains: if prophecy, in the first place, is a natural process, by what means do individuals attain and acquire divine capacity? Indeed, since this privilege is unlikely to depend on divine intervention, given the rigorous naturalism underlying Albalag's thought, what reasons are there to believe that such a capacity exists?

By way of an answer, one can argue that although acquiring this capacity requires learning and full mastery of the theoretical sciences, it essentially relies on the individual's innate disposition, i.e., acquiring this capacity is made possible through a disposition that naturally exists in the soul, without which man cannot become a prophet even if complete intellectual perfection were achieved. In this manner, the divine capacity to which Albalag refers could be seen as on par with the Avicennan concept of divine

[366] Roger Arnaldez, *Averroes: A Rationalist in Islam* (Notre Dame, Ind. : University of Notre Dame Press, 2000), 56.
[367] *Tiqqun*, note. 30, p. 44

intellect. This explanation, however, is problematic. Avicenna's theory of prophecy centers on a profound conviction that there exist only a few individuals, identified as prophets, who can attain emanative knowledge from above without going through the accumulative process of intellectual development. This is possible due to a special capacity with which prophets are naturally endowed. In this manner, they can be distinguished from philosophers in two ways: 1) whereas philosophers attain all knowledge piecemeal and reach the stage of the acquired intellect, in which contact with the Active Intellect is possible, after learning and contemplation, prophets do not need such a process of intellectual development. They intuitively attain knowledge without learning, inasmuch as the prophetic mind is naturally pure and can directly contact the Active Intellect.

> The prophetic mind possesses a strong capacity for this (i.e. for contact with the Active Intelligence) as though it already possess the second capacity (i.e. intellect *in habitu*), nay, as though it knows everything from within itself. This degree is the highest point of this capacity and this state of the material intellect should be called the Divine Intellect.[368]

2) In this state of intuitive knowledge, the divine intellect receives all knowledge at once, whereas the ordinary mind, even at the highest stage of intellectual cognition, receives intelligibles one after another. Although this intuitive mode of cognition does not require intellectual effort on the prophet's part, it does not involve doctrines that contradict knowledge obtained through rational investigation because the Active Intellect deposits all knowledge in the prophetic mind at once, according to the proper natural order of things. Thus, the prophetic mind differs from the philosophic only with respect

[368] Avicenna, *Najat*. This quotation is taken from F. Rahman, *Prophecy In Islam,* 1958, p. 32. A summary of Avicenna's theory of prophecy can be found in the *Maqasid*, p. 221 and *TT,* pp. 313-14.

to the "quantity" of knowledge to which it has access and with respect to the "manner" in which it grasps intelligibles. The content and quality of knowledge remain the same.[369]

When we examine Albalag's notes on prophecy against the backdrop of Avicenna's theory of prophecy, the similarity between the concepts of divine capacity and divine intellect turns out to be merely linguistic. Unlike Avicenna, Albalag claims that in virtue of the prophetic capacity the prophet has access to doctrines that contradict the conclusions of demonstration. Such a view was never at the basis of Avicenna's explanation of the divine intellect and theory of intuitive knowledge. Avicenna, as James Morris clarifies, never mentions the existence of "a higher class of objects of intellects that differ or transcend the rational principles of observable natural orders discussed by philosophers, natural scientists, and mathematicians." [370]

Additionally, Avicenna's concept of divine intellect presupposes that prophets 1) are naturally endowed with an exceptional natural capacity that renders them capable of grasping theoretical truth without training, and 2) receive revelation from the Active Intellect. Reading the *Tiqqun*, we do not find any serious acceptance, even by implication, of either premise. Whereas Albalag divides human beings into philosophers and the vulgar masses, according to the soul's natural disposition for learning and intellectual development, he does not account for the distinction between prophets and philosophers in similar terms. Moreover, Albalag arguably would follow Averroes in thinking that the Avicennan notion of intellectual revelation is impossible. In his commentary on *Parva Naturalia*, Averroes, as Kogan explains, rejected this notion of

[369] Michael. E. Marmura, "Avicenna's Psychological Proof of Prophecy" *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, Vol. 22, No. 1 (Jan., 1963), pp. 49-56

[370] James Winston Morris, "The Philosopher Prophet in Avicenna's Political Philosophy" *Political Aspects of Islamic Philosophy,* edited by Charles Butterworth (Cambridge, Mass. : Distributed for the Center for Middle Eastern Studies of Harvard University by Harvard University Press 1992), 184.

prophecy out of consideration for the cause-effect necessary relationship. As Averroes argues, if it were assumed that theoretical knowledge could be obtained without learning, this would mean that there is no necessary connection between the cause, i.e. learning, and the effect, i.e. knowledge. Averroes thus denies the possibility of the existence of angelic men capable of grasping theoretical truth without learning:[371]

> It is therefore impossible that a theoretical art be fully acquired by a person, by God, unless a person assumes that we have here a species of man that can comprehend theoretical science without training. Now this species, if indeed it existed, would be called man only equivocally, but actually it would be closer to the angels than to man. Now it will be seen that this is impossible.[372]

Albalag adopts a similar view regarding the necessary cause-effect relationship in the domain of human knowledge. This is suggested by one note, which we cited above, in which Albalag states that if it were possible for human beings to obtain universal truth independently of abstraction and syllogistic reasoning "all human beings would have had obtained this universal form and [they] would have been able to answer any question without previous knowledge," this is not possible.[373] But let us (dubiously) grant that we may read Avicenna's first premise into Albalag's thought by devising a reason for the exclusiveness of what Albalag designates as divine capacity to prophets. Still, there seems to be no way that we can read his second premise into Albalag's thought, given the absence of its chief element from Albalag's account for prophecy: the Active Intellect.

Admittedly, it is not possible to formulate a definite idea about the nature and the cause of what Albalag calls the prophetic divine capacity. This is partially due to lack of details, and also the fact that the claim regarding the existence of a divine capacity

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[371] B. Kogan, *Averroes and the Metaphysics of Causation*, p. 82.
[372] Quotation is taken from B. Kogan, *Averroes and the Metaphysics of Causation*, 1985, p. 82.
[373] *Tiqqun*, note, 46, p. 73.

exclusive to prophets appears to be at odds with the naturalistic explanation of prophecy that Albalag offers in another context.

We may assume that Albalag's conception of prophecy is meant to be a synthesis of two paradigms: the naturalistic one presented by al-Farabi and Maimonides and the super-naturalistic one presented by ha-Levi and Avicenna (namely insofar as the notion of intellectual revelation is considered).[374] Yet, the evidence for this assumption is extremely meagre. Perhaps the best approach is to admit, as in the former section, that the divine features associated with prophecy and prophets are not based on a scientific conviction, but are propagated by Albalag for political goals and to reinforce the masses' belief in prophecy.

Where is the imaginative faculty?

Albalag's conception of prophecy gives rise to another difficulty: the absence of the imaginative faculty. Medieval philosophers distinguished prophets from philosophers particularly on account of the imaginative faculty. In virtue of the imaginative faculty, the philosophers explain, prophets are able to formulate the law and communicate theoretical truth to the masses in a figurative language. [375] Maimonides, for instance, differentiates between three individuals: 1) the philosopher (the one who perfected his rational faculty, the statesman (the one who perfected his imaginative faculty,) and the prophet (who perfected both his intellectual and imaginative faculties.)[376] It is by virtue of the

[374] Assuming that Albalag really held this synthetic position, it would be reasonable to argue that he may have been influenced by Thomas Aquinas who spoke of two aspects of prophecy: naturalistic and super-naturalistic. For Aquinas' theory of prophecy see "Alexander Altman Maimonides And Thomas Aquinas: Natural or Divine Prophecy?" *AJS Review*, Vol. 3 (1978), pp. 1-19

[375] See for instance al-Farabi's theory of prophecy in *the Virtuous City* where he specifies that the prophet is the one who receives emanation to his imaginative faculty. For further discussion see Jeffery Macy," Prophecy in al-Farabi and Maimonides: The Imaginative and the Rational Faculty," *Maimonides and Philosophy*, 1986.

[376] *Guide* I:27. Maimonides, furthermore, arranges the ranks of prophets according to the sharpness of the imaginative faulty. This point is puzzling, because Maimonides associates man's evil impulse and deficiencies with the imaginative

combined operation of the rational and the imaginative faculties that the prophet is able to bring a divine law, one that aims to the welfare of the body and the welfare of the soul.

Although Maimonides deems the imaginative faculty the distinctive feature of prophets, he distinguishes Moses, affirming that Moses' prophecy was unique because it did not involve the operation of the imaginative faculty. [377] This, however, does not mean that Mosaic Law did not involve the operation of this faculty. Analysing the details of Maimonides' theory of prophecy, Kaplan suggests that we must distinguish between Moses' prophecy and Law. Whereas the former is purely intellectual, it is hard to speak of the latter without considering the operation of the imaginative faculty. Kaplan supports this argument with a number of points; most important of all is Maimonides' affirmation that Moses' law is the only divine law because it cares for the welfare of the soul and the welfare of the society. If, according to Maimonides' theory of prophecy, social welfare requires the interplay of the intellectual and imaginative faculties of the soul, we must conclude that Mosaic Law does involve the activity of imagination.[378]

In all the notes on prophecy, Albalag completely omits the imaginative faculty. so as to stay in line with the transcendent conception of prophecy he is presenting. By omitting the imaginative faculty from his account of prophecy, Albalag wants to say the prophetic knowledge is purely intellectual, and perhaps is not transferable to other inferior forms. Prophets and prophetic knowledge are entirely above the human domain. But if this really is Albalag's intention, one is propelled to ask how the law and the

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faculty. For a discussion of this point see Zev Harvey "Three Theories of Imagination in 12th Century Jewish Philosophy," *Intellect et imagination dans la Philosophie Médiévale Intellect and Imagination in Medieval Philosophy Intelecto e imaginação na Filosofía Medieval*, édités par Maria Cândida Pacheco-José F. Meirinhos, 2006, pp. 287-305.

[377] *Guide* (II:37). Maimonides' most explicit view regarding the uniqueness of Moses can be found in his Introduction to the Commentary on the Mishnah, *pereq Heleq*

[378]Lawrence Kaplan" I sleep, but my Heart Waketh: Maimonides' conception of Human Perfection," *Philosophical and legal Studies*, edited by Ira Robinson, Lawrence Kaplan, and Julien Bauer (N.Y., USA : E. Mellen Press, 1990).

figurative representations contained in Scripture came about. Albalag never address this issue, which brings more lacunas and obscurities to his conception of prophecy.

Conclusion

The goal of this chapter has been to determine what Albalag means by prophecy. I have examined, more or less, all his notes on prophecy against the metaphysical and epistemological premises of the *Tiqqun* and against the background of the naturalistic conception of prophecy generally adopted by medieval Jewish and Islamic philosophers. The chief claim of Albalag's notes on prophecy is that prophets are superior human beings who, by virtue of a supra-rational mode of cognition, have access to a level of reality that stands beyond reason and could in some cases contradict conclusions of demonstration. This claim, I have shown, does not accord with the *Tiqqun's* chief metaphysical and epistemological premises and therefore I devalued its philosophical significance. What testifies to this conclusion is the fact that Albalag never attempts to provide a tangible logical explanation for this mode of prophecy, despite his repeated recommendation that one should not accept a doctrine unless it is demonstrated. In short, the conception of prophecy offered in the *Tiqqun* is a mere political idea; one that aims to reassure the multitude's belief in prophecy, and challenge the philosophical interpretations of Scripture that led some, such as Maimonides, to compromise, or ever deny, demonstrative truth in favor of Scripture.

It might be suggested that Albalag held an esoteric conception of prophecy that goes in line with the Farabian-Maimonidean naturalistic paradigm. While some elements of this paradigm emerge in the *Tiqqun*, namely the intellectual requirement for prophecy,

the omission of the main elements of this paradigm, the Active Intellect and the imaginative faculty, proves that Albalag did not espouse that paradigm. The omission of these two elements cannot be accidental. Indeed, Albalag's insistence that prophecy is exclusive to a specific class of individuals, "prophets," makes it evident that the naturalistic paradigm of al-Farabi and Maimonides is not workable in the *Tiqqun*. Likewise, the Avicennan paradigm of intuition-based prophecy should be ruled out because Albalag distinguishes prophecy from philosophy not only in quantity, but also, and most importantly, in quality.

Whether Albalag qua a Jew really believed in prophecy in the sense he described cannot be determined. Evaluating Albalag qua a philosopher, we can assuredly say that he did not. If so, the fundamental notion underlying the double truth claim, i.e. prophecy, is undermined.

Law, Society, and Happiness

The main objective of the present chapter is to investigate Albalag's political thought. By political thought I refer to the medieval domain of philosophical investigation that is concerned with examining the connection between the social good and human happiness, on the one hand, and philosophy and religion on the other. This aspect of Albalag's philosophical investigation, despite its brevity, is not inconsequential and offers a range of useful insights into his view on the relationship between religion and philosophy.

I start by linking the conclusion I made in the previous chapter regarding Albalag's conception of prophecy to a significant passage in the *Tiqqun* in which Albalag determines the qualities and task of the political leader, to which Albalag refers as *Moreh ẓedeq*. Within the same context, Albalag makes a statement, that has been argued, involves a Kabbalistic theme. I provide a naturalistic interpretation of this statement and elucidate how my interpretation fits into the political theme of the context in which it emerges. Lastly, I turn to examine Albalag's understanding of the role of the Torah in the accomplishment of human happiness against Maimonides' definition of divine law.

1. The *Moreh ẓedeq* and Social Welfare

Aristotle's statement that "man is a political being by nature"[379] lies at the center of the political thought of medieval Jewish and Muslim philosophers. To the exclusion of Ibn Bajjah who thought that man must if necessary withdraw from society in order to gain perfection, medieval philosophers generally held that man could not live or realize

[379] *NE*. 1.7 1097b11 and *Politics* I.2 1253a2-3

perfection without society. Maimonides, for instance, differentiates human beings and other creatures on the basis of their ability to dispense with social cooperation.[380] Whereas some animals can fulfill their essential needs and pursue the purpose of their existence in isolation, human beings can't survive without social interaction and collaboration. In the same vein, Averroes brings this Aristotelian statement in opposition to Ibn Bajja's non-social attitude, arguing that it is "impossible for man to live without a state." [381]

Albalag follows the lead of his predecessors, emphasizing that human beings are different from other creatures on account of their rational faculty and political nature. Albalag considers man's "political nature" to be consequent on divine generosity that equipped individuals of all species with the necessary means for their existence.[382] The political nature of man is a substantial condition required for the continuation of the human species. Unlike other creatures whose needs are limited, the material needs of human beings are multiple and require much effort to be fulfilled. Although human beings are endowed with reason and possess tools of craftsmanship,[383] these tools are insufficient to satisfy the needs of life. Human beings must socialize and collaborate in order fulfill their needs. Man's political nature, in other words, is purposive and serves toward a specific end.[384]

> Because the needs of man … require regular laboring; for example those devoted to the making of food and clothing, divine providence provided human beings with rational faculties and tools of craftsmanship…. And since the multiple crafts … require engagement of large numbers of workers, collaboration, and assistance of individuals to

[380] *Guide* I: 72
[381] Erwin. I. J. Rosenthal, *Political Thought in Medieval Islam* (Westport, Conn. : Greenwood Press, 1985), 175.
[382] Aristotle mentions this phrase in both the NE and politics. According to Melamed, Medieval Jewish and Islamic philosophy didn't have access to Aristotle's politics and this idea about the political nature of human beings is derived from the *NE.* For an overview of the sources of Aristotle's political thought in Medieval philosophy see Abraham Melamed, "Aristotle's Politics in Jewish Political Thought" in *Well Begun is Only Half Done: Tracing Aristotle's Political Ideas in Medieval Arabic, Syriac, Byzantine, and Jewish Sources*, edited by Vasileios Syros et al (Tempe, Ariz. : ACMRS, Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2011)
[383] Cf. *Guide* 1:72. Cf. Averroes, *Commentary on The Republic,* pp. 6-7
[384] Cf. Aristotle *Politics* 1252b30-1253a1 where Aristotle explains that Nature is wise and that it does nothing in vain. The political nature of man has a reason and serves toward a specific end.

> one another it follows that—socializing—is a natural (*ṭvi'i*) disposition in them and a necessity for their existence… This is the meaning of the verse stating that 'it is not good for man to be alone, and the interpretation of the word, *'ezer*, help—pointing to the partner—that was created for the sake of man.[385] Similarly, philosophers maintain that man is political by nature.[386]

In itself, man's political nature is not sufficient to maintain harmonious ties and peaceful relationships among human beings. Aristotle's emphasis on the idea of man's political nature involves a thesis that good life is necessarily a social life.[387] Man cannot attain the highest good in isolation; he needs to associate and collaborate with others. The highest political and social good is, however, structured on a number of factors, most importantly man's capability of acting in concord. Since human beings vary in characters and share no uniform disposition to moral virtues, a matter that subsequently affects their behaviors and actions towards one another, social wellbeing requires promoting a condition of "likeness" among its members.[388]

In line with Aristotle, Medieval philosophers paid considerable attention to the moral and behavioral diversity of human beings and its negative impact on both individual and social wellbeing. In his introduction to *Philosophy of Plato and Aristotle,* al-Farabi clearly emphasizes the fact that individuals are distinctively disposed toward certain moral virtues and possess different characters corresponding to different levels of deliberative virtues.[389] On account of this, the *imām*, or the king, being superior in moral and deliberative virtues, in addition to his possession of supreme theoretical virtues, is entitled to instruct the members of his society and train them to act in a manner that would serve toward realizing the conditions conducive to both earthily and supreme happiness.[390]

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[385] *Genesis* 2:18
[386] *Tiqqun*, Introduction, p. 1
[387] *NE*. 1.7.
[388] *NE*. VIII, 1155a, 33-35
[389] Al-Farabi, *Philosophy of Plato And Aristotle* (Ithaca, N.Y. : Cornell University Press, 2001), 34.
[390] Ibid, pp. 34-35

Likewise Averroes deals with this issue extensively in his commentary on Plato's *Republic* wherein he examines distinctive moral virtues and their influence on the required socio-political conditions leading to happiness.

Maimonides too addresses this issue in several contexts. In the *Guide,* for instance, he regards behavioral diversity of mankind as a state of affairs that makes it necessary for members of a society to follow a code of moral norms in order to regulate actions and prevent anarchy:

> Now as the nature of the human species requires that there be those differences among the individuals belonging to it and as in addition society is a necessity for this nature, it is by no means possible that this society should be perfected except—and this is necessarily so—through a ruler who gauges the actions of the individuals, perfecting that which is deficient and reducing that which is excess, and who prescribes actions and moral habits that all of them must always practice in the same way, so that the natural diversity is hidden through the multiple points of conventional accord and so that the community becomes ordered.[391]

When Albalag discusses the cause of social disorder, he omits behavioral diversity and focuses instead on another type of diversity: that which pertains to "doctrines" (*de'ot*,) and laws (*mishpatīm*.) This omission does not necessarily signify any substantial deviation from the Aristotelian account adopted by Albalag's predecessors and contemporaries, but it clearly shows that he was more concerned with the political aspect of society than the ethical one. Indeed, Albalag seems to suggest that the principal cause of conflict among people is political. A "perfect" society is a harmonious society in which all individuals live according to a "uniform legislation" and "fixed order."[392] Absence of these two factors prevents society from attaining perfection and impedes the conditions necessary for the continuation of human beings. These conditions cannot be fulfilled without a "leader" (*manhîg*) who carries on the task of unifying people in creed and praxis.

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[391] *Guide* II: 40
[392] *Tiqqun*, p. 1

> Due to the fact that a community which is composed of a large number of individuals attains no perfection except with its agreement on a uniform belief (*hit'aḥdām al da'at ehad,*) and a uniform legislation, (*mishpat 'eḥad*) the Divine wisdom cunningly (*he'rîmah*) poured from its spirit to the soul of the perfect (*tamīm*) of the generation and awakened his heart to become a master of justice, (*moreh ẓedeq*) and to instruct people in laws and judgments that they share so that they might, on the basis of these judgments, follow the same path, that is, live according to proper order (*seder nakhon*) and shared consensus (*haskamah meshutefet*) lest they divide and commit the sinful deed of enmity; each individual being against his fellow human as our Rabbis explain " if man wins, his partner is a helpmate, and if not, the partner is an enemy, as a consequence there will be an impediment to the will necessary for the perpetual continuation of the human species.[393]

Underlying this passage is Avicenna's "teleological"[394] proof of prophecy, which appears in the concluding chapter of the *Metaphysics* of the *Shifa'*. In the *Maqasid*, al-Ghazali reconstructs the proof as follows:

> It is necessary that the *prophet* should be included in the category of existence… since the universe does not maintain regular order except with a governing code of law to which creatures submit and by which they are governed, lest they war against each other and bring about total destruction to the world. Just as rain is necessary for the continuation of the order of the universe of which Divine providence is never short of providing with abundance, the order of the universe can't continue without those who teach people good things [that benefit them] in this world and the world to come. Not every individual in the human race is capable of performing this task…. Accordingly… the cause of order in the universe is the successor of God. [395]

As can be seen, the proof is rooted in the idea that securing justice and social order are necessary requirements for human existence. Such requirements cannot be realized without the involvement of a lawgiver who would enact laws and promote doctrines conducive to the social and spiritual well being of mankind. Because the existence of the lawgiver which al-Ghazali identifies with the prophet is necessitated by human needs, al-Ghazali deems prophecy to be testifying to "divine providence" for mankind. Albalag

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[393] *Tiqqun*, Introduction, p. 1

[394] Avicenna offers two types of proofs for prophecy: psychological and teleological from the nature of society and divine providence. For the difference between the two proofs see Michael Marmura " Avicenna's Psychological proof of Prophecy" *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*. Vol. 22 No. 1 (Jan., 1963) pp. 49-56

[395] *Maqasid*, p. 222.

follows the main lines of this proof and reaches the same conclusion.[396] Nonetheless, he differs from Avicenna and al-Ghazali in a crucial point: he does not identify the leader with the prophet.

As Albalag states, the leader assumed to carry on the task of unifying people is the "perfect" (*tamīm*) of his generation."[397] The usage of the word *tamīm* is significant because it implies that the leader is not necessarily a prophet. As we saw in the former chapter, prophets in Albalag's opinion are not ordinary human beings. They are unique individuals who attained the highest degree of intellectual perfection and acquired the cognitive capacities of separate intellect and qualities of divine knowledge. In describing this prophetic quality, Albalag usually uses the word "*shalīm*," which also is an equivalent of the philosophical term *perfectio* or *eudaimonia.* [398] This linguistic note enhances the conclusion of the former chapter, namely that prophecy as such is not achievable.

Assuming that Albalag really thought that supra rational prophecy is unachievable, it makes sense that he excludes it from the present discussion. The discussion starts with a note on divine providence, which, as Albalag states, cares for "species" by providing the essential needs required for their continuous existence. With respect to the human species, Albalag mentions man's political nature, reason, and skills of craftsmanship. A few lines later, Albalag speaks of a certain leader whose existence, being necessary for the continuation of mankind, is rendered part of Divine providence. This reasoning is not uncommon in medieval philosophy, but whereas philosophers, as we saw with Avicenna,

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[396] Charles Butterworth, "Ethical and Political Philosophy," The *Cambridge Companion to Arabic Philosophy,* 2005, p. 281.

[397] *Tiqqun*, p. 1. The terminologies used in this passage correspond to Maimonides' terminologies in the *Treatise on Logic* (XIV) where he explains the significance of political science to lawmakers: "It also lays down laws of righteousness for the best ordering of the groups. The sages of the peoples of antiquity made rules and regulations, according to their various degrees of perfection, for the government of their subjects. These are called *nomoi*." Maimonides adds a note after this saying that we no longer need this science since we have the divine law.

[398] *Tiqqun*, pp. Introduction, p. 4, notes 30, 37, 42, 62, and 64.

consider prophecy to be a testimony to divine providence for mankind, Albalag omits prophets and prophecy altogether and refers to a leader whom he describes as *moreh ẓsedeq* (master of justice, or a guide of justice, according to Vajda's translation. [399]) In point of fact, the theory of divine providence in the *Tiqqun* accords with the main premises of Aristotelian naturalism, and this explains why Albalag omitted prophets in this context. Divine providence accords with nature, and this means that whatever it provides for the sake of the continuation of mankind would correspondingly be natural. Albalag's supernatural prophet does not fit in this naturalistic framework.

One thing need be highlighted here. Although Albalag uses the term "*leshfokh*" (pour) in describing the act of Divine providence in fulfilling the human need for leadership, this does not permit identifying the *moreh ẓedeq* with the Farabian-Maimonidean prophet whose prophecy consists in an overflowing from the Active Intellect. In the previous chapter, we sufficiently discussed the implications of the omission of the Active Intellect from Albalag's account for prophecy and concluded that this omission, which cannot be accidental, marks Albalag's separation from Farabian-Maimonidean paradigm of prophecy. In the present context, Albalag again omits the Active Intellect completely. Moreover, the term "pour," taken as it stands in the passage, does not signify any transcendent act of revelation. The sentence reads as follow: Divine wisdom cunningly poured from its spirit to the soul of the most perfect of his generation and *awakened* his heart to be a master of justice. Here it is obvious that Divine Wisdom does not specifically bring about or inspire the law or the doctrines taught by the *moreh ẓedeq*, but the *disposition* to leadership. Again, as we read Albalag's statement against the idea of divine providence, the disposition for leadership and capacity to legislate emerge

[399] Georges Vajda, *averroïste juif, traducteur et annotateur daḷ-Ghazâlî*, 1960, p. 15.

as a natural inclination with which the *moreh ẓedeq* is endowed.[400] That is to say, there is no difference between man's political nature and the disposition for leadership in this regard—except, of course, for a quantative difference, since assumingly only a few individuals possess this disposition. Just as the political nature of man is provided by divine providence as a means for the continuous existence of mankind, so is the disposition for leadership. Both are means with which human beings are naturally endowed; they do not require a direct or an extraordinary act of divine intervention. That being said, we can understand the emanation terminology in this context as merely explanatory, just as Maimonides employs the emanation language to "explain" how the causal agency of separate intelligences in the physical realm operates without accepting it as a model for creation.[401] The matter comes down to an explanation of how Divine providence could supply the needs necessary for the perfection of the universe without this resulting in impugning God's perfection.

What, then, are the specific qualities of the *moreh ẓedeq* and what are the tools he employs to accomplish the goal of social welfare? With regard to the first question, Albalag does not provide a direct answer. Yet, some features can be inferred from the very title "*moreh ẓedeq*." Taken as it stands, the construction of *moreh ẓedeq* means a master or a teacher. This designation indicates that Albalag's leader, like the paradigmatic ruler of al-Farabi and Averroes, serves a pedagogical role. [402] He must be equipped with educational and persuasive skills in order to be able to educate others in whatever doctrines conducive to the perfection of society.

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[400] Cf. *Guide* II: 40

[401] *Guide* II: 12. For a discussion of Maimonides' attitude to the theory of emanation see Arthur Hyman, "Maimonides on Causality," *Maimonides and Philosophy,* edited by Shlomo Pines et al, 1986.

[402] Al-Farabi derives the twelve characteristics of the perfect ruler from Plato's Republic. See al-Farabi see *The Perfect State*, edited with commentaries by R. Walzer (New York : Oxford University Press, 1985), 244-49. Cf. Averroes' Commentary *on Plato's Republic,* p. 176.

The word "*ẓedeq"* together with "*mishpatīm*" allude to the divine attributes of action—loving-kindness (*hesed,*) righteousness (*ẓedeqah,*) justice (*mishpat*)—underlying Maimonides' notion of *imitato Dei*. [403] The word *ẓedeqah* has different meanings. Insofar as it signifies an attribute of action, Maimonides takes it to be equivalent to *ẓedeq,* justice. The three attributes *hesed, ẓedeqah,* and *mishpat* define the following set of actions respectively: "excess in beneficence," fulfilling obligations toward others on account of moral virtue, and exercising judgment. In addition to these linguistic notes, we can find further supporting evidence for Albalag's adoption of the notion of *imitato Dei* in the context of his treatment of divine attributes. There, Albalag states that the "worship suitable for the wise (*maskīl*)" consists in "seeking knowledge of God's attributes" and "the actions that follow from them."[404]

The notion of *imitato Dei* involves theoretical and practical aspects. It defines the epistemological features and political obligations of the perfect individual. By achieving knowledge of God and His providence based on nature, the perfect individual comes to recognize the constant features of being: loving-kindness, righteousness, and judgment. These features guide the way of life and define the political obligations of the perfect individual: by imitating God; practicing the noblest actions of loving-kindness, righteousness and justice in self-governance and governance of others, the perfect individual contributes to the welfare of individuals and society. Imitation of God is the highest level of "practical perfection."[405] Application of the three attributes is the most relevant way to fulfill the practical duties and conditions necessary for perfection of man as a man and perfection of society.

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[403] *Guide* III-51-53
[404] *Tiqqun*, note, 66, p. 93
[405] H. Kreisel, *Maimonides' Political Thought,*1999, p. 140.

> It is clear that the perfection of man that may be gloried in is the one acquired by him who has achieved, in a measure corresponding to his capacity to the apprehension of Him, may He be exalted, and who knows His providence extending over His creatures as manifested in the act of bringing them into being and in their governance as it is. The way of life of such an individual, after he has achieved this apprehension, will have in view loving-kindness, righteousness, and judgment, through assimilation to His actions, may He be exalted, just as we have explained several times in this Treatise.[406]

Whereas it is not certain that Albalag is alluding to Maimonides' notion of *imitato Dei*, it seems that he has in mind something similar. Assumingly, the *moreh ẓedeq* must fulfill practical duties and possess theoretical excellence. The practical aspect is evident from the very pedagogical and legislative duties he is assumed to carry on in order to accomplish the wellbeing of society. These duties include securing justice by enacting and applying law and instructing people in doctrines conducive to the perfection of society. The theoretical aspect is not stated, however, it stands to reason to assume that the *moreh ẓedeq* possesses theoretical knowledge. If the goal of the *moreh ẓedeq* is to guide people to live according to the "best order,"[407] he must perforce have knowledge of what this order consists in and how to realize it. This type of knowledge, as Maimonides' notion of *imitato Dei* indicates, follows from an understanding of natural things. The same idea regarding the dependence of good practice and governance on theoretical knowledge emerges also in al-Farabi and Averroes who follow Plato in this regard. Averroes, for instance, in the commentary on *Plato's Republic,* describes the government of the "wise" state as one whose foundation is speculative knowledge.

> Good government and good counsel are without doubt a kind of knowledge, only we cannot say that this State possesses good government and good counsel on account of knowledge in the practical arts…This being so, it possesses wisdom only in that knowledge which we are setting forth. It is evident that this wisdom can only be perfected through knowledge of the (ultimate} human aim, since this polity tends that way. It is also evident that we can only perceive this human aim through the speculative sciences. Thus,

[406] *Guide* III: 54
[407] *Tiqqun*, p. 1

> this State is necessarily spoken of as wise in two (kinds of) knowledge simultaneously, practical and theoretical.[408]

If my reading is correct, then Albalag's leader (*moreh ẓedeq*) corresponds to Averroes' philosopher-king—I exclude the Farabian-Maimonidean paradigm of the philosopher-prophet because Albalag's theory of prophecy with its evident supernatural claims does not accord with the main features of this paradigm.[409] Regarding the philosopher-king Averroes says that he possesses "intellectual virtue by which practical matters are dealt in nations and states."[410] The philosopher-king, in all likelihood, is no more than a wise politician. Averroes was not convinced, as was al-Farabi, that the philosopher-king should necessarily be a prophet.[411] If so, then the *moreh ẓedeq,* like Averroes' philosopher-king, is not necessarily a prophet, but a philosopher-ruler who brings about harmony and wellbeing to society on account of his theoretical and political excellences and persuasive skills. In short, divine providence provides the needs necessary for the continuous existence of human beings through individuals that possess a high degree of intellectual and practical virtues, rather than supernatural prophets.

2. Law, Unity, and Divine Perfection: A Naturalistic Reading of a Kabbalist Theme in The *Tiqqun*

We have examined Albalag's standpoint on the qualities of the ruler as stated in the preface to the *Tiqqun*. In all, Albalag's view is universalistic; it stems from an examination of human nature and the causes of and means for social disorder and

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[408] Averroes, *Commentary on Plato's Republic*, p. 156.
[409] For al-Farabi's idea of the philosopher-prophet see *Philosophy of Plato and Aristotle*, pp. 34-35.
[410] Averroes, *Commentary on Plato's Republic*, p. 72. It should be mentioned, however, that in the *Attainment of Happiness*, al-Farabi's supreme ruler is a philosopher. There is no reference to prophecy or revelation. Al-Frabi identifies the ruler as one who invents the images and persuasions. *Al-Farabi's Philosophy of Plato and Aristotle*, translated by Mohsin Mahdi, 1969, p. 47.
[411] Averroes, *Commentary on Plato's Republic*, p. 177.

harmony respectively. What Albalag describes are, from the point of view of philosophical investigation, universal facts regarding the nature of human beings and the political and social needs necessary for their continuous existence. Albalag makes no specification with respect to a nation, society, or legislator.

Having established this general view, Albalag turns to the Torah. The remainder of the preface proceeds to identify the features of the Torah as a law, the merit of its style, and its role in establishing social harmony. Albalag starts this section with a statement that promotes an unusual notion regarding the relationship of God and the sublunary realm.

> As our Rabbis explain 'if man wins, his partner is a helpmate. If not, the partner is an enemy.' Consequently, there will be an impediment (*mônea'*) to the will (*ḥefeẓ*) necessary for the perpetual continuation of the human species… This is the goal of the Torah and the meaning of the Rabbinic saying that the world is founded upon the Torah and peace. From this, you should learn that not only does the desired species [the human species] require the Torah for its continuation, but also divine will (*ha- ḥefeẓ ha-'elohī,*) which determines (*gôzer*) the existence of the human species requires the Torah for its subsistence (*qiyûmô*)…. the act of the divine realm is completed (*nishalm*) and subsists thanks to the sublunary order. Therefore, it is necessary to glorify *torah*, which is the principle and basis (*'iqaar*) of this order.[412]

Two key ideas regarding the Torah emerge in this passage: 1) The Torah represents a substantial principle for human existence due to the fact that it fulfills the requirements for social and political order. [413] 2) The Torah is the primary principle for the subsistence of human existence and divine will. Although the existence of the human species depends, in the first place, on divine will, divine will requires the Torah order for its subsistence. What is more, the perfection of the divine realm is profoundly related to the Torah. What does Albalag mean by this odd notion and how does it relate to the political theme of the *Tiqqun*?

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[412] The passage is highly ambiguous especially with regard to the referents. In my translation, I paid attention to the general meaning of the context. My translation parallels Vajda's translation of the passage, p. 16.
[413] Cf. *Guide* III: 27

At first glance, Albalag seems to suggest something along the line of the Kabbalist doctrine of *Tiqqun ha'olam.* In view of this doctrine, the universe and the creator maintain a powerful connection. Not only does God affect the universe, but also the universe, specifically human deeds, affects God. The duty of mankind on earth, according *Tiqqun ha'olam*, is to restore the world thereby bringing both humanity and God to complete perfection by observing the commandments and performing righteous deeds. Kabbalists go as far as to maintain that the primary purpose of the commandments is not realizing physical and social wellbeing as the philosophers claim, but to restore the imbalance within the Godhead.[414] Due to the similarity between the key idea underlying this Kabbalistic doctrine and the passage at stake Israel Zinberg, in his overview of Albalag's thought, describes Albalag as a "dubious Aristotelian" who deviated from the Aristotelian notion of divine perfection by adopting Kabbalistic views.[415]

Zinberg's conclusion, which appears to be based on a partial reading of the *Tiqqun,* creates an undue incoherence in Albalag's thought. Thus, I propose to read the present passage in light of Albalag's analysis of the attribute of divine will. It shall, then, become clear that Albalag couldn't have understood the God-world relationship in terms of the indicated Kabbalistic doctrine. In chapter four, we will examine Albalag's theory of divine attributes. For the purpose of the present discussion, I offer some general notes on divine will in order to clarify what Albalag really means by this, ostensibly Kabbalistic, notion of divine perfection.

Firstly, like most Aristotelian philosophers, Albalag holds that divine will is uncaused. It is not contingent on the desired object, but it is causally prior to all existents.

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[414] Hava Tirosh-Samuelson, "Philosophy and Kabbalah: 1200-1600" in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Jewish Philosophy* edited by Daniel H. Frank and Oliver Leaman (Cambridge ; New York : Cambridge University Press, 2003)
[415] Israel Zinberg, *A History of Jewish Literature* (Cleveland, Press of Case Western Reserve University, 1972 1974), VI, p. 104.

Indeed, although in the passage at stake Albalag suggests that the subsistence of divine will is somehow associated with social order and the Torah, he does not go as far as to claim that they *cause* divine will.

Secondly, immutability is a substantial feature of divine will. This feature is based on two considerations: 1) that God's will derives from knowledge of His unchanging essence 2) that God's will accords with nature, for it constantly desires the same thing: "what is good."[416] Since "what is good" is generally identified in the *Tiqqun* with "existence," God's choosing what is good means that He constantly chooses existence over non-existence. Thus, granting that God's will is constant and immutable, there can be no alternation in the desired object to which it attaches: existence. The universe in its present shape and all what it includes are accordingly destined to remain. That a change could, either by addition or diminution, occur to the universe, its order, or its species is something that Albalag firmly denies. He asserts "nothing whatsoever could be added or subtracted from the universe."[417]

Based on these notes, we can readily conclude that Albalag is unlikely to hold any view that would impugn the self-sufficiency of divine will. For him, divine will does not involve any sense of contingency. The mere supposition that the human species could cease to exist contradicts the very essence of divine will that constantly chooses what is good, existence. Thus, when Albalag says that divine will requires the Torah for its subsistence he could reasonably be understood as saying that the Torah represents a means for executing the perpetual and unchanging divine will by providing the needs necessary for the continuous existence of the human species.

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[416] *Tiqqun*, note, 53, p. 78
[417] Ibid, note, 30, p. 47

The same is true with respect to the assumed contingency of divine perfection. Albalag's statement, which apparently suggests that the sublunary realm contributes to divine perfection shouldn't be taken literally. It makes more sense to understand the relationship of divine perfection to the sublunary order as a relationship of *correspondence* rather than dependence. One fundamental theme that marks Albalag's analysis of the relation of God to the physical universe pertains to divine wisdom. God's knowledge, which is identical with His essence, is a unified form of the forms of all existents. Sometimes Albalag refers to this unified form as the form of the universe. All that exists in the universe exists in virtue of this form, specifically by means of God's self-intellection—we will discuss the details of the theory of causal knowing in chapters four and five. Despite its unity, this form is the source of multiplicity in the universe. Multiplicity is not meant in an individualistic sense, for the universe, with its multiple parts, exists as a unified whole. None of its parts can exist if separated from the whole. Moreover, the unification of the parts *is* the cause of the parts as well as the universe in its entirety. It is on account of this feature of unity that the universe is said to be complete and "perfect."[418]

Now, if the unity of the universe derives from and accords with the unity of the form of the universe, i.e. divine essence, does not this mean that the perfection of the universe corresponds and testifies to the perfection of God? In fact, the two perfections are closely associated with each other. The perfection of the universe is contingent on God's self-knowing of the unified form of the universe, and God's perfection consists in knowing His own essence (the unified form of the universe). Even thought God is self-sufficient and His knowledge is not derived from things themselves, the fact that God

[418] *Tiqqun*, note, 69, p. 96-7

apprehends the form of the universe brings His perfection in a close connection to the perfection of the sublunary realm. Assuming that the universe would degrade into a state of imperfection, say, for instance, due to the termination of the human species, this would imply imperfection in God whose apprehension of the form of the universe *is* the very cause of existence, unity, and perfection of the sublunary realm. (It should, however, be noted that Albalag's discussion of the God-world relationship involves more radical aspects. We will discuss this in chapter five.)

We can now show that this explanation is more fitting to the political theme of the context in which the passage under discussion emerges than the Kabbalistic idea. We saw in the former section that social welfare—in turn human existence—is based on a condition of unity. Unity is not merely a condition for the permanence of human species, but a feature of societal perfection. Like Aristotle, Albalag maintains that a society realizes its full perfection when its members are united. In light of what we have explained, we can say that cosmic and social perfections share with divine perfection one particular characteristic: unity.

The perfections (unity) of the cosmos and society are constituted through law, the law of nature and legislation respectively. Indeed, Albalag imparts this idea in one context where he sets nature and legislation in parallel on account of their respective roles in preserving cosmic and social order.

> … nature [is called] a law (*ḥoq*) because it is the cause of the order (*seder*) characterizing all existents just as human law (*ha-nimus*) is the cause of order in the actions of human beings. [419]

The parallel between nature and the law can be understood in a much deeper way if we consider the notion of *imitato Dei*. Now we can assume that Divine unity, as

[419] *Tiqqun*, note, 30, p. 47

manifested in the universe, provides a political model for the human governor on the basis of which he formulates a law that aims to a united society. Within his domain of governance the leader imitates God by unifying society through the law.

I believe this way of interpreting the connection between divine perfection and the sublunary realm goes in tune with what I concluded in the previous section about the *moreh ẓedeq* and his role in promoting unity. It also spares Albalag from the charge of being a dubious Aristotelian who adopts Kabbalistic themes that stand in a jarring contradiction with his overall philosophical outlook.

3. Torah and Happiness

No doubt, Albalag deems the Torah a paradigmatic model of a legislation that has the capacity to realize societal perfection and harmony. This is evident from the passage we examined in the previous section which links divine will and human existence to the Torah. But what is the role that the Torah plays in accomplishing human happiness? To answer this question, we first define what human happiness consists in. As with the majority of questions discussed in this study, I read Albalag against the backdrop of the medieval Aristotelian tradition in order to determine points of convergence and divergence in his thought.

The question of the relationship between religion and philosophy involves many subjects of inquiry. One central subject focuses on determining the role of religion as opposed to the role of philosophy in realizing human happiness. Medieval Aristotelians investigated this subject in light of theories bequeathed from Greek philosophers regarding the definition of happiness and in accommodation with the conviction that

Scripture contains knowledge suitable for moral, social, and spiritual needs. [420] Philosophers determined four types of virtues with respect to the true happiness:

> The human things through which nations and cities attain happiness in this earthly life and supreme happiness in the life beyond are of four kinds: theoretical virtues, deliberative virtues, moral virtues and practical arts. [421]

Of the four virtues, they held theoretical virtue to be the ultimate form of human happiness. Al-Farabi, for instance, stresses this idea clearly in a number of works. In the *Aphorisms,* he describes the ultimate happiness of man as a

> a state that is not attained or perfected except after becoming sophisticated; perfecting cognizance by means of demonstration; and becoming perfect in the natural sciences, what follows upon them, and what is after them according to rank and order, so that he finally comes to knowledge of the happiness that is truly happiness—namely, that which is sought for its own sake and at no period of time is sought for anything else—and is cognizant of how the theoretical virtues and the virtues of calculation are a reason and principle for bringing about the practical virtues and the arts.[422]

Similarly, Maimonides indicates in different places in the *Guide* that knowledge of theoretical truth is the highest end of man. He defines perfection as: "acquisition of the rational virtues." [423] His interpretation of Adam's fall affirms this idea of human perfection. Before his fall Adam was in the highest state of man, fully engaged in theoretical science. His life was fully determined by reason and therefore he didn't need laws to determine the difference between good and evil. After the sin, he acquired inferior type of knowledge, that which pertains to the practical life.[424]

This emphasis on the contemplative ideal is problematic. The assumption that reason is required for the ultimate happiness means that only a small segment of people, those who can exercise reason, will be capable of achieving the true happiness. Also, it

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[420] Oliver Leaman, *An Introduction to Medieval Islamic Philosophy*, 1985, p. 177.
[421] Al-Farabi, *The Philosophy of Aristotle*, translated by Mohsin Mahdi, 1962. Cf. *Guide* III:27
[422] Al-Farabi, "Selected Aphorisms," *Al-Farabi: The Political Writing*, translated by Charles Butterworth (Cornell University Press, Ithaca and London, 2004), 61.
[423] Ibid III: 54.
[424] *Guide* I:2

raises implications regarding the role of religion in human happiness. Could observing the Law lead man to theoretical virtue?

In one remark Albalag states that the "internal meaning" of Scripture contains doctrines from which the *ḥakhamim* could benefit in accomplishing happiness.[425] This implies that Scripture plays a role in providing people with the knowledge (or part of the knowledge) required for intellectual perfection. However, this role is tied, first and foremost, to the ability to discover the secrets of Scripture. Ironically, as Guttmann notes, the internal meaning of the Torah cannot be arrived at without first learning the truth from demonstration. [426] Assumingly, one can then engage with philosophical interpretation of Scripture and discover its internal meaning. But this means that, in reality, the Torah does not add to our knowledge and that philosophy constitutes the primary source of truth. More ironical is the fact that, Albalag, as discussed in chapter one, exhibits skepticism about the possibility of arriving at the meaning of the internal layer of Scripture, especially the prophetic layer which, as Albalag affirms, is completely inaccessible to non-prophets. Yet even with respect to the philosophical layer of scripture, Albalag is not entirely positive. In one context, he shows ambivalence regarding the philosophical interpretation of Scripture, stating that when a given verse appears to be in concord with a demonstrative doctrine, we cannot be certain that that doctrine represents the true meaning of the verse or not. Accordingly, interpreting the Torah in terms of philosophy does not lead to certainty, the chief condition for the knowledge required for intellectual perfection. These considerations fly in the face of Albalag's brief remark regarding the intellectual benefit that Scripture provides for the *ḥakhamim.*

[425] *Tiqqun*, Introduction, p. 4
[426] Guttmann, "Mishnato Shel Isaac Albalag."

Nor does the literal meaning of Scripture qualify for fulfilling the epistemological requirement for intellectual perfection. Albalag expresses his view clearly regarding the style of the Torah and its suitability for the masses. The Torah relies on rhetorical statements, imaginative representations, and similes that have the capacity to "instill in the minds" of the vulgar the doctrines they are capable of apprehending.[427] To accommodate with the intellectual deficiency of the vulgar, the Torah imparts doctrines in a "cunningness" (*he'rimah*) style.[428]In pointing out the suitability of the Torah for the masses, Albalag does not differ from his predecessors, al-Farabi, Maimonides, and Averroes. All three philosophers considered the rhetorical style and imaginative representations of Scripture to be suitable for the masses that have no capacity to apprehend abstract concepts and demonstrative truth. Al-Farabi, for instance, highlights this aspect of religion.

> Religion…aims simply to instruct the multitude in theoretical and practical matters…in such away as to enable the multitude to understand them by persuasion or imaginative representations, or both. [429]

Yet, a crucial difference between these views of Scripture and the view of Albalag can be highlighted. This difference has to do with Albalag's classification of human beings into two classes according to their respective types of happiness. Albalag holds a radical division of human beings into "philosophers" and "vulgar."[430] In regard to the latter class, Albalag maintains that they are "fools" (*ṭipshīm*) and like "the animals that are deprived of reason" (*ba'alei ḥayim she'inam medabrīm.*)[431] This conception of human

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[427] *Tiqqun*, Introduction, p. 2-3
[428] *Tiqqun*, p. 2. Cf. *Guide* (III:30) and (III:32)
[429] Al-Farabi, *The book of Letters*, *Medieval Islamic Philosophical by Writings*, edited by Muhammad Ali Khalidi, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 1.
[430] *Tiqqun,* p. 2
[431] *Tiqqun*, note. 30, p. 45. Cf. *Guide* (III:51) where Maimonides refers to a low class of beings that are lower than the rank man and a bit higher than apes.

beings allows Albalag to propose a dichotomy between two types of happiness, "the happiness of the philosophers" (*haẓlaḥat ha-ḥakhamīm*) and the "happiness of the multitude" (*haẓlaḥat he-hamon*). It should be noted that Albalag does not propose *grades* of happiness, but different types of happiness. The happiness of the philosophers as opposed to the happiness of the multitude, the former is intellectual whereas the latter is exclusively civic. Albalag couldn't have been clearer in stressing this dichotomy.

> The happiness of the sages consists in their attainment of the virtues necessary for the survival of the intellect (*hasekhel*), whereas the happiness of the multitude consists in their attaining imaginative virtues (*midot ha-medûmot*) and performing the acts that promote hope of reward and fear of punishment so that they may stay away from the habits that corrupt society and destroy social ties.[432]

Underlying this dichotomy is a notorious understanding of the Torah, one that, I believe, sets Albalag apart from his predecessors; I have in mind particularly al-Farabi and Maimonides.[433] In light of their philosophical understanding of religion, both al-Farabi and Maimonides determined a criterion for differentiating between divine and man-made law. As Fraenkel explains, "Divine Law is defined by its goal."[434] This criterion manifests clearly in the *Guide* where Maimonides differentiates between human and divine law, not based on the traditional understanding of the law or religious considerations, but based on their respective purpose. [435] Whereas non-divine legislation, according to Maimonides, pays no attention to the individual's rational faculty, the

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[432] Ibid

[433] The impact of al-Farabi's philosophical and political thought on Maimonides has been scholarly recognized. For a discussion of the shared themes between al-Farabi's and Maimonides' political thought see Lawrence Berman, "The Ideal State and Prophetic Law," in *A Straight Path A Straight Path: Studies in Medieval philosophy and Culture: Essays in Honor of Arthur Hyman,* edited by Eremiah Hackett et. al. (Washington, D.C. : Catholic University of America Press, 1988)

[434] Carlos Fraenkel, *Philosophical Religions From Plato to Spinoza*, 2012, p. 175.

[435] For a discussion of Maimonides' definition of Divine and human law see W. Z. Harvey, "Political Philosophy and *Halakhah* in Maimonides" *Iyyun* Vol. 9 (pp. 198-212) [Hebrew].

primary focus being inculcation of moral virtues and regulations necessary for communal welfare, Divine law pays attention and directs the community to intellectual perfection.

The intellectual consideration of the Torah emerges in the laws and beliefs that it requires, which, according to Maimonides, are conducive to intellectual perfection of man. Maimonides provides a comprehensive discussion of the reasons for the commandments in terms of this understanding of the goal of the Torah. That the Torah's goal does not focus exclusively on the practical domain and that it concerns itself with theoretical virtues is reflected in commands such as to "love the Lord, "[436] which in Maimonides' interpretation, is an injunction for the true worship of God: intellectual worship. To fulfill this injunction, one must have knowledge of all existents and apprehension of God according to his capacity.[437] Indeed, "without knowledge, one cannot truly love and worship God." [438] The Torah, accordingly, calls upon the adherents of the Torah to seek knowledge of all that exists by virtue of which man attains intellectual perfection and truly worship God. Although studying sciences is a necessary tool for realizing the true worship of God, the role of the Torah is primary; the Torah directs the community toward love of God. Even practical actions prescribed by the Torah contribute to this goal:

> The purpose to which I have drawn your attention is the purpose of all the actions prescribed by the law. For it is by all the particulars of the actions and through their repetition that some excellent men obtain such training that they achieve human perfection, so that they fear, and are in dread and in awe of, God, may He be exalted, and know who it is that is with them and as a result act subsequently as they ought to….the fact that this end is achieved through actions, you can learn from dictum in this verse: if thou wilt not take care to observe. For it has already been made clear that this refers to actions prescribed by commandments and prohibitions.[439]

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[436] Deuteronomy 6:5
[437] Eight Chapters, *The Ethical Writing of Maimonides*, translated by Charles butterwort (New York: Dover, 1975), 78.
[438] David Hartman, *Maimonides: Torah and Philosophic Quest* (Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society, 2009), 189.
[439] *Guide* (III:55)

As we turn to Albalag it is striking that he reverses the elements that Maimonides uses to determine the supremacy of the Torah. In a passage that anticipates Spinoza, Albalag maintains that "the purpose of the Torah" (*takhlit kavanat ha-Torah*) is happiness of the masses,"[440] which, as the former passage informs, is confined to social wellbeing. This purpose of the Torah is tied to promoting "the fear of punishment and hope of reward"[441] and developing "imaginative virtue."[442] What exactly Albalag means by imaginative virtue is not specified, but it is obvious that it is does not belong to the species of true happiness, and, as Albalag states, it depends primarily on "authority" (*shemu'a*) rather than learning.[443] In one remark, however, Albalag refers to the Torah's role in "teaching" the masses *some* of "the true doctrines" that contribute to social wellbeing.[444]

Whether the Torah accomplishes its social function pedagogically or authoritatively, it is clear that a substantial component of the Torah aims to promoting "fear of punishment" (*yir'at ha'onesh*) and "hope for reward" (*tiqvat ha-sakahr*). Albalag enumerates the following four principles, which, in his view, constitute the "foundational principles of the Torah" (*'iqari*), and which serve to promote fear and hope: 1) the existence of reward (*sakhar*) and punishment (*'onesh*), 2) the survival of the soul (*nefesh*) after death, 3) the existence of a Lord (*'adon*) that rewards and punishes,[445] and 4) the

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[440] *Tiqqun*, p. 2. Spinoza relates faith and philosophy to two different domains: "For the aim of philosophy is nothing but truth, but the aim of faith, as we have abundantly demonstrated, is simply obedience and piety." *Theological-Political Treatise*, edited by Jonathan Israel (Cambridge; New York : Cambridge University Press, 2007), 184.
[441] Ibid
[442] Ibid
[443] We may link this to Maimonides' description of the imaginative happiness which is associated with knowledge of God based on authority and traditional sorties. Only when one apprehends God by way of speculation does he or she knows the true happiness. See *Guide* III:23
[444] *Tiqqun*, p, 2
[445] See *TT*, p. 360. Averroes emphasizes that a philosopher who openly mocks the doctrine of reward and punishment is liable to the penalty of unbelief.

existence of divine providence that watches over human beings, each according to his deeds (*ke- darkho.*)[446]

Although the political purpose of these principles, as noted by Touati, is so evident,[447] Albalag states that they are foundational to philosophy as well. One is propelled to ask whether Albalag's statement is sincere or apologetic, specially given that it appears in a context where Albalag responds to the widespread charge that the philosophers advocates doctrines that "destroy" (*horsim*) the Torah. I am specifically concerned with the doctrine of divine providence which, in view of these four principles, appears to be related to individuals. Such a conception of divine providence, of course, clashes with the core metaphysical premises of the *Tiqqun*. In addition to the fact that Albalag provides no evidence for or even make a claim regarding individual-based providence, he explicitly advocates a species-based conception of divine providence. Ironically, Albalag points to this conception of divine providence right before stating the four principles. In another place, Albalag affirms the Aristotelian premise that "the superior does not exist for the sake of the inferior,"[448] and explains that divine providence, which consists exclusively in providing the means for the permanence of the existence of the species, is implemented by way of secondary intention, concomitantly with the spheres' motion. In this respect, there is no room for arguing for individual-based providence. Moreover, a doctrine of individual-based providence implies that God knows the particulars of his creation, a view which, as we will be seen in the chapter four, clashes with the Aristotelian conception of divine perfection to which Albalag subscribes. No wonder, then, that the sincerity of Albalag was questioned by Jewish thinkers such as

[446] *Tiqqun*, p. 2
[447] Ch. Touati, "Vérité Philosophique Et Vérité Prophétique Chez Isaac Albalag"
[448] *Tiqqun*, note. 62, p. 88

Shemtov ben Shemtov who recognized the discrepancy between these principles and Albalag's philosophical commitments. He thus raises a harsh critique against Albalag and accuses him of unbelief.[449]

Yet, even if we assume that these four principles are actually rooted in philosophical truth, Albalag's view of the purpose of the Torah is problematic. By drawing a dichotomy between the happiness of the masses and the happiness of the philosophers, associating the Torah exclusively with the former, and by emphasizing the strategy of promoting fear and hope, Albalag raises a conception of the Torah that blatantly disregards the criterion for divine law determined by Maimonides. Albalag indirectly leads the reader to the conclusion that the Torah is more or less a political book.

Another way of interpreting Albalag's view on the purpose of the Torah is to assume that Albalag did not mean the distinction between the happiness of the philosophers and the happiness of the multitude in a dichotomous sense, but in the sense of gradation. In examining the political thought of Medieval philosophers, Fraenkel argues that "the simplistic opposition between philosophers and non-philosophers"[450] and their happiness that the philosophers sometimes employ indicates "the first and last levels of the spectrum" of human perfection.[451] The philosophers, accordingly, understand human perfection in terms of gradation and recognize the value of the Law in directing human beings toward the ultimate goal of man and providing the primary rational needs for this goal. Although it could be suggested that Albalag meant the dichotomy between the happiness of the philosophers and the happiness of non-philosophers in this sense, his emphasis on the Torah's role in promoting fear and hope eventually sets his view of

[449]Shemtov ben Shemtov, *Sefer ha Emunot*, I:1
[450] Carlos Fraenkel, "Theocracy and Autonomy in Medieval Islamic and Jewish Philosophy," *Political Theory*, 2010; SAGE Publications, 38(3) pp. 340-336.
[451] Ibid

religion at a clear variance with the Maimonidean-Averroist view, according to which one's motivation for serving God should not be fear of punishment or hope for reward, but love, specifically intellectual love. [452]

Conclusion

In this chapter I have examined the political thought of Albalag as consisting of his view of the nature and qualifications of the political leader and definition of human happiness and the means for accomplishing it.

We have seen that Albalag, drawing upon Avicenna's teleological proof of prophecy, associates the continuity of the human species with Divine providence which provides the species with the natural needs necessary for its permanence. Among these needs are man's rational faculty and political nature, but most important of all is the statesman or the leader who brings about proper political order by enacting law that aims at unifying people in creed and praxis. A proper political framework is a necessary condition, not only for social welfare, but also for the continuity of the human species. Therefore, the existence of a righteous leader, just like the political nature of man, is part of the eternal divine providence that supplies each species with the necessary means for its survival. We have noted that Albalag does not link prophets to this political idea, and suggested that the naturalistic notion of divine providence underlying this idea does not permit speaking of supernatural prophets. Albalag omits the idea of prophecy in a context where he would be most expected to stress it, which leaves open the possibility that the ideal political leader is not necessarily a prophet, and promotes more mysteries regarding the true reality of the class of individuals referred to as "prophets."

[452] See Carlos Fraenkel for the reference to Averroes' criticism of the members of the religious community who emphasizes fear of punishment and desire for reward; Ibid, p. 356.

Albalag accommodates the Torah into the political theme of the *Tiqqun*, presenting it as a paradigmatic model of a law that aims at social wellbeing. The Torah accomplishes this aim by unifying people in creed and praxis. But, can the Torah unify philosophers and non-philosophers? On the social and political levels this might be possible. With respect to theoretical issues, this is not possible. Albalag's dichotomy between the happiness of the philosophers and the happiness of the multitude, which he associates with philosophy and the Torah respectively, offers the most explicit attestation to the confinement of the Torah to the socio-political domain and its limited utility to the philosopher.

Part 2: Questions in Physics and Metaphysics

Conception of God

The present chapter will offer a comprehensive examination of the conception of God in the *Tiqqun.* I shall argue that Albalag's analyses of different aspects of the conception of God involve a tension between dogmatism and skepticism. On the one hand, he attempts to enhance the Aristotelian ideas of the Unmoved Mover and divine perfection. On the other, he advocates a skeptical stance regarding the possibility of knowing the *quiddity* of God's attributes, which means that nothing about the *what* and *how* of God's attributes can be known by rational investigation. Despite that, Albalag does not seek to resolve the tension by appealing to the authority of Scripture or by advocating the double truth doctrine. On the whole, Albalag remains faithful to philosophy, particularly as represented in what he believes to be correct Aristotelianism, despite admitting the limitation of human reason with respect to metaphysical knowledge.

Themes under Discussion

The discussion of the conception of God in the *Tiquun* is extensive. Almost all the questions regarding God that preoccupied contemporary Jewish philosophers and theologians are touched upon.[453] Although Albalag's discussion proceed in the form of commentarial notes based on book II of the *Maqāṣid*, the *Tiqqun* overall is not wholly confined to the scheme of the *Maqāṣid*. Sometimes Albalag overlooks parts of al-Ghazali's discussions and swerves to issues that have no basis in the text. Let me briefly sketch the scheme of book II in the *Maqāṣid* and map out the interplay between its ideas and those of the *Tiqqun.*

[453] G. Vajda. *Averroïste juif, traducteur et annotateur daḷ-Ghazâlî*, p. 23.

The *Maqāṣid al-Falāsifa* consists of three parts: logic, physics, and metaphysics. Due to the significance of the science metaphysics, Al-Ghazali devotes considerable attention to it and deviates from the regular order of the contemporary philosophic treatises. Instead of locating metaphysics at the end, he locates it second after logic. Al-Ghazali, as he states in the prologue to the treatise, found it convenient to prioritize metaphysics in focus and place because of its "contentiousness" and "significance."[454]

The metaphysics of the *Maqāṣid* consists of two prologues and five articles. The prologues provide a classification of the sciences and determine their subject matter.[455] The five articles all pertain to the conception of God in one way or another. They are arranged as follow: 1) on the division of being and its rules, 2) on the cause of existence, which is God, 3) on God's attributes, 4) on His actions and the relation of existents to Him, and 5) the way existents proceed from God.

Albalag's notes on these articles vary in length and profundity. Regarding the first article, Albalag engages critically with al-Ghazali's reformulation of Avicenna's proof of God's existence and its underlying ontology. He does so in separate places, instead of following the thematic order of the *Maqāṣid*. The issue of causality, in particular divine causality, the subject of the second and fifth articles, is also examined in separate places, where Albalag usually digresses to discuss other topics. The themes of the second and third articles, God's attributes and actions in relation to the universe, are pivotal to the

[454] *Maqāṣid*, p. 61. Ranking sciences in terms of significance was common among medieval philosophers. In line with Aristotle (*Metaphysics* VI, 1026a, 23) philosophers, considered metaphysics to be superior to other sciences. The order of their arrangement in a given treatise would go either from highest to lowest or lowest to highest, which would occasionally result in switching the regular order of logic, physics, and metaphysics; see H. Wolfson for further discussion; "the Classification of Sciences in Medieval Jewish Philosophy," *Studies in History of Philosophy and Religion*, 1973, 515.

[455] Al-Ghazali classifies philosophical sciences into theoretical and practical. The former includes physics, mathematics, and metaphysics, each of which is divided into many branches. The latter includes three sciences that deal with social behavior, management of the household, and ethics. The ground for Al-Ghazali's classification is Aristotle. According to H. Wolfson, this classification was introduced to Arab philosophy through the translation of John Philoponus' commentary on Prophyry's *Isagoge* and became the basis for different schemes of classification of sciences in Medieval Jewish and Islamic philosophy.

Tiqqun. Of the many themes discussed in these two articles, Albalag focuses most on the issues of God's will and knowledge.

My examination of Albalag's conception of God centers on the aforementioned themes. The present chapter is structured as follows: section one reviews different methods of proving the existence of God and elucidates the theological implications associated with some of these methods. Section two reconstructs Albalag's answer to the question of the relation of the Prime Mover to God. Section three analyzes Albalag's understanding of the concept of divine knowledge. Section four focuses on divine will.

1. Proofs of God's Existence: Methods and Implications

Proofs of God's existence in the medieval discourse proceeded from either the eternity or the Creation premise. For this reason, philosophers were accustomed to determining their position with regard the question of the age of the world before formulating a proof.[456] Yet the decision to proceed from Creation or eternity involved other considerations besides one's conviction of the truth of either premise. As Davidson explains, the conception of God that a given philosophical or theological system sought to emphasize contributed significantly to that decision. This is because each of the two premises entailed fundamental implications for the conception of God and therefore their respective proofs would ultimately arrive at different conceptions of the deity. [457]

The tension between the two doctrines, Creation versus eternity, and their respective implications for the conception of God, is well reflected in al-Ghazali's critique

[456] H. Davidson, p. 2
[457] Ibid. Cf. H. Wolfson, "Notes on Proofs of the Existence of God in Jewish Philosophy," *Studies in History of Philosophy and Religion*, 1973, 569.

of the philosophers in *Tahāfut al-Falāsifa*.[458] Al-Ghazali conceived of God as the Maker of the universe in the sense of being a voluntary agent that acts freely and has knowledge of what He wills.[459] When speaking of God as the "maker" (*fā'il*) of the universe, al-Ghazali has a specific meaning in mind: bringing into existence "after non-being."[460] Obviously, this understanding of the deity cannot be discerned in the framework of Aristotelian metaphysics. For this reason, al-Ghazali challenges the philosophers' claim for proving the existence of a "Maker" (*ṣāni'*) of the world. [461] In some occasions, he goes so far as to accuse the philosophers of falling short of proving the existence of God altogether. [462]

The tendency to emphasize a specific conception of God was not always the primary factor in determining the premise for proving the existence of God. Some philosophers proceeded from methodological considerations.[463] Maimonides' procedure for proving God's existence represents this tendency—although Maimonides notably emphasizes the incompatibility of the eternity premise and the doctrine of divine will and admits that the Creation premise is more logically possible than the eternity one.[464] Despite that, Maimonides offers four proofs for the existence of God, all of which proceed from the premise that "time and movement are eternal, perpetual and existing *in actu*."[465] Indeed, Maimonides' choosing of the eternity doctrine for proving the existence of God is

[458] The *Tahāfut* contains twenty discussions, each of which is devoted to a particular philosophical doctrine. Of these twenty, ten discussions are wholly devoted to different aspects of the conception of God. The remainder also contains examination of elements pertaining to the conception of God.
[459] Frank Griffel, *Al-Ghazali's Philosophical Theology* (Oxford ; New York : Oxford University Press, 2009), 153.
[460] Ibid, p. 145
[461] Ibid, Fourth Discussion, p. 79
[462] *Tahāfut*, p. 83. The conception of volitional agency was also central to the *Asharites'* proofs of God's existence; see for instance, Abu Al-Hasan al-Ashari, *Kitab al-Luma',* edited by Hamudah Gurabah, 1955, pp. 17-30.
[463] For instance, Ibn Tufayl, Maimonides, and Thomas Aquinas followed this approach. See references in H. Davidson, *Proofs for Eternity, Creation and Existence in Medieval Jewish and Islamic Philosophy.* 1987, p. 4.
[464] *Guide* II: 19
[465] Ibid, II:1

confusing, because it raises the assumption that the foundation of religion rests on an unproved premise.[466]

In justifying this procedure, Maimonides explains that his preference of the eternity doctrine stems from a methodological rather than doctrinal concern.[467] His goal, as Harvey explains, is to "protect the Torah from the ridicule of the scientists" who consider the theory of creation absurd.[468]

> Whenever in my books of [jurisprudence], … I start upon establishing the existence of the Deity, I establish it by a discourse that adopts the doctrine of the eternity of the world…. [Because] I wish to establish the existence of God… through a demonstrative method… Thus, we shall not cause the true opinion…to be supported by a foundation that everyone can shake…. while others think it has never been constructed. [469]

In the *Tiqqun*, proofs of God's existence are dealt with in different contexts and for different purposes. In general, when Albalag discusses this subject, he hardly aims to provide a formal proof of his own. In one context he deals with the matter in order to reveal Maimonides' secret adoption of the eternity doctrine. For Albalag, as for many post-Maimonidean philosophers, Maimonides' proof from the eternal motion of spheres raised questions regarding the methodological validity of the proof and Maimonides' doctrinal affinity. Maimonides' faithful commentator, Shem Tov Iben Falaquera, for instance, expresses unease about Maimonides' methodology.

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[466] Some recent scholarship has offered a fresh account of Maimonides' usage of the eternity premise in proving the existence of God. Daniel Davis, for instances, attempts to remove the accusations of inconsistency and the secret subscription to the eternity doctrine, arguing that Maimonides' method of argumentation involves an element of dialect; see Daniel Davis, *Method and Metaphysics in Maimonides Guide for The Perplexed* (Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 43-54.

[467] Ibid

[468] Waren Zev Harvey, "Maimonides First Commandment, Physics, and Doubts" *Hazon Nahum: Studies in Jewish Law, thought, and History*, (New York, NY: Michael Sharf Publication Trust of the Yeshiva University Press Hoboken, NJ : Ktav, 1997).

[469] Quotation is taken from Zev Harvey, "Maimonides First Commandment, Physics, and Doubts," *Hazon Nahum: Studies in Jewish Law, thought, and History*, 1997, p. 153.

> I say that one must ask how something significant like this can be proved on the basis of something doubtful, let alone if it is not true. For if the premises are not true, how can the outcome be true, and how can they produce a demonstration.[470]

For Albalag the issue is different. Maimonides' proof of God's existence in *sefer ha-mada'* is a strong indication that Maimonides secretly adopted the eternity doctrine.

> I wonder why ha-Rav ha-Moreh did not reveal his position on this issue. He follows an esoteric approach; sometimes he hints and even brings *testimonies and evidence* that this—the eternity doctrine—is his conviction as he did in *sefer ha-mada'*. When he wanted to prove that God's power is infinite—a premise from which Maimonides concludes to the existence of God—he based his argument on [the premise which says] that the spheres' rotations existed from eternity.[471]

Apparently, Albalag does not doubt Maimonides' worth as a philosopher. Therefore, it seems unlikely to Albalag that Maimonides would prove the existence of God on a premise he thought was unproved. Alternatively, Albalag suggests that Maimonides' decision to prove God's existence on the basis of the eternity doctrine rests on a strong conviction of its soundness. Saying otherwise, namely that Maimonides doubted the veracity of the eternity premise, implies, that Maimonides carelessly set forth a proof of God's existence that he knew was invalid.[472] This reading explains why Albalag did not object to the methodological basis of Maimonides' proof *per se*, despite its reliance on what Maimonides considered to be an unproved premise. Albalag found it more reasonable to argue that Maimonides secretly accepted the eternity doctrine than faulting the methodology of the proof.

The remainder of Albalag's notes on proofs of God's existence is devoted to Avicenna's proof from the conception of being, particularly for the sake of criticism.

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[470] Shem Tov ben Flaquera, *Moreh ha-Moreah* I:71 (my translation)
[471] *Tiqqun*, note. 30, p. 50.
[472] On this dilemma see Micah Goodman, *The Guide of the Perplexed: A book That Changed Judaism* (Philadelphia, the Jewish Publication society, Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 2015), 183. Goodman sheds light on the problems associated with Maimonides' approach of proving the existence of God. He takes into account the possibility that Maimonides' proofs could not protect the existence of God from doubt.

Albalag deems Avicenna's approach unscientific because it is based on "unsound","[473] and theologically motivated premises, being derived from a specific "understanding of the First Cause."[474] From a philosophical standpoint, Albalag's critique of Avicenna bears some truth. As I explained previously, Aristotle's metaphysics and the eternity doctrine imply outrageous theological implications that elicited the attacks of theologians like al-Ghazali. But these theological implications never evaded the philosophers' attention and therefore they earnestly attempted to bridge the gap between the eternity doctrine and Aristotle's metaphysics, on the one hand, and the conception of God as represented in Scripture, on the other.

The most outrageous implication of the eternity doctrine is that it undermines the idea of the Creator. Avicenna is specially credited for his in-depth attempt to develop a metaphysics that genuinely synthesized the values of the Aristotelian metaphysics and "monotheistic metaphysics," the former with its emphasis on self-sufficiency and necessity and the latter with its emphasis on absolute contingency of existence.[475] The core of the new metaphysics of Avicenna is a proof of the existence of God, "a cosmological[476] argument that combines the *kalam* appeal to contingency with the Aristotelian search for a cause."[477] To be sure, the cause for which Avicenna searched is not Aristotle's cause of motion, but the cause of existence. Avicenna makes this point explicit in his critique of Aristotle's proof from motion, which, in his statement, insufficiently arrives at a First Cause of motion and falls short of proving the existence of

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[473] *Tiqqun*, note. 38, p. 61

[474] Ibid

[475] L. E. Goodman, *Avicenna* (Hoboken: Taylor and Francis, 2013), pp. 63-64.

[476] There is a scholarly disagreement on the proper classification of Avicenna 's proof, whether it should be regarded as a cosmological or an ontological proof; see H. Wolfson, "Notes on Proofs of the Existence of God in Jewish Philosophy," Hebrew Union College Annual v1 (1924): 575-596. p. 561. Cf. H. Davidson, *Proofs of Eternity*, 1987, p. 298

[477] Ibid

a cause of existence. In his commentary on Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, Book XII, Avicenna maintains:

> It is abominable that they, Aristotle and the commentators, reach to the First Truth through movement and through [making Him] the Prime Mover. It is even more abominable that He is made the principle of essences [through this procedure], since they, the philosophers, only proved that He is a Mover, not the origin of existence. How weak it is to make movement the only way to prove the true one who is the origin of all existence.[478]

Responding to this shortcoming, Avicenna proposed to prove the existence of a cause of the universe through a new approach that proceeds from the concept of existence qua existence. This proof relies on a conception of being that divides all existents into two categories: necessary and contingent. On the basis of this division and the axiom maintaining that the contingent can never be self-sufficient, Avicenna establishes that the universe as a whole depends on an efficient cause that itself does not depend on a cause, i.e. "exists necessarily by virtue of its own."[479] In this way, Avicenna's proof bridges the gap between the "self-sufficiency" and "causal productivity" of the conception of divine perfection as respectively held by Aristotle and monotheistic religions.[480] In some real sense, the proof leads to a conception of the deity that is not entirely alien to religion.[481]

Averroes points out the theological underpinning of Avicenna's proof, albeit for the sake of criticism. He regards Avicenna's proof from the concept of being, and specifically the way the latter scrutinizes the meaning of contingency and necessity, as an attempt to harmonize the metaphysics of necessity stipulated by the eternity doctrine with

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[478] Avicenna*, "Commentary on Metaphysics,* Book XII," *Aristotalis 'ind al-'rarab,* edited by Abd El-Rahamn Badawi, 1987, p. 23.
[479] Avicenna, *Illahiyat*, I: 6, pp. 29- 34.
[480] R. Wisnovsy, *Avicenna's Metaphysics in Context*, 2003, 246. Wisnovsky explains that Avicenna's ontology, specifically his conception of *Wujub*, enabled him to maintain God's self-sufficiency, which corresponds to the Aristotelian conception of divine perfection, and causal productivity, two exclusive characterizations that make the deity "above perfection."
[481] L. E Goodman explains that the key goal of Avicenna's proof of God's existence is the quest for an absolute creator, see *Avicenna,* 2013*,* pp. 63-64.

the ideology of absolute contingency intrinsic to the Islamic doctrine of creation *ex nihilo*. The *Mutakalimun's* understanding of the division of being provided Avicenna with the theoretical ground for this combined metaphysics, and for the purportedly genuine metaphysical proof of God's existence: [482]

> The first man to bring into philosophy the proof which al-Ghazali gives here as a philosophical one was Avicenna, who regarded this proof as superior to those given by the ancients since he claimed it to be based on the essence of existence, whereas the older proofs are based on accidents consequent of the First Principle. This proof Avicenna took from the theologians who regarded the dichotomy of existence into possible and necessary as self-evident and assumed that the possible needs an agent and that the world in its totality, being possible, needs a necessary existence. This was a theory of the *Mu'tazilites* before the *Ash'arites*, and it is excellent, and the only flaw in it is their assumption that the world in its totality is possible for this is not self-evident. Avicenna wanted to give a general sense to this statement, and he gave to the possible the meaning of what has a cause, as al-Ghazali relates. And even if this designation can be conceded, it does not affect the division which he had in view. For a primary division of existence into what has a cause and what has no cause is by no means self-evident.[483]

Most of the objections that Averroes raises against Avicenna's ontology are considered in the *Tiqqun*. Albalag does not leave behind any opportunity without criticizing Avicenna's conception of being. His opposition to Avicenna culminates in accusing him of being a primary source of confusion in the field of metaphysics:

> And now you must recognize that all these terms and the like which Avicenna invented, that is, possible in itself and necessary by virtue of another… have caused errors in the field of metaphysics, and have caused it to deviate from its primary path.[484]

For Albalag, Avicenna's proof of the existence of God represents an instance of the deviation of metaphysics from its "primary path." In his critique of the ontological basis of the proof, Albalag expresses a more stringent rejection of the proof than Averroes.

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[482] For a nuanced discussion of Avicenna's adoption and adaptation of the Mutazlilites' concepts of contingency and necessity see R. Wisnovsky, *Avicenna's Metaphysics in Contex*t, 2003, p. 227. Cf. Emil L. Fackenheim, "The Possibility of the Universe in al-Farabi, ibn Sina, and Maimonides" (*Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research*, Vol. 16 (1946 - 1947), pp. 39-70). Cf. Omer Mahir Alper, "Avicenna's Argument for the Existence of God: Was He Really Influenced by the *Mutakalimun*?" *Interpreting Avicenna: Science and Philosophy in Medieval Islam*, Proceedings of the Avicenna Study Group Conference (Brill Academic Publishers, 2004), pp. 129-141.

[483] Averroes, *TT*, Fourth Discussion, p. 163
[484] *Tiqqun*, p. 27

Instead of tracing back its conceptual basis to the *Mu'tazilites,* a viewpoint that Averroes advances while consenting to the proof's premises with some modifications,[485] Albalag dismisses the proof completely as "strange" and "doubtful" and its premises as unsound.

> …. Avicenna deviates from Aristotle's method. His deviation from Aristotle led him to divide being into that which is necessarily existent and that which is possible. [He advanced this division] in order to establish the existence of the Necessary Existent. But this method is strange (*zar*), and its premises are not sound, and thus it involves many doubts.[486]

What Albalag dismisses as "doubtful," and "strange" was deemed meritorious by other philosophers. Avicenna's proof, specifically its metaphysical concepts, gained popularity in the medieval philosophical discourse due to its assumed scientific value and its theological advantage.[487] Maimonides's third proof of God's existence (*Guide* II:1) testifies to this.[488] The proof explains the existence, unity, and incorporeality of God on the basis of the primary premises of Aristotle's physical proof and Avicenna's metaphysical proof. The latter is particularly significant. It represents for Maimonides a "demonstration concerning which there can be no doubt,"[489] and, perhaps, as Stern[490] suggests, "the greatest proof through which one can know the existence of the deity." [491]

Quite relevant to this, Averroes shares with Avicenna the concern that Aristotle's proof of the prime mover is not satisfactory from a religious perspective despite its utter

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[485] Averroes' main objection to Avicenna was that his presentation of the meaning of the classes of being involved some ambiguity. Should this ambiguity be removed, Avicenna's premises as well as the entire argument would be valid; see *TT*, pp. 164, 166

[486] Ibid, p. 14

[487] See H. Davidson, *Proofs of Eternity,* 1987, pp. 385-405. For the significance and influence of Avicenna's proof see R. Wisnovsky, "Avicenna," *The Cambridge Companion to Arabic Philosophy*, 2005, pp. 113-127.

[488] For a detailed discussion of the structure of Maimonides' proof see Davidson *Proofs of Eternity*, 1987, pp.378-385.

[489] *Guide* II:1.

[490] *Guide* I:70. While it is generally agreed that the "greatest proof" refers to Aristotle's proof from motion, Joseph Stern argues that it is not unlikely that Maimonides' reference is to the third proof, the one that proves the existence of the necessarily existent being in virtue of itself." For the former view see, for instance, Carlos Fraenkel, "God's Existence and Attributes," *The Cambridge History of Jewish Philosophy*, 2009, 581. For Stern's view, see his *The Matter and Form*, 2013, pp. 148-159.

[491] The significance of Avicenna's proof to Maimonides is also reflected in his interpretation the Tetragrammaton, which according to Maimonides signifies the necessary existence of the deity in the sense of denying the dependence of His existence on an existence: "He exists without an existence"; see *Guide* I: 61- 63

scientific validity.[492] He thus continued to support Aristotle's proof but also formulated a proof from design. Regarding this proof, Averroes maintains that it accords with "the direct path (*alṣiraṭ al-Musṭaqim*) to which God calls man so that he may acknowledge Him."[493]

The attempts of Avicenna, Maimonides, and Averroes, to compensate the limitations of Aristotle's proof, by either modifying Aristotle's proof or formulating new proofs, testify to the theological difficulties that were in play. As we turn to Albalag, it is striking that religion is almost absent from his consideration. Unlike his predecessors, Albalag never attempts to teach the existence of God in a theologically appealing fashion and. Instead, he continues to uphold to Aristotle's proof from motion, affirming that it is the only cogent proof of God's existence; this is so despite the fact that Albalag admits "there is not demonstrative proof (*mufti*) of God on the basis of nature (*derekh ha teva'*)," including Aristotle's proof.[494]

In light of this one wonders whether Albalag is content with the conclusion of Aristotle's proof. Throughout the treatise Albalag uses multiple terms in reference to the supreme divine being, i.e. God. In addition to conventional religious terminologies like *ha-boreah* and *ha-'eloha*, he uses philosophical terms such as *ha-sibah ha-rishonah* (the First Cause), *ha-sekhel ha-rishon* (the First Intellect). Apparently, these terms are synonymous, referring to God. But what is the relation of God to the prime mover (*ha-meniya' ha-rishon*) known from physics? Can we say that the deity to whom these terms refer is identical with the prime mover or is it another being superior to it?

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[492] Taneli Kokonen, "Averroes and the Teleological Argument," *Religious Studies* 38, 405-428; Cambridge University Press (2002).
[493] Averroes states this view in *Kitab al-Kash*f. Quotation is taken from Taneli Kokonen, "Averroes and the Teleological Argument." *Religious Studies* 38, 405-428; Cambridge University Press (2002)
[494] *Tiqqun*, note. 38, p. 61

This question aims to identify Albalag's position regarding the philosophical debate over the identity of God, i.e. whether God is identical with the Prime Mover, known from Aristotle's proof from motion, or another transcended being. Some philosophers adopted Aristotle's proof but refused to identify God with the Prime Mover. Take for instance Maimonides. Although he uses Aristotle's proof from motion, he emphasizes that the Prime Mover is not itself God,[495] but the primary agent through which God governs the world. The next section investigates the theoretical issues involved in this question and attempts to determine Albalag's position.

2. The Identity of the Prime Mover with God: Physics and Metaphysics in Conflict

Medieval philosophers reveal different answers to the question of the identity of God with the prime mover. While faithfulness to Aristotle spurred some to concede that the Prime Mover is God, others ascertained that God transcends the Prime Mover. [496] Albalag himself in one note displays uncertainty on this question and refrains from stating a conclusive position. His notes on this issue take their departure from different topics. Most important is Avicenna's procedure of proving the existence of God in the science of metaphysics.

The Existence of God: a Problem of Physics

[495] Waren Zev Harvey, "Maimonides First Commandment, Physics, and Doubts," *Hazon Nahum: Studies in Jewish Law, thought, and History*, 1997, 150.

[496] Avicenna represents this approach, also Maimonides *Guide* II*:* 4. On a study on different approaches to this question in Jewish philosophy see Arthur Hyman, "From what is One and Simple Only What is One and Simple Can Come to Be," *Neoplatonism and Jewish Thought*, edited by L. E. Goodman (Albany: State University of New York Press,1992), pp. 111-135.

In chapter ח,[497] which comments on parts of article I, book II of the *Maqāsid*, Albalag engages directly with Avicenna's metaphysical proof, briefly introducing one of its underlying misconceptions, namely the misconception that the existence of God enters in the subject matter of Metaphysics. [498] Albalag's discussion starts with a review of al-Ghazali's classification of sciences in the *Maqāsid*. [499] According to al-Ghazali:

> Regarding the science of metaphysics, its subject matter is the most general thing (*a'am al-'umūr*), which is being in the absolute sense (*al-wujūd al-mutlaq*). This science seeks things that follow (*lawāḥiq*) from existence qua existence insofar as it is a substance, accident, universal, particular, cause, effect, potentiality, or actuality…. This science also includes the investigation of the Cause of existence, the unity of the Cause, His being the Necessary of Existent, His attributes, and the dependence of all existents on Him.[500]

Although al-Ghazali does not mention that proving the existence of God is a topic of metaphysics, Albalag assumes that al-Ghazali would not espouse a position that differs from Avicenna's.[501] He comments:

> From al-Ghazali's statement that the "investigation of the Cause of existence, i.e. God, is included in this science, metaphysics," it is not clear whether he means by this His essence, attributes, and the manner in which He is a cause or also His existence. But from his statement that [metaphysics] also investigates the unity of the cause, His being the Necessary of Existence, and His attributes, it is obvious that he also means His existence. Avicenna, likewise, upholds the view that the existence of God is demonstrated in this science.[502]

Avicenna's thesis that proving the existence of God belongs to metaphysics prompts Albalag's critique. Albalag does provide a detailed refutation of Avicenna, but we can infer what his rationale would consist in from the quotation from Averroes that he

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[497] In the second article of book II of the *Maqāsid,* al-Ghazali briefly reviews Avicenna's proof of God's existence. He starts with the metaphysical concepts on which the proof rests—necessity (*ḍarorah*), contingency (*imkān*), and causality (*sababiyah*)—and then moves to elaborate the twelve characteristics of the Necessary Existent stipulated in the proof. Albalag's notes on al-Ghazali's discussion of Avicenna' proof is not systematic. They hardly follow the order of the *Maqāsid* and appear in diverse contexts.

[498] Determining the proper subject matter of metaphysics was a problem that medieval philosophers occupied themselves with and to which they provided variable solutions; for further discussion of this problem see Demitri Gutas, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition* (Boston: Brill, 2014), pp. 271-288.

[499] Al-Ghazali's classification of sciences follows the standard model of Medieval Aristotelians; see above, note 6.

[500] *Maqāsid*, p. 64

[501] Avicenna's full view is stated in the Metaphysics of the *Shifa,* Book I, Chs, 1-2. For a study on this view see McGinnis, *Avicenna* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 149-163.

[502] *Tiqqun*, p. 15

makes, namely that "metaphysicians have to accept the existence of God from natural philosophy, which is the proper place for proving His existence."[503] Averroes had criticized Avicenna's proof of God's existence for several reasons. One issue that he takes against Avicenna is that proving the existence of God in metaphysics breaks with the basic Aristotelian rule that: "no master of any art can demonstrate the proper principles of his art."[504] Averroes takes this to mean: "it is impossible for any science to demonstrate the existence of its own subject matter." [505] A given science must concede the existence of its own subject "either as something which is self-evident or as something that has been demonstrated in another science."[506] Accordingly, the science of metaphysics cannot prove the existence of its own principles, but they ought to be presupposed or else be demonstrated in another science, whereas metaphysics investigates their states and attributes.

By quoting Averroes, Albalag appears to be faulting Avicenna for missing the point of Aristotle's rule. But this seems inexplicable. Why would Albalag, and of course this applies to Averroes, criticize Avicenna on an approach that he discussed and justified in one of his writings?[507] In justifying his innovative approach, Avicenna, taking into consideration the very rule of Aristotle, explains:

> The existence of God, exalted be His greatness—cannot be admitted as the subject matter of this science; rather, it is [something] sought in it. This is because, if this were not the case, then [God's existence] would have to be either admitted in this science but searched for in another, or else admitted in this science but not searched for in another. Both alternatives are false. For it cannot be sought in another science, since the other sciences are either moral, political, natural, mathematical, or logical. None of the philosophical

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[503] *Tiqqun*, note. 38, p. 61
[504] Averroes, *Long Commentary on Physics* in H. Wolfson "Averroes' Lost Treatise," p. 13. For Aristotle's definition of the subject matter of metaphysics see *Metaphysics* IV 1003a21-22
[505]Ibid, p. 9
[506]Ibid, p. 14
[507] H. Davidson points to this problem in Averroes' critique of Avicenna. He considers this to be a failure on behalf of Averroes which took place due to his unfamiliarity with the entire body of Avicenna's writings. See Davidson, *Proofs for Eternity,*1987, p. 334.

> sciences lies outside this division. There is [absolutely] nothing in them wherein the proof of God—exalted be His greatness—is investigated…it thus remains that the investigation [of God's existence belongs] only to this science.[508]

Regardless of whether Albalag was aware of this argument or not, his objection to Avicenna's procedure of proving the existence of God in Metaphysics seems to dwell on other concerns besides the theoretical issue of the subject matter of metaphysics. Many related passages display Albalag's reservation on the conclusion of the metaphysical proof, specifically, 1) the proof's inability to establish the deity's unity and incorporeality, and 2) the identity of the deity it establishes. With regard to the former, Albalag expresses his view straightforwardly. After examining the twelve characteristics of the Necessary Existent consequent to the metaphysical proof, [509] Albalag concludes that the proof "does not dispel all doubt" about God's unity and incorporeality. Commenting on Al-Ghazali's discussion of Avicenna's explanatory example of how God's incorporeality follows directly from proving His necessary existence Albalag says:

> One may object and say that the composing elements of the ink are the cause of ink because each of the composing parts has actual existence prior to the composition. In this way, their existence is prior to the existence of the ink. But the things whose composing parts do not exist independently, nor could they exist independently, i.e. outside of the compound, such as matter and form in the body…. the parts … are not the cause of the totality and also the totality is not the cause of the parts. Thus [an objection to Avicenna] could be raised as follow: 'it is not completely ruled out that the deity could belong to this type of composite bodies'…however, as we follow the approach of Aristotle in proving this issue, which is based on investigating the mover and what is moved, it will be proved that the deity is not a body altogether, neither a simple nor a composite body. [By this] we will dispel doubts without any doubt.[510]

Regarding the identity of the deity, Albalag is less straightforward. Following his note on the subject matter of Metaphysics, he raises a question on the relation of the prime mover demonstrated in physics to the deity:

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[508] *Ilahiyyat* I, p. 3
[509] *Maqasid al-Falasif*, p. 104
[510] *Tiqqun*, note. 33, p. 53. Albalag's argument is based on the *TT*, Tenth Discussion, p. 253.

> I have been devoted to investigating Aristotle's book of physics for many days and I did not find Aristotle's arguments leading to [anything] except to the existence of a prime mover that is neither a body nor a force in a body, it is not explained whether this prime mover is the deity or anther being.[511]

In chapter one, we examined this note from an epistemological perspective and highlighted its skeptical underpinning. Albalag here seems to suspend judgment on the issue of the identity of God with the Prime Mover on account of the fact that neither the proof from physics nor the one from metaphysics provides a conclusive answer to that issue. Up to this point, Albalag does not attempt to resolve this issue and he leaves open the possibility of the existence of a deity superior to the Prime Mover. The issue is called into question again in another context:

> Ibn Rushd's view is that the Prime Mover of the first sphere is the First Cause. And I say, it is certain that Aristotle concluded to the existence of this Prime Mover in natural science. However, he did not affirm (*lo gazar)* whether this mover is a first cause or an effect of another Unmoved First Cause. In Ibn Sina's view is that the Prime Mover [proved in physics] is the first effect of another unmoved being which he identifies with the deity (*ha-'eloah)*.[512]

Albalag here points to a philosophical debate, one that took place over many generations, on the relationship of the deity to the Prime Mover.[513] Without stating his own position, Albalag compares and contrasts Avicenna's and Averroes's responses to that debate, explaining that the former considered the Prime Mover known from physics to be a first effect of another transcendent mover, whereas the latter affirmed the identity of the Prime Mover with the First Cause. For his part, Albalag explains that the disagreement between Avicenna and Averroes on the identity of the deity results from their adherence to different understandings of the sense in which the deity is a First Cause.

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[511] *Tiqqun*, note. 6, p. 14
[512] Ibid
[513] Avicenna touches upon this debate, for instance in *Ilahiyyat*, 9: 2, p. 316. Averroes also reflects up on it in the *TT,* Third Discussion, pp. 108-9.

> I say, the two philosophers, I mean Ibn Sina and Ibn Rushd, advanced [different proofs of God's existence] due to [their] different views of the First Cause, though they do not state this [fact] explicitly.[514]

Here Albalag suggests that the methodological choices of the two philosophers in proving the existence of God are closely related to their respective doctrinal commitments. Formerly, we saw Albalag inferring Maimonides' commitment to the eternity doctrine from his approach to proving the existence of God. In this context, the reasoning is reversed. Albalag suggests that because Avicenna and Averroes had in mind different conceptions of the deity, they adopted different approaches for proving His existence. With this in mind, Albalag may also be alluding to his own answer to the question regarding the identity of God with the Prime Mover, since he agrees with Averroes on the method. Nonetheless, Albalag is not willing to present a hasty answer. Seeing that physics does not resolve the issue of the identity of the deity, further examination must be pursued in a higher science, i.e. Metaphysics:

> The truth in my view is that metaphysicians must accept the existence of the Prime Mover from the science of physics, not insofar as It is an uncaused First Being, but as a Prime Mover and after that examine if this mover is caused by another unmoved cause as Avicenna believes or itself is a First Cause of all existents as Ibn Rushd believes… Metaphysics is the science that investigates all the attributes (*te'arīm*) related to the existent qua existent, such as its being a cause or an effect, one or multiple, potential or actual, and so on.[515]

This passage informs that, for Albalag, being a "first cause" is the primary specification of the deity. Thus, a resolution of the issue at stake is possible only by proving or disproving the applicability of this specification to the Prime Mover. This task

[514] Ibid
[515] Ibid, note. 38, pp. 61-62

is carried on in the science of metaphysics, which starts where physics leaves off, namely from the existence of a Prime Mover that is "not a body or a force in a body."[516]

Albalag's direct engagement with the question of the relation of the Prime Mover to the deity provides no specific conclusion and raises the assumption that the Prime Mover known from physics may possibly turn out to be an effect of a more transcendent First Cause. But what if this assumption proved to be true; would the conclusion of Metaphysics override that of physics? From an epistemological perspective, Metaphysics does not *demonstrate* the existence of its principles, and hence Metaphysics would hardly provide a higher conclusion than that of physics. If there exists no real epistemological reason for preferring the conclusion of Metaphysics to physics, why does Albalag suggest this futile solution?

To understand Albalag's suggested solution, I consider reading it in light of Averroes's explanation of the aim of Metaphysics. In his commentary on Book Lam, Averroes develops his own understanding, one that goes against the views of ancient commentators, Alexander and Themistius, of the specific aim of physics and Metaphysics. Generally, these commentators tended to reduce the conception of *being qua being,* Aristotle's generic definition of the subject matter of Metaphysics, to eternal substance—the word substance being usually used in the sense of principle or cause.[517] Averroes, however, goes against this tendency, stressing that metaphysics includes all classes of substance.

> Alexander says: since his (Aristotle) aim in this discipline (i.e. metaphysics) is to discuss being qua beings, its principles and cause, for it is evident that wisdom and first philosophy are concerned only with an inquiry into the first principles of the being which

[516] Cf. *Guide* II: I
[517] Charles Genequand, "The Aims of Metaphysics," *Ibn Rushd's Metaphysics: A Translation with Introduction of Ibn Rushd's Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics, Book Lam* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1985), pp. 14-15.

> is substance. I say: we must understand by substance the genus subject to generation and corruption and the eternal substance. For he, Aristotle, has expounded the principles of the sensible substance subject to generation and corruption in book *waw* and *zay*, and they have also been explained in physic. [518]

Here Averroes leaves the borderline between physics and Metaphysics undetermined, a problem that Aristotle's text gave rise to and which commentators attempted to avoid by stressing a fundamental distinction in the two sciences' scope of investigation: Metaphysics investigates the principles of eternal being whereas physics merely "postulates them," being exclusively concerned with "principles of the substance subject to generation and corruption." For his part, Averroes is careful not to deviate from Aristotle. He thus rejects this way of distinguishing the two sciences,[519] and presents an alternative view of the relationship between the two sciences:

> The metaphysician is he who seeks what the principles of substance qua substance are and shows that the separate substance is the principle of natural substance, but in explaining this problem, he (Aristotle) takes over what has been explained in the first book of physics, namely that this is composed of form and matter; as for eternal substance, he takes over what has been explained at the end of the eighth book, namely that the mover of the eternal substance is something free from matter. He also shows in this book that the principle of the first separate substance is also substance, form, and end, and it imparts motion in these two ways together… after that, he begins to explain the principles of the eternal substance and postulates what has been said about it in the physics and examines it is the way proper to this science, for instance its being substance, first form and first end; then he inquires into this immovable substance, whether it is one or many and if they are many then what is the one to which they ascend and what is the hierarchy of this multiplicity in relation to it? So, we must understand what these two sciences have in common.[520]

From this passage, we learn that the relationship between the two sciences is complementary. Physics proves the existence of a moving principle and metaphysics explains its role as an efficient, formal, and final cause. In this manner, Metaphysics can be said to prove the first principles of the sublunary world, including the First Principle.

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[518] Averroes, *Commentary on Book Lam,* 1985, p. 65.
[519] Averroes says: "These words contain obscurity…for natural philosophy explains the existence of the eternal substance at the end of the eighth book physics just as the principles of substances subject to generation and corruption has been explained in this book (Metaphysics), Ibid, p. 73.
[520] Ibid, p. 75

In other words, physics lays the groundwork for Metaphysics by establishing the existence of its principles. As far as the answer to the *that*-question is concerned, physics remains the only source, whereas Metaphysics continues by answering the *what*-question. Neither science transgresses the function of the other, nor do the outcomes of their respective investigation clash.

Most likely, Albalag was aware of Averroes's view of the relationship between physics and metaphysics. With this in mind, his view that Metaphysics serves to settle the issue of the deity's identity stems from the view that the functions of the two sciences are complementary. Both physics and Metaphysics investigate immaterial principles from different perspectives and based on different methods. Whereas physics imparts certain knowledge of *the existence* of immaterial principles, metaphysical investigation leads to knowledge of the states and features of these principles. Based on this understanding, Albalag probably would not have presupposed a distinction in the conclusions of the two sciences. It is unlikely that Metaphysics would arrive at a principle superior to that known from physics, the Prime Mover. What remains is to determine the sense in which the Prime Mover is the "First Cause." This is the main pivot along which Albalag's investigation in Metaphysics revolves.

The Prime Mover: Metaphysical Investigation

To understand the core arguments of Albalag's metaphysical investigation of the Prime Mover, I consider the question of the plurality of the unmoved movers. This question goes back to Aristotle and was discussed by medieval philosophers, for instance,

Avicenna and Averroes, under different subjects of inquiry. [521] Although Albalag does not refer directly to this question, the issues he takes up in the investigation of the Prime Mover are closely related. Therefore, I offer a brief overview of the concerns that gave rise to this question.

At the end of book XII of Metaphysics Aristotle recalls the conclusion he had established in Physics VIII, namely that the perpetual motion of the heavens points to the existence of a mover that is completely unmoved and separate from any material body. [522] Aristotle, then, adds:

> We must not ignore the question whether we have to suppose *one* such substance *or more than one*, and if the latter, how many.[523]

The exact meaning of Aristotle's question has elicited diverse scholarly explanations. [524] Harry Wolfson examines it in light of other passages in Aristotle that raise the question of whether many *first* unmoved movers exist.[525] In his view, when the question of the plurality of movers is raised, the subject which Aristotle intends to explore is not "movers" but "*first"* unmoved movers. Aristotle already pointed to the existence of many immovable movers (i.e. transcendent beings that are separate from the spheres and move their respective spheres, particularly as final causes.) So, when the question is raised in metaphysics Aristotle is particularly concerned with the first mover, that is; the mover of the outermost sphere, and in regard to it he asks whether it is one of the sort or many.

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[521] For Averroes' engagement with this issue See H. Wolfosn, "The Plurality of Immovable Movers in Aristotle, Averroes, And St. Thomas," *Studies in The History of Philosophy and Religion*, 1973, pp.12-18.
[522] *Metaphysics*, XII 1073a1-10
[523] *Metaphysics*, XII, 1073a13-15
[524] For a description of the problem, see David B. Twetten, "Averroes on the Prime Mover in the Physics." Twetten proffers how medieval philosophers, specifically Averroes, reflected upon the problem and attempted to reconcile Aristotle's contradictory statements.
[525] H. Wolfson, "The Plurality of Immovable Movers," p. 3, 7

Although the question regarding the multiplicity of the immovable movers seems to underlie an assumption of multiple universes, Wolfson argues that Aristotle had refuted this assumption in the *De Caelo*, and therefore his answer to the question at hand, most likely, proceeds from the assumption of there being only one world.[526] This means that his inquiry into the first unmoved mover in Metaphysics XII:8 concerns the qualification "first" with respect to the mover of the outermost sphere. This understanding of the subject of Aristotle's question finds support in multiple passages explaining the meaning of "first" and the manner in which the Prime Mover relates to the unmoved movers of the planetary spheres as first.

From Aristotle's explanation in Metaphysics XII it is clear that this qualification, involves certain criteria. Most particularly, "first" entails unity in both species and number. The first in any class, says Aristotle, is "one" in measurement and "simple." Of any class, the first is "always best."[527]

Considering that the immovable movers of the spheres share the characteristic of immovability, there seems to be no advantage of one mover over the other. Still, Aristotle points to a crucial distinction between the Prime Mover and the other movers: the former is absolutely immovable, moving neither essentially nor accidentally, whereas the other movers of the planetary spheres move accidentally by virtue of the circular motion that the mover of the outermost sphere produces in the other spheres. In this manner, the uniqueness of the Prime Mover consists in its absolute immovability, and it is precisely this notion of uniqueness that sets the Prime Mover in a class of its own.[528] In other words, the Prime Mover is one in "number." From this, conclusion follows: the Prime

[526] Ibid, p. 8. For Aristotle's argument see *On the Heavens*, I: 276a23-276b23
[527] Metaphysics XII: 7, 30-36
[528] *Physics* VIII: 259b20-29, 260a15-20

Mover is absolutely simple, since only things that have matter can be numbered and involve composition. The Prime Mover, Aristotle concludes, is "one in number and formula," [529] i.e. species, and he "reserves the qualification 'first' precisely to the Prime Mover."[530]

That Albalag recognized the existence of many unmoved movers is quite evident from his description of separate intellects as transcendent movers that numerically correspond to the number of the celestial spheres. These movers, which are not direct or internal movers of the spheres, as the soul is with respect to the body, produce the particular movements of the spheres by way of final causation—Albalag also states that these movers produce motion by way of efficient and formal causation, but as will be discussed in chapter five these modes of causations apply to the separate movers in a metaphorical way only.[531] Albalag does not deal with the question of the plurality of the unmoved movers under this specific heading.[532] But his discussion of the Prime Mover engages with the key elements of Aristotle's framework of inquiry into the subject. The metaphysical discussion in the *Tiqqun* tends generally to expound the sense in which the mover of the outermost sphere relates to and is differentiated from the unmoved movers of the planetary spheres. It culminates in proving the absolute unity of the Prime Mover. The discussion can be outlined in three progressive steps.

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[529] H. Wolfson, "The Plurality of Immovable Movers," p. 8
[530] Ibid
[531] Albalag proves this in a number of contexts; see for instance pp. 85, 92, 94
[532] Scholars have different views on whether medieval philosophers were aware of the problem of the multiplicity of the unmoved movers. Genequad argues that Averroes' ambiguous language was the cause of a common misunderstanding, namely that Averroes followed Aristotle's view on the multiple unmoved movers, that there exists as many final causes as the numbers of the heavenly motions. He explains, Averroes considered the Prime Mover to be the object of desire "to all the spheres' intellects," thus being the only final cause common to all intellects; see Genequad's notes on *Averroes' Commentary on Book Lam*, p. 41. Harry Wolfson, by contrast, argues that medieval philosophers perceived of the spherical intelligences as final causes. In the context of their attempts to explain how the immaterial world, intelligences, admit multiplicity, philosophers (he refers to Avicenna, Averroes, Maimonides, and Aquinas) indirectly offered variable solutions to that problem; see H. Wolfosn, "The Plurality of Immovable Movers in Aristotle, Averroes, And St. Thomas," pp. 12-18.

I. *The cosmological rank of the mover of the outermost sphere*

Through a process of elimination, Albalag illustrates that the mover of the outermost sphere is the supreme mover of the universe beyond which there exists no movers. This conclusion appears in Albalag's note on al-Ghazali's discussion of the debate over the number of separate intellects.[533]Albalag reviews different viewpoints, evaluating them against two main premises, which he attributes to Aristotle: 1) each spherical motion follows from a particular intellect, 2) "action (i.e. motion) proceeds necessarily from the existence of the intellect, just as light proceeds necessarily from the existence of the sun."[534]

From the first premise, it follows that the number of the intellects corresponds to the types of spherical motions. Astrologers, as Albalag explains, recognized 38 types of motion, which means that the number of separate intellects is 38 "at minimum."[535] Albalag, however, admits, that we cannot determine whether the number of intellects exceeds 38 or not.

The second premise, also attributed to Aristotle, provides further information: since action (i.e. motion) proceeds necessarily from the existence of the intellect, the existence of an intellect from which no specific motion proceeds is impossible. Based on this premise, Albalag considers Avicenna's view of the number of the separate intellects, which follows from the premise maintaining that from the One only what is one proceeds,[536] as implying the existence of an intellect that lies beyond the spheres:

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[533] *Maqasid*, p. 154
[534] *Tiqqun*, note. 68, p. 94
[535] Ibid.
[536] This premise is repeatedly rejected by Albalag. He traces its origin to the logical errors of some ancient pseudo-philosophers; see *Tiqqun*, p. 58. Maimonides' too criticizes this premise, but his purpose was to challenge the idea of

> The number of the separate intellects after the First Principle would be the same as the number of movements… their number would be ten after the First.[537]

Avicenna here refers to the deity, which is also an absolute intellect, as is known from other contexts.[538] Even though all causes of motion ultimately return to the First Principle, its absolute transcendence and unity necessitates that it should not be involved directly in producing motion in the spheres. To avoid impugning the First with multiplicity, Avicenna formulates a theory of emanation which ascribes the multiplicity observed in the universe to the intellects proceeding successively from the first emanative intellect. But this explanation clashes with what "the philosophers said,"[539] namely that the existence of an intellect "that has no effect on the spheres or on what is below them," is impossible. Thus, Avicenna's cosmology seems to involve a philosophic difficulty: postulating the existence of a moving substance that does not impart motion; in other words, its existence is "useless." [540]

Against Avicenna, Albalag cites Averroes, who goes out of his way to prove that "the outermost sphere is nothing but the sphere of the fixed stars, and that the First is its mover, [the one that produces] its daily motion particular to it."[541] All of Albalag's analysis, and specifically his citing of Averroes' against Avicenna, reveals that he doubted the possibility of the existence of an intellect beyond the mover of the outermost sphere.

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causal necessity closely associated with it, see *Guide* (II:22.) For a study on the origin of this principle and its influence on Jewish philosophy see Arthur Hyman, "From What is One and Simple Only What is One and Simple Come to Be" *Neoplatonism and Jewish Thought,* edited by L. E. Goodman (Albany : State University of New York Press,1992)

[537] *Illahyiat*, p. 325

[538] Ibid, 284. "*Wajib al-Wujūd 'aql maḥḍ*" and also p. 291, "*yajib an t'alam 'anahū eza qīl 'aql lil'awali qīla ala alm'ana albasīṭ"*

[539] *Tiqqun*, note. 68, 94

[540] Cf. Averroes, *Commentary on Book Lam*, p, 172.

[541] Ibid

II. *Causal primacy of the Prime Mover*

In one context, Albalag examines al-Ghazali's question regarding the nature of the causal activities of separate intellects, whether they move the spheres as efficient or final causes. Avicenna, as al-Ghazali reports, described two types of movers: final and efficient. The first is one "that moves in the same manner that a lover moves his beloved," and the second is a mover that "moves in the same manner that the soul moves the body."[542] When referring to the motion caused by separate intellects, Avicenna refers to the first form, whereas efficient causality is ascribed to the souls of the spheres, which by virtue of their aspiration to the beauty of the intellect moves the body of the sphere towards the beloved intellect.[543] Albalag objects to Avicenna's twofold explanation of the spherical motion, arguing that attributing souls to the spheres is absurd and alien to Aristotle.[544]

Albalag's objection to this theory has to do with his reservation on relating the movements of the spheres to imperfect faculties such as "the imaginative" and "appetitive faculties" of which the soul is constituted. [545] Alternatively, Albalag posits that the movers of the spheres are separate intellects, which function as final, formal, and efficient causes of motion, all at once.

Knowing that separate intellects, as Albalag states, produce motion in spheres in the same threefold manner, there seems to be no genuine differentia between the intellects. Moreover, recall that Albalag strongly opposes the theory of emanation and

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[542] This is according to al-Ghazali's explanation in the *Maqasid*, p. 150-1. C.f. Avicenna, *Illahiyyat*, IX:2, p 307
[543] Ibid
[544] Albalag here departs from Averroes who endorses the theory of animated spheres. See the third discussion of the *TT,* pp. 111-112. Yet, in his commentary on Book Lam Averroes removes the difference between soul and intellect in the celestial bodies. According to him, the souls of the celestial bodies contain the highest powers of the soul. In them the "desirable is not distinct from the intelligible," p. 149. To avoid any confusion, Albalag found it more adequate to affirm that the spheres have no souls and to deprive them of desire altogether.
[545] *Tiqqun*, p. note 60, p. 86.

Avicenna's view that the intellects relate to each other as causes and effects.[546] How, then, does the intellect of the outermost sphere differ from the rest of the intellects?

According to Albalag, causation within the divine realm is, unlike the empirical realm, simultaneously threefold: final, formal, and efficient.[547] Separate intellects move their respective spheres in this threefold manner. Similarly, although separate intellects are eternal, they are not self-sufficient. They require for their perpetual existence a cause, which carries on the threefold function of efficient, formal, and final causation. The intellect of the outermost sphere, which is completely self-sufficient, plays this role. By providing separate intellects with the knowledge with which their essences materialize, the intellect "moving the outermost sphere" (*meniya' ha galgal ha 'elyyon*) serves as the efficient, formal, and final cause of separate intellects. It is also regarded the efficient, formal, and final cause of all celestial movements upon which existents in the sublunary realm depend. In this respect, the intellect of the outermost sphere deserves to be called the "First Cause" (*'elah rishonh*) of "the entire universe" (*kol ha 'olam*).[548]

III. *Absolute unity of the Prime Mover*

The theory of emanation, whose origin goes back to Plotinus,[549] emphasizes the doctrine of Divine unity: the First Principle is simple in every possible respect, involving no sense of multiplicity. Like his predecessors, Avicenna considers the implications of the cause-effect relationship for divine unity. Because multiplicity of effects corresponds

[546] This problem goes back to Aristotle, as we explained formerly. Averroes examines this problem from several perspectives. In several contexts, he explains that the distinction between the first principle and the separate intellects is a distinction in rank, in the sense of priority and posteriority. See, for instance, *TT*, Fifth Discussion, p. 171-172. In one context, Albalag draws upon the idea of differentiating intellects in the sense of priority and posteriority, but he does not refer specifically to the intellect of the outermost sphere; see *Tiqqun*, p. 66.
[547] Cf. Averroes, *TT*, Third discussion, p. 107.
[548] *Tiqqun*, note 65, p. 92
[549] See A. H. Armstrong, "The One and Intellect," *The Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy,* edited by A. H. Armstrong (London: Cambridge U.P., 1967), pp. 240-241.

to conceptual multiplicity in the mind of the agent, God, being the ultimate cause of the universe, would accordingly involve multiplicity. This difficulty is resolved by the theory of emanation which is rooted in the premise maintaining that "from what is One only what is one proceeds." Thus, from God only one effect emanates. The first emanative effect, which is a simple intellect, does not entail multiplicity in God essence. From the first effect there follows a successive process of emanation in which multiplicity develops progressively. It is due to "the multiplicity of meanings" in the emanative intellects that multiple effects come out.[550]

Based on this schema, Avicenna was compelled to deny the identity of the mover of the outermost sphere with the First Principle, since "from the mover of the first heaven results the heaven itself and the mover of the sphere which follows it, so that it must be non-simple and have a cause prior to it."[551] Although Avicenna's theory has the advantage of explaining how the simple Principle can be the cause of multiplicity, Albalag rejects it on the grounds that it rests on unsound premises; the criterion for soundness, of course, being Aristotle. In fact, the entire system of emanation is dismissed by Albalag as "doubtful."[552]Against Avicenna, Albalag argues, based on Averroes, [553] that from what is simple multiple effects come to be, without impugning its unity. Should this argument be proved to be true, then, there would be no need to posit the existence of

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[550] *Illahiyyat*, p. 331

[551] I quote this explanation from Averroes' *Commentary on Book Lam.* Albalag's critiques of Avicenna display much indebtedness to this text; see p. 172

[552] *Tiqqun*, note. 69, p. 96

[553] Averroes, *TT,* Third Discussion, p. 108. In this context, Albalag refers to two contradictory responses of Averroes to the issue at stake. In the *Epitome to Metaphysics,* Averroes endorses the emanation scheme and refuses to identify the deity with the Prime Mover. In the *TT,* he goes against Avicenna, refuting the emanation scheme and affirming the identity of the Prime Mover with the deity. Albalag endorses Averroes explanation in the *Tahāfut* and draws upon it in refuting Avicenna. For the development of Averroes' position on the relation of the deity with the Prime Mover see Barry Kogan. *Averroes and the Metaphysics of Causation*, 1985, pp. 246-255.

a transcendent intellect beyond the spheres, and the Prime Mover would, no doubt, be the deity. Albalag devotes an entire chapter to account for the unity of the Prime Mover.

His account rests on an analogy between the universe and human beings. This analogy goes back to Aristotle's *Physics* VIII where Aristotle compares celestial spheres with animals. The celestial realm is like an organic body. Despite its diverse motions, it maintains uniformity thanks to the "permanently simple and unvarying" circular motion produced by the Prime Mover.[554] The analogy was well known to medieval philosophers. Both Maimonides and Averroes employed it for different ends.[555] Maimonides, for instance, expands the analogy to substantiate a number of doctrines about the deity and the cosmos, most importantly, the doctrine of divine unity. Albalag uses the analogy for the same purpose.

The analogy in the *Tiqqun* can be summarized thusly: man and the universe are composite, each being composed of numerous parts, which, strictly speaking, can hardly function independently of the whole body. Albalag explains: "the universe is like an individual whose parts do not exist separately."[556] The organs and limbs of the individual function in a uniform and consistent fashion, despite its containment of diverse parts, which in turn operate by and produce different movements. The same is true with regard to the universe, which despite its containment of multiple spheres and these spheres have different movements, perpetuates in a perfect and a uniform manner.

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[554] *Physics* VIII: 6259a-260a18

[555] Maimonides, *Guide* I:72. Averroes, TT, *Third Discussion*, p. 112. Averroes accords the analogy a political meaning. In his view, the celestial realm parallels the organization of a state that operates out of love and obedience to the Commander. Without His command, which consists in the circular motion, the celestial realm would neither pursue their peculiar motions nor preserve harmony.

[556] *Tiqqun*, note 68, p. 95. Albalag draws upon Averroes, *TT*, Third Discussion, p. 108

Such harmony, whether in the universe or the individual human, cannot endure except by virtue of a unifying "principle" (‘*inyan*) that has the capacity to keep the parts united and motivate them to operate in uniformity. By virtue of this thing:

> The universe is called one in the same manner that the human being is called one by virtue of the force (*kôaḥ*) that keeps all the organs together.[557]

With regard to human beings, it is by virtue of the motion of the heart that the being lives as a whole. Correspondingly, the cosmic harmony is a result of the daily circular motion produced by the mover of the outermost sphere. The analogy extends to establish that multiplicity of effects does not necessarily entail multiplicity of causes. Drawing upon Averroes' premise, which Albalag attributes to Aristotle, that "everything whose existence is only effected through a conjunction of the parts receives its existence as a consequence of the conjunction,"[558] Albalag arrives at two conclusions: 1) the principle that brings the multiple parts together deserves to be called the cause, 2) this principle must be an absolute unity, for, Albalag explains, "the agreement (*het'aḥdut*) of many objects on one goal *is not possible except through a thing that is an absolute simplicity*."[559]

Albalag continues to account for the unity of this principle based on the nature of celestial motion. Each spherical movement follows after a particular intellectual representation, which Albalag interchangeably refers to as a "form."[560] The intellect of the first sphere, which produces the circular motion of all spheres, is distinguished from the rest of the moving intellects by its representation being all-encompassing, containing all the forms of existents. Another way to describe this is that this form is a full image of

[557] *Tiqqun*, note. 69, p. 97
[558] *TT,* Third Discussion, p. 108.
[559] *Tiqqun*, note. 69, p. 96
[560] Albalag supports this premise by referring to Aristotle. He offers an explanation of this premise in chapters ס, סא, סח.

the universe. The comprehensiveness of this image does not entail multiplicity; all forms exist in it as a unified and indivisible whole. In fact, this form cannot be said to involve divisibility, because it is the exact image of the universe, whose parts are unified and cannot exist separately. Just as the universe is an indivisible unit, the Form on which its existence depends is indivisible.

> It has been explained that the form of man is not divisible. And it has also been explained that the whole universe is like a man whose form is just like the form of Reuven, for instance. This means that the form of the universe is unified and indivisible. The parts comprising this form, whose conjunction results in the perfection of the universe, are comparable to the organs of the individual man [inasmuch] as they cannot exist outside of the total composition. It follows that in case the form of the universe should cease to exist the parts would also cease to exist. Accordingly, the form of the universe, insofar as it is a unity, results from an agent that is necessarily a unity. This agent does all the parts as one thing; not that each part requires an agent, since they [the parts] are unified by virtue of the unifying Form.[561]

In conclusion, Albalag's ambivalence to explicitly voice his position regarding the identity of the Prime Mover with the deity may be discerned as a cautious attempt to leave open the likelihood of the existence of a creator superior to the Prime Mover, one that might satisfy the characteristics of the traditional conception of God. His metaphysical investigation of the Prime Mover, however, removes this likelihood.[562]

Although the foregoing discussion has shown that the Prime Mover possesses the main specifications for the deity, absolute unity and causal priority, the question remains whether Albalag's attributing of efficient causality to the Prime Mover is credible. For reasons that will become clear in the next chapter, efficient causality applies to the Prime Mover only metaphorically.

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[561] *Tiqqun*, note. 69, p. 97

[562] In his translation of the *Tiqqun*, Vajda mentions that, for Albalag, the Prime Mover remains the Necessary Existent. Although Albalag's analysis leads to the conclusion that the Prime Mover is God, the sense in which Avicenna uses the Necessary Existent term does not accord with Albalag's metaphysics as we explained earlier. To apply this term to the Prime Mover, we must first determine other alternative senses of the term, as Averroes explained in the Third and Tenth Discussions of the *Tahāfut*. However, Albalag never touches upon this issue. See *averroïste juif, traducteur et annotateur daḷ-Ghazâlî*, pp. 32-3.

3. Divine Knowledge

In the preface to the *Tiqqun*, Albalag mentions four principles that, he claims, are foundational to all religious systems and philosophy. One of these principles concerns the doctrine of divine providence. According to Albalag, the deity exercises providence "in proportion to man's deeds,"[563] that is to say, providence is individual-based. Other than the distinction between religion and philosophy with respect to the manners in which they impart the truth about divine providence (i.e. demonstrative versus rhetorical statement), Albalag does not suggest any difference in their understanding of that doctrine.

No doubt, the type of providence Albalag presents raises philosophical implications. To say that God exercises providence in accordance with man's deeds implies that He knows the particulars of His creation. But such view stands at odds with what Aristotle, to whom Albalag repeatedly declares commitment, taught about divine knowledge.[564] For Aristotle the unmoved mover is "the best substance," and hence His knowledge does not include potentiality and change, both of which are features associated with thinking composite objects and acts of thinking in which the act of thought is different from the object of thought. Since nothing is more perfect and free form potentiality than the divine essence, Aristotle maintains that "it must be of itself that the divine thought thinks and its thinking is a thinking on thinking."[565]

This Aristotelian conception of divine transcendence does not allow for speaking of God's knowledge of sublunary events and individuals, and hence the claim regarding individual-based providence is undermined. One must, then, assume that Albalag's

[563] *Tiqqun*, p. 2
[564] *Metaphysics*, Book XII: 9,1074b30-35
[565] Ibid

philosophical understanding of God is different from his open declarations on this matter. The goal of this section is to determine Albalag's theory of divine knowledge. As in almost every metaphysical question, Albalag's position on the issue of divine knowledge is not free from ambiguities and contradictions. His discussion presents views that vary from the affirmation of absolute divine omniscience to the negation of God's knowledge of particulars.[566]

Most of Albalag's notes on the subject come in the form of critical remarks against Avicenna's account of divine knowledge as reported by al-Ghazali.[567] In the *Maqāsid*, al-Ghazali reproduces seven philosophical propositions regarding God's knowledge. The first four account for the compatibility of attributing wisdom to the deity with the doctrine of divine unity. The rest describe the nature, manner, and the object of God's knowledge.[568] In dealing with the issue of divine knowledge, Avicenna took into consideration the incompatibility of attributing knowledge of particulars to God with His absolute simplicity and immateriality. Knowing particulars requires engaging with features associated with matter, such as temporality, and relying on sensory organs, both notions are in conflict with God's immateriality. To this difficulty Avicenna provides his remarkable view that God "knows particulars in a universal way."[569] That is to say,

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[566] Charles Manekin argues that Albalag's positive formulation that God knows everything is a theologically conservative formulation which Albalag states to "mask an epistemic and metaphysical bias against the particular." This bias is a result of the "Aristotelian" definition of genuine knowledge as universal and necessary. Manekin's conclusion implies that Albalag would not mind attributing universal knowledge to God. As will be explained below, Albalag vigorously attacked Avicenna's theory of divine wisdom according to which God knows particulars in a universal way. See Charles Manekin, "Hebrew Philosophy in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries: An Overview," *the History of Jewish Philosophy*, 1997, p. 308.

[567] Al-Ghazali's reports of the philosophers' account of divine knowledge fall in the second article of metaphysics "On the Essence of the Necessary Existent." In this article, al-Ghazali reports and discusses eleven theories regarding the Necessary Existent. Vajda offers a French translation and a discussion of these theories. See George, Vajda. Isaac Albalag: *averroïste juif, traducteur et annotateur daḷ-Ghazâlî,* 1960, pp. 55-90.

[568] Al-Ghazali, *Maqāsid*, p. 112. C.f. Avicenna, *Illahiyyat*, Book 8, Chapter 6, pp. 283-285

[569] Ibid, p. 288. Scholars hold no unanimous interpretation of this statement. Marmuara reads Avicenna's view in the light of his criteria for universal knowledge, concluding that God's universal knowledge of particulars includes the

> The First knows the genus and species of all existents…. Since He knows all genus and species, He knows all contingent events…He knows particulars in a universal way such that [He knows them] in an eternal and everlasting [way] and without change. Not even the tiniest part of an atom… is unknown to Him. He knows its cause in a universal way, for there is no reference to a specific moment or time. He knows it eternally and everlastingly so that not even a weight of an atom escapes His knowledge.[570]

The sincerity of Avicenna's statement regarding God's knowledge of particulars was brought into question by al-Ghazali in *Tahāfut al-Falāsifa*. After examining Avicenna's theory of God's knowledge of particulars and its premises, al-Ghazali contends that, in truth, this theory is tantamount to a denial not only God's knowledge of particulars, but also a denial of divine knowledge altogether.[571]

Albalag too engages critically with Avicenna's theory of divine knowledge. He rejects it completely on account of the fact that it relates God to a type of knowledge that is particular to human beings. Most of Albalag's critique is derived from Averroes' *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut* and *Commentary on Book Lam.*[572] Through several contexts, Albalag undertakes to provide an alternative account of divine omniscience without violating the Aristotelian view regarding the confinement of divine knowledge to self-contemplation.

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celestial world, whereas the world of generation and corruption is excluded; Michael E. Marmura, "Some Aspects of Avicenna's Theory of God's knowledge of Particulars" *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. 82, No. 3 (Jul-Sep. 1962), pp. 299-312. See also Catarina Belo, "Averroes on God's Knowledge of Particulars," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 17:2 (2006) pp.177-199. Belo considers Avicenna's exposition of the issue in the *T'aliqat*, which she thinks, contrary to Marmura, lends credibility to the view regarding God's knowledge of particulars. See also Peter Adamson, "On Knowledge of Particulars," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, New Series, Vol. 105 (2005), pp. 257-278. Adamson reads Avicenna's view in the context of his epistemology, arguing that God knows the essential features of the particulars of each species.

[570] *Maqāsid*, p. 118

[571] Al-Ghazali, *Tahāfut al-Falāsifa*, p. 125.

[572] Averroes' account of God's knowledge is not free from difficulties. This is because his account spans many works that pursue varied objectives and targets different audiences. This can be seen from the glairing gap between the *ḍamimah,* the appendix to the *Decisive Treatise*, on the one hand, and the *Tahāfut* and the *Commentary on Book Lam*, on the other. In the former, he states that the peripatetic philosophers could not have held that the "eternal knowledge" of God does not involve particulars while believing that it is the cause of prophecies. In latter works, he straightforwardly denies that God's eternal knowledge includes universals or particulars. For a discussion of this problem see Charles Manekin, "Maimonides on Divine Knowledge: Moses Narboni's Averroist Reading." *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly*, 2002, Vol. 76, No. S. Pines, "The Arabic Recession of *Parva Naturalia* and the Philosophical Doctrine Concerning Veridical Dreams according to al-Risala al-Manamiyya," *Israel Oriental Studies* 4 (1974): 104–53.

Drawing upon Averroes,[573] Albalag argues that God is a pure immateriality, and hence the only activity that suits His perfection is thinking His own essence. Through this activity, He knows all existents on the ground that His essence encompasses all forms of existents.

Albalag's reasoning to this effect proceeds from three epistemological premises: 1) the knower is the knowledge and the object of knowledge; 2) the essence of the intellect is nothing but the knowledge it perceives, 3) knowledge proper relates exclusively to the essence of the object. Based on these premises, Albalag concludes that the essence of the separate intellect is nothing but the forms of *existents*, for if it does not apprehend existents "the essence of the intellect will be annulled."[574] But since separate intellects do not derive knowledge from things themselves, for otherwise their perfection would be contingent on less noble objects, their knowledge must be derived "from above."

> Since [separate] intellects are many in number, and since the quiddity of each intellect consists of the forms of existents, the forms' intellectual existence varies in species; that is to say, one is finer than the other so that the existence [of the forms] in one intellect [can be] differentiated from its existence in the other…. [The hierarchy of intellects] ascends up to the First intellect [in] which [the forms exist] in the finest and most perfect [mode] of existence… since it is not adequate [to say] that the perfection of [what is] divine is derived from what is below, the apprehension of these—separate—intellects can not be derived directly from existing objects. However, their perfection must be derived from what is above.[575]

Following this, Albalag formulates an argument from the impossibility of infinite regression to prove that separate intellects derive knowledge from a self-sufficient and all-knowing Intellect that knows all existents through apprehending His own essence. This intellect, God, is not ignorant of existents even though He does not apprehend objects outside His essence.

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[573] For a brief overview of the Averroist background of Albalag's theory of Divine knowledge see J. Guttmann, "Mishnato Shel Isaac Albalag"
[574] *Tiqqun*, p. 66
[575] Ibid

> …there [exists] an Intellect [the First Intellect] that is superior to all intellects and that apprehends nothing outside of His essence. Only by virtue of apprehending His own essence He apprehends things *insofar as they are existents* in His essence. This [the totality of forms] is the object perceived by all [separate intellects].[576]

What does Albalag mean by apprehending things "insofar as they are existents"? This statement echoes Averroes' account of divine knowledge in the Commentary *on Book Lam*. According to Averroes, God knows things insofar as "they are existents" through apprehending His own essence, a formula that refers to the simplest "nature" of things. [577] For instance, as Averroes explains, insofar as God knows the nature of the heat of fire, which is the simplest of all things possessing the quality of heat, He knows the heat present in all other objects.

> The truth is…the first is He who knows absolutely the nature of being qua being, which is His essence…. [578]

Building on the idea of divine knowledge as the totality of the forms of all existents, Albalag further advances a theory of causal knowing which suggests that God knows all existents in a stronger sense than merely knowing their natures. This theory, which is derived from Averroes, has two accepts: metaphysical, one that explicates the role of divine knowledge in producing and sustaining existents, and epistemological. According to Albalag, divine knowledge embraces the forms of all existents in such a way as to bring them into intelligible existence, i.e. in the separate intellects, and into material existence, i.e. in the sublunary world.[579] Albalag stresses the link between divine knowledge and causality:

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[576] *Tiqqun*, note. 42, p. 66
[577] J. G. Flynn, "St Thomas and Averroes on The Knowledge of God," *Abr-Nahrain* 8 (1978–79): 19–32.
[578] Averroes, *Commentary on Book Lam*, p. 197.
[579] As we shall see below this does not go without problems, because it implies that God knows forms, which would 1) bring the divine and the human intellects to similarity, and 2) clash with Albalag's firm denial of God's knowledge of universals.

> It is said in regard to the First that His Wisdom is the cause (*sebah*) of the existence of all divine and mundane forms … and that it is the means (*ha kli)* through which everything is made.[580]

To illustrate the idea of God's causal knowledge, Albalag likens the causal relation between God's thought and existents to the causal relation between the thought of craftsman and the material existence of artifacts: all forms exist in the First Intellect in the same manner that the form of a box exists in the mind of a craftsman before he produces it. Both the craftsman and the deity know the objects of their knowledge because they are the causes of the objects.[581]

Here we encounter two difficulties. The first concerns the possibility of the idea of causal knowledge in Albalag's non-emanative scheme. Given Albalag's assertion that forms of existents "*do not* proceed from God but His essence is itself the forms of existents,"[582] it is difficult to see how God's knowledge produces beings. If forms existing in God's essence do not proceed from Him by way of emanation, how do they transit into external ontic existence? In regard to the intelligible existence, say in separate intellects, the gap could be resolved by arguing that what is causal is not God's knowledge *per se* but the separate intellects' apprehension of Him as the final and the formal cause. But this solution falls short of accounting for the material existence of forms—this issue shall be examined in chapter five.

Leaving aside this problem, and also the problem of equating God's essence with the forms of all existents, which provokes an immanent conception of God, as Guttmann notes, Albalag's account of the causal nature of divine knowledge involves an evident

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[580] *Tiqqun*, note. 42, p. 68

[581] The underlying idea of the analogy is rooted in Aristotle's *Metaphysics. Z* 7. 1032b22, where he explains the process of production of artifacts, which starts from the forms existing in the soul of the artesian.

[582] *Tiqqun*, note. 44, p. 71. Albalag here is responding to al-Ghazali's explanation of the manner in which God's causal knowledge functions: "His being omniscient follows form the fact that from Him emanates what makes the emanation of all the details possible. His knowledge is the creative Principle of the details…" *Maqasid*, p. 117

paradox.[583] This paradox arises due to Albalag's appealing to the craftsman analogy while at the same time holding a strict opposition to bringing God into comparison with His creatures. Albalag consistently argues against inferring or illustrating divine matters through analogies with human beings. Such an approach, as he often contends, promotes misconceptions and impious thoughts. One representative of this approach is al-Ghazali whose analogy-based account of Divine knowledge Albalag regards as a source of error.[584]

> From what I have explained, you must have recognized that the inquiries al-Ghazali raises and many other doctrines of the same sort apply to divine knowledge only because he compares and equates it with human knowledge.[585]

Noticeably, Albalag's objection to bringing God to comparison with human beings for the sake of elucidating or inferring doctrines about Him reveals the weakness of his account of God's omniscience. For it is precisely on the basis of an analogy that Albalag explains how God, being the cause of all existents, knows things independently of their concrete existence. True, Maimonides had used this analogy for the same purpose, which also raised critiques on his account of divine knowledge. Post-Maimonidean philosophers such as Gersonides highlighted the discrepancy between Maimonides' "agnosticism" about the nature of divine attributes, as expressed in his negative theology and theory of equivocation, and his reliance on the craftsman analogy in explaining divine knowledge.[586] When Albalag employs this analogy to explain God's causal knowledge, he exposes his account to criticism. Unless we admit that Albalag was not completely

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[583] J. Guttmann, "Mishnato Shel Isaac Albalag"
[584] *Tiqqun*, note. 45, p. 73
[585] *Tiqqun*, note. 44, p. 71
[586] By way of a solution, Gesrsonides states that Maimonides did not intend the analogy to compare divine and human knowledge, but to stress "the great disparity" between them; The Wars of the Lord 3:3, trans. Feldman, 2: 101. Reference is mentioned in Charles Manekin, "Maimonides on Divine Knowledge: Moses Narboni's Averroist Reading," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly,* Vol. 76, No. 1 (2002). For a different interpretation of Maimonides' analogy of the craftsman see David B. Burrel, "Why not Pursue The Analogy of the Artesian and View God's Knowledge as Practical," *Neoplatonism and Jewish Thought*, 1992.

agnostic about the nature of divine knowledge and that he allowed a room for comparing divine and human knowledge, his account of God's casual knowledge loses creditability.

The truth is that Albalag expresses himself as a Maimonidean when it comes to speaking of the limits of human understating of divine attributes. In what follow I examine Albalag's theory of equivocation in relation to Maimonides' theory of divine attributes and highlight its function in his analysis of the issue of divine knowledge.

Theory of Equivocation

For Albalag, the human intellect has limits that it cannot cross. This is a view that can readily be recognized from a number of notes on the limitation of the human intellect, most of which come in the context of the discussion of divine knowledge.[587]When Albalag criticizes al-Ghazali for deriving knowledge about God on the basis of analogy his critique is not simply a matter of disagreement on methodological issues. Rather, it is motivated, first and foremost, by his conviction of the absolute otherness of the deity. The deity shares no features with His creatures, and therefore any comparison between them leads only to misconception. This idea expresses itself clearly throughout the treatise, in particular in Albalag's exposition of the problem of equivocation between human and divine knowledge:

> … it is impossible that we can apprehend Divine knowledge…on this account our sages did not find particular names for these things—God's knowledge and will—and they were compelled to use human language in describing these matters. The equivocation of the name became a primary reason for error and thinking that these matters are the same for God and man.[588]

Albalag here draws a connection between the limitation of language as a means for expressing metaphysical truth and the epistemic limitation of man. Clearly, the former limitation is a natural result of the later. This connection suggests that the signifying an

[587] See Vajda's notes on the impenetrability of divine knowledge according to Albalag. *averroïste juif, traducteur et annotateur daḷ-Ghazâlî*, p. 167, 195.
[588] *Tiqqun*, note. 30, p. 24

object requires knowledge of its essential characteristics, a suggestion that finds support in Aristotle's "theory of signification" according to which "utterances are in the first place signs of the soul." [589] Medieval philosophers understood and expounded the relationship between expressions and objects in light of this Aristotelian theory. For instance, Maimonides explains that what determines the "referent of a speakers' use of linguistic expression is the notion, or mental representation it signifies."[590] In other words, the utterance signifying a given referent must be in accordance with the essence or the particular aspects of the content of the mental representation. Already in the same context, Albalag stresses the centrality of mental representations to knowing the truth of an object and identifies the epistemic implications of this cognitive process. Because forming mental representations of some matters, especially divine matter, is not possible, man cannot possess complete metaphysical knowledge.

Absence of true knowledge of divine matters leads to linguistic implications. This can be recognized in the sages' using improper expressions in describing divine matters. Terminologies such as knowledge and will do not correspond to true notions of God; therefore they do not reflect God's true reality.[591] When they are used in relation to God, one must admit that they are equivocal. The question to follow, of course, is what does Albalag mean by equivocation? Does he mean equivocation in the absolute sense that the two parities to which a given terminology is applied have nothing in common?

Although Albalag's account of divine knowledge owes great deal to Averroes, the skeptical tone characterizing his exposition of the cause of equivocation draws him closer

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[589] *On Interpretation,* I:16a3. Quotation is taken from J. Stern. *The Matter and Form of Maimonides' Guide*, 2013, p. 218.
[590] J. Stern (2013, p. 218)
[591] This view is well represented in Maimonides' definition of the conception of "belief" and in his negative theology *Guide* I:50

to Maimonides. Both Maimonides and Averroes agree that terms such as "knowledge" and "will" are equivocal when predicated of God. Nonetheless, it is almost certain that Maimonides adopts an idea of absolute equivocation. In his exposition of divine attributes, Maimonides stresses the inadequacy of predicating terms particular to mundane beings to the divine. He presents a number of arguments, all of which proceed from his conviction that there is no likeness between God and His creatures. Since God is in no way comparable to his creatures, his attributes must be totally different in kind rather than degree. Thus, the meaning of terms such as "knowledge," "will," and "power" do not apply to God, as they do to human beings. Rather, they have totally different connotations, unknown to us. What is shared is only the naming rather than the meaning.

> Similarly, the terms "knowledge," "power," "will," and "life," as applied to Him, may He be exalted, and to all those possessing knowledge, power, will, and life, are purely equivocal, so that their meaning when they are predicated of Him is in no way like their meaning in other application. Do not deem that they are used amphibiously. For when terms are used amphibiously they are predicated of two things between which there is a likeness in respect of some notion. [592]

In other words, these terms are not informative, constituting more or less an artificial language, which we predicate of God owing to our inability to fathom and subsequently signify the corresponding characteristics in Him. Maimonides' systemic application of the idea of equivocation develops into a full-fledged negative theology, which regards "silence" to be "praise to God." Maimonides' theory of divine attributes has brought about conflicting interpretations, [593] precisely because of the inconsistency arising

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[592] *Guide* I:56. Maimonides explains the difference between univocal, amphibious, and equivocal terms in the *Treatise on Logic*; see *Treatise on Logic,* 1938, p. 59. For a discussion on the distinction between the three terms in Aristotle and their development in Arabic philosophy see H. Wolfson, "The amphibious terms in Aristotle, Arabic Philosophy and Maimonides" in *Studies in the History of Philosophy and Religion,* 1973, p. 22. Also see his "Crescas on The Problem of Divine Attributes," *The Jewish Quarterly Review*, New Series, Vol. 7, No. 1 (Jul., 1916), pp. 1-44

[593] For instance, Alfred L. Ivry maintains that although Maimonides believed that everything ascribed to us is different from everything ascribed to God, he did not say that they are "*totally* different." Alfred L. Ivry, "Providence, Divine Omniscience, and Possibility: The Case of Maimonides," *Divine Omniscience and Omnipotence in Medieval*

from his describing God as "the intellect, the intellectually cognizing subject, and the intellectually cognized object," in the same time advocating negative theology.[594]

In spite of this, it was obvious to post-Maimonidean philosophers that Maimonides' negative theology presented an idea of complete equivocation. Gersonides, for instance, challenges Maimonides' theory of equivocation due to the linguistic and epistemic restrictions it imposes. He raises the objection that if terms such as "knowledge" were completely equivocal, one could not predicate them of God altogether. No less objectionable is the fact that Maimonides speaks of some characteristics of Divine knowledge, such as its unity and identity with God's essence, despite the complete "agnosticism" associated with his theory of equivocation.[595]

Albalag too understood Maimonides as referring to complete equivocation; however, he was much more sympathetic to Maimonides' way of thinking than Gersonides. Without directly referring to Maimonides, Albalag adopts his core argument in favor of the complete equivocation of the term knowledge in relation to God, which can be formulated thus: God's knowledge is identical with His essence. Since God's essence is completely unknown to us, we cannot apprehend His knowledge, and the term "knowledge" applies

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Philosophy, Edited by Tamar Rudavisky (Dordrecht, Holland, 1985), p. 144. Charles Manekin, while admitting that Maimonides intended equivocality in the complete sense, argues that pure equivocation does not rule out any shared meaning as the term applied to man and God. Nonetheless, equivocation rules out a certain type of the meaning, namely that which comes in the answer of the how-question, See Charles Manekin, "Maimonides on Divine Knowledge: Moses Narboni's Averroesit Reading," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly,* Vol. 76, No. 1 (2002). Ehud Z. Benor, by contrast, stresses Maimonides' conception of complete equivocality, arguing that Maimonides' conviction of God as "wholly other," pushed him to deny the possibility of any relation of analogy between the attributes that apply to God and man; see Ehud Z. Benor "Meaning and Reference in Maimonides' Negative Theology," *Harvard Theological Review*, Vol. 88, n3, 1995: pp. 339-360

[594] For example, *Guide* I: 68. Shlomo Pines suggests that Maimonides contrived this contradiction to hide his position; see his introduction to the *Guide* p. xcvii. For an alternative resolution of this problem see Hanah Kasher, "Self-Cognizing Intellect and Negative Attributes in Maimonides" *The Harvard Theological Review*, Vol. 87, No. 4 (Oct. 1994), pp. 461-472.

[595] See Charles Manekin, "Maimonides on Divine Knowledge: Moses Narboni's Averroesit Reading."

equivocally to Him.[596] After a detailed discussion of the distinctiveness of Divine knowledge, Albalag presents this very short version of the argument:

> The truth is that they [divine and human knowledge] are like two opposites (*hefkhim*) in every possible respect, and hence we have no capacity to mentally represent the [attribute of knowledge] of the divine intellect and its characteristics… knowledge is nothing but the knower and therefore the sage answered the inquirer about the essence of God by saying that His knowledge is His being. *This is the reason why we can apprehend nothing of the Divine attributes except their existence.*[597]

Again, Albalag aligns with Maimonides' skeptical motifs. Convinced of the unknowability of divine knowledge, Albalag goes so far as to recommend against seeking knowledge of this divine attribute. Those who cannot restrain the desire for learning about divine knowledge are more susceptible to arrive at falsehood. The more attempts we exert to arrive at the unknowable, the more errors we make—like al-Ghazali who, proceeding from the assumption that God and human beings bear likeness, inferred many wrong doctrines about divine knowledge.[598]

God's knowledge of universals and particulars

A more lucid expression of the idea of equivocation can be found in a number of Albalag's statements that count the many aspects of distinction between divine and human knowledge. These statements share one particular principle: divine knowledge is so unique that it has nothing in common with human knowledge. As one espouses this conviction, he or she will be guarded against accepting false doctrines about divine knowledge.

The distinction between divine and human knowledge is consequent to the distinction between divine and human intellect. Albalag elaborates that the divine intellect

[596] *Guide* III:20
[597] *Tiqqun*, note. 44, p. 71
[598] Ibid, notes 44, p. 73

and human intellect differ with respect to "their essence." [599] This is an abridged way of saying that their essential features and ways of apprehension are distinct,[600] and hence the word "intellect" applies to them equivocally. Being essentially distinctive, human and divine intellects associate with types of knowledge that are "opposite" in their characteristics. [601]

> The apprehension of separate intellects is neither particular nor universal. It does not fall under the domain of tenses. It is not subject to plurality. Moreover, it always exists in a state of actuality and does not transform from potentiality to actuality. All intelligibles exist in the separate intellect simultaneously. This is opposite to the human intellect in which knowledge exists in intervals, because it derives knowledge from individual material objects by the aid of senses and imagination. [602]

In this passage, Albalag responds to many implications of Avicenna's theory of divine knowledge according to which God knows particulars in a universal way. His response is based on the Sixth Discussion in the *Tahāfut* where Averroes refutes Avicenna on two grounds: 1) universal knowledge implies potentiality, whereas God's knowledge is absolute actuality, and 2) universal knowledge, being associated with potentiality, implies multiplicity in the divine essence. It is clear from the emphasis Albalag places on the absolute actuality and unity of divine knowledge that he denies God's knowledge of universals on account of the same considerations raised by Averroes.

In another context, drawing upon Aristotle's view in *Posterior Analytics* regarding the necessity of sense perception for universal knowledge, Albalag offers a reasoned justification for denying God's knowledge of universals.[603] He argues that God does not perceive universals because grasping universal knowledge requires prior apprehension of

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[599] *Tiqqun*, note. 44, p. 71
[600] Ibid, note. 42, p. 67, note. 44, p. 71
[601] *Tiqqun*, note. 42, p. 67
[602] *Tiqqun*, note. 2, p. 6
[603] *Posterior Analytics* I:81b7-10

particular objects directly through sense perception. Therefore, one who lacks sensory faculties has no capacity for universal knowledge. A "blind" person, for instance, cannot apprehend the species of colors because the prerequisite knowledge of individual colors is missing. Because God possesses no sensory faculties, for He is completely detached from matter, Albalag asserts, He does not "apprehend universals in a universal manner [for] this knowledge is a deficiency with respect to Him. [This also applies to] particulars, [for knowing particulars] is a deficiency with respect to Him and impossible for Him (*nemna'*)."[604]

Albalag's assertion is questionable for two reasons. Firstly, this assertion clashes with the doctrine of divine providence which he claims lies at the center of all religious systems and philosophy. A doctrine of individual-based providence cannot be professed unless it is admitted that God knows the particulars of His creatures. But even if we assume that providence is not individual-based and that it pertains only to species, as Albalag indicates in another note, denying universal knowledge from God undermines the ground for this notion of providence.

Secondly, it is unclear why God's knowledge could not have included particulars and universals. The rationale Albalag offers is that knowing particulars and universals requires sense perception whereas God is absolutely immaterial. The example of the blind person is puzzling. If divine intellect bears no likeness to human intellect, why would God need sensory faculties in order to grasp what man perceives through senses? Couldn't His transcendent cognitive capacity allow him access to particular and universal knowledge independently of sense organs? This comes as one example where Albalag could have

[604] *Tiqqun*, note. 44, p. 71

saved his narrative from difficulties by appealing to the doctrine of double truth without paying so much consideration for the rational validity of attributing particular and universal knowledge to God. But, as seen, Albalag is clearly sensitive to the Aristotelian conception of divine perfection and he constantly attempts to stay in line with its norms regardless of the theological implications it raises.

Another question arises from Albalag's account of divine knowledge. In denying universal knowledge, does Albalag intend "universal" to be referring to the *object* or the *manner* of God's knowledge? In other words, does he mean that God is altogether ignorant of universal concepts or that God knows universals in a completely different process? After denying God's knowledge of particulars and universals, Albalag posits that God "does not apprehend universals in a universal way."[605] The denial of the universal could either pertain to the mode, the object, or both. Clearly, the adverbial phrase "in a universal way" makes indicates that the universal mode of knowledge is alien to God altogether. With respect to either the manner or the mode of apprehension, God's knowledge cannot be described as universal. Yet the other alternative, that God does not know universal concepts, is not unlikely. Recall that in demarcating the distinction between human and divine knowledge Albalag states that God's knowledge is different from human knowledge in all respects. They differ in *type* not in rank, which means that the content of human knowledge (i.e. universals and particulars) must be unqualifiedly excluded from the domain of divine knowledge.[606] But if Albalag really denies God's knowledge of universal

[605] Ibid

[606] Drurat points to a similar problem in Averroes. She considers the possibility of Averroes' adoption of a radical view according to which God is ignorant of universals and particulars. In some passages Averroes denies God's association with the *modes* of universal and particular perception rather than denying his knowledge of particular and universal *things*. In other significant passages, however, he alludes to the latter viewpoint. See Therese-Anne Druart, "Averroes on God's Knowledge of Being Qua Being," *Studies in Thomisitc Theology*, edited by Paul Lockey (Houston: Centre for Thomistic Studies, University of St. Thomas, 1996), pp. 175-209.

concepts, and not only the *mode* of universal knowledge—an assumption which is also supported by Albalag's affirmation that God does not apprehend things outside His essence—we would be left with an ambiguity regarding the content of divine knowledge, which, we are told, is the totality of forms, i.e. the universal qualities of species and genera.[607] Unless Albalag has in mind a different understanding of forms, say the ideal platonic Forms, his denial of God's knowledge of universals proves to be self-contradictory.

All these contradictions in Albalag's account of divine knowledge, to which we add the paradox related to the craftsman analogy, raise the assumption that he might have held an esoteric standpoint. Indeed, Albalag offers a remark at the end of his discussion that seems to allude to his secret adherence to Aristotle's theory of divine knowledge, according to which God knows only His own essence. Albalag draws the reader's attention to the fact that his account of divine wisdom is not strictly speaking scientific. Students who are eager to learn the truth are advised to study Aristotle's *Metaphysics* and *De Anima*:

> This is the completion of what I can explain to you regarding divine Wisdom through a rhetorical method and a language that is easy to grasp…. A good many issues about divine Wisdom are examined in Aristotle's *sefer ha nefesh* (Book of the Soul*)*. If you wish to increase knowledge, accustom yourself to learn the wisdom from this book. After that, delve into the book of *Metaphysics.* Examine it vigorously. Be careful in the way you approach things, and progress gradually, bit by bit, for they are very difficult.[608]

Alternatively, we may understand the contradictions in Albalag's account of divine knowledge as a skeptical message, one that aims to show that the nature of divine knowledge is unfathomable, and hence any attempt to understand it would lead to

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[607] I cannot find a reason why Albalag would deviate from this understanding of forms or adopt the Platonic theory of Forms which Aristotle systematically refutes (see; *Metaphysics* I:9). Throughout the treatise Albalag uses the terms form (*ṣorah*) and essence (*mahot*) interchangeably. In defining "form", Albalag recalls Aristotle's differentiation between two senses of existence: 1) existence as referring to the material existence of the object, 2) and existence as referring to the universal characteristics of the object which exists in the intellect. This second type of existence, Albalag says, is the essence or the form according to Aristotle, *Tiqqun*, notes. 2, 18.

[608] *Tiqqun*, note. 42, p. 69

confusion. Although the reference to Aristotle suggests that Albalag secretly held a specific doctrine of divine knowledge, the skeptical notes involved in his narrative cannot be ignored. What is more, after referring to Aristotle, Albalag again admits the unknowability of the quiddity of divine wisdom.

> [Doctrines regarding divine Wisdom] are alien to the material intellect. They are almost completely incomprehensible. When one thinks that he had a grip on them, they escape and fly away like birds.[609]

It follows, then, that the truth about divine wisdom is concealed from mankind. Perhaps, we can learn from Aristotle's theory of divine knowledge that God has knowledge, but the manner and domain of this knowledge remain beyond human reason.

To conclude: in discussing the issue of divine knowledge, Albalag generally aims to refute Avicenna's theory of divine knowledge and provide an alternative account of divine knowledge without surrendering the Aristotelian norms for divine perfection. His effort, however, is constrained due to the limitation of the human intellect. Albalag admits this fact without giving upon rational investigation and without appealing to the authority of Scripture as an alternative or a supplementary source of knowledge. Significantly, the double truth doctrine, which could have provided a resolution to the difficulties of the issue of divine knowledge, has no utility in Albalag's account.

4. Divine Will

The issue of divine will constituted one of the most difficult subjects of inquires for medieval Jewish philosophers because denying or admitting divine will had many implications for basic concepts of Judaism and philosophical convictions

[609] Ibid

respectively.[610]Many fundamental doctrines of the Torah, such as Creation, prophecy, and miracles, assume that God possesses free choice and willfully engages with the world and individuals. But attributing will to God was problematic from the standpoint of Aristotelian philosophy. Because divine perfection consists in stability and immutability,[611] attributing will to God would seem to suggest His being affected by a desire and being transformed into another state where his desire is satisfied, and hence the immutability supposedly characterizing the perfect deity, the unmoved mover, is impaired.

Albalag's treatment of the issue of divine will reflects an inclination to satisfying the standards of the Aristotelian idea of divine perfection without completely undermining the doctrine of divine will. This is evident from his attempt to harmonize two incompatible premises regarding God: His absolute immutability and free choice. I shall argue that Albalag's arguments to this effect serve apologetic rather than scientific goals. In reality, Albalag held divine will to be identical with knowledge, but he attempted to argue for the existence of a voluntary force in God in order to clear the charges raised by al-Ghazali and like-minded thinkers against the philosophers.

Arguments for the volitional nature of Divine Agency

In the *Maqāsid,* al-Ghazali explains the philosophers' strategy for reconciling the idea of divine will with the Aristotelian conception of divine perfection,[612] which consists in reducing divine will to knowledge. The philosophers argue that since God's

[610] M. Halbertal, *Maimonides: Life and Thought* (Princeton, N.J.] : Princeton University Press, 2011), 313.
[611] On the perfection of the First see Aristotle, *Metaphysics* XII: 1072b10-12, 24-29
[612] Al-Ghazali's reports of the philosophers' views on divine will fall in the second article of metaphysics "On the Essence of the Necessary Existent." In this article, al-Ghazali reports and discusses eleven theories regarding the Necessary Existent and presents the conclusion in a separate discussion of Divine attributes. Vajda offers a French translation and a discussion of these theories. See George, Vajda. *Isaac Albalag: averroïste juif, traducteur et annotateur daḷ-Ghazâlî,* 1960, 55-90.

knowledge is the cause of existents, and since existents overflow from Him without compulsion (*dona karāha*), His acts can be said to be volitional. Al-Ghazali explains, "His will (*irādah*) is nothing but His wisdom," which is the ultimate cause of existents.[613]

Although al-Ghazali's narrative in the *Maqāsid* is not particularly polemical, Albalag thought that the *Maqāsid* that goal by laying the ground for the *Tahāfut's* systematic critique of the philosophers. Thus, al-Ghazali, according to Albalag, brought in the *Maqāsid* undemonstrative statements in the name of the philosophers so that he could fulfill "the request of the requester" and refute the philosophers later on in the *Tahāfut*.[614]As it seems to Albalag, al-Ghazali's reports of the philosophers' account of divine attributes serve this goal, and therefore he keeps a close eye on al-Ghazali's contention with the philosophers in the *Tahāfut* and responds to some of his critiques.

With respect to the philosophers' account of divine will, al-Ghazali presents the following critique in the *Tahāfut*:

> God made the universe consequent on His essence, by nature and by necessity, not through will and choice; indeed, the universe is consequent on His essence, as light is on the sun, and just as the sun has no power to check its light, nor fire to repress its producing heat, the first cannot repress its act. Now this kind of occurrence, although it may be called an act, does not imply knowledge at all.[615]

With this critique in mind, Albalag rejects the account of God's will as presented by al-Ghazali in the *Maqāsid*. His main objection is that al-Ghazali's report confuses the philosophers' standpoint on the nature of divine agency, making God appear as a natural agent to whom will is attributed only on the grounds that His acts are not characterized by compulsion (*karāhah*.) This report, Albalag contends, misrepresents the philosophers'

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[613] *Maqāsid*, p. 120. Al-Ghazali seems to be referring to Avicenna, *Ilahiyyat* 8:7, p. 296. According to Avicenna, "if he says [regarding the deity] that He is "Willer," he would only mean that the Necessary Existent's being with His intellectuality—that is the negation of matter from Him—is the principle of the entire order of the good, and that He intellectually apprehends this.

[614] *Tiqqun*, note. 52, p. 78

[615] Al-Ghazali, quoted in Averroes' *TT*, The Eleventh Discussion, p. 263.

view of divine will, for they argue that God's agency forms a unique species in its own right. It is neither a voluntary nor a natural agency. Yet, this conception of divine agency does not entail necessity with respect to God's acts, such that they proceed from Him in the same way that "light proceeds from the sun."[616]

On behalf of the philosophers, Albalag argues that God's acts involve "will" (*ḥefeẓ*), and this can be inferred via an analogy with human will. Albalag's argument goes as follow: it is known that God is a separate intellect and that the human intellect with which man reasons and deliberates is nothing but "a separate material form."[617] If it is agreed that human acts, which are dictated by the material intellect, involve knowledge and volition, then the acts of the separate intellect must involve both knowledge and volition.[618] Albalag then concludes that the philosophers affirm that the world proceeds from God, not by necessity but by free will.[619]

Albalag's reasoning is not clear, but the overall idea seems to be that knowledge alone is insufficient to bring a given act into effect without a determining factor, i.e. will. In order for an act to be performed, the agent must have knowledge of the intended act and free choice to determine whether to do or refrain from doing it. If this is true with respect to human agents, who possess reason, so much more is it the case with divine agents, i.e. God and separate intellects, which are essentially intellects.

For the same goal, Albalag offers what he calls a "demonstration" (*mofet*) on behalf of philosophers. Through this demonstration, Albalag shows that Gazali's claim about the philosophers' conception of divine will is consequent to the misunderstanding that the philosophers identified God's will with His creative knowledge. Albalag argues:

[616] *Tiqqun*, note. 23, p. 24
[617] Ibid
[618] Ibid

It is agreed that God has knowledge, and that His knowledge includes "opposites, (with which he seems to mean what is good as opposed to what is not or what appears to be so.)[620] If so, then there must be a determining principle by which one contrary is chosen and produced, otherwise all contrary acts would have occurred simultaneously for all contrary states of affairs are equally known to Him. This principle is what the philosophers call divine will (*ḥefeẓ*), and it is something "additional" (*nosaf*) to His knowledge.[621]

The Nature of Divine Will

So far, Albalag does not speak in his voice. The aforementioned arguments are all presented on behalf of the philosophers and it is not immediately clear whether Albalag's aim in restating the philosophers' account of divine will is lending them support or only correcting what seemed to him a misrepresentation of the philosophers on al-Ghazali's part. However, the fact that Albalag refers to one of the arguments as a "demonstration" indicates that he approves the philosophers' account of divine will. Moreover, although Albalag does not provide an account of his own of divine will, he maintains in one context that he demonstrated the volitional nature of divine agency elsewhere.[622] That said, we take the two arguments presented by Albalag on behalf of the philosophers to be representing his own reasoning in favor of divine will.

As with many of the metaphysical questions discussed in the *Tiqqun*, Albalag's reasoning involves some difficulties. One difficulty, which is associated with the first

[620] Ibid. Since Albalag is drawing upon Averroes, I determine the meaning of the opposites based on Averroes. In his notes on the *TT*, Van Den Bergh (note 2, p. 148) interprets Averroes in terms of Aristotle's *De Anima* III433a 29 where Aristotle describes the manner in which the appetite distinguish between objects, "what is good and can be brought into being by action" and what appears to be good.
[621] Ibid. This proof can be found also in Averroes, *TT,* The Eleventh Discussion, p. 264.
[622] *Tiqqun*, note. 50, p. 77

argument, consists in a clash between dogmatism and skepticism. Albalag repeatedly emphasizes the unknowability of God's essence and insists that comparing His attributes to human attributes is a primary cause of error. Despite that, he paradoxically follows an analogical approach to prove the volitional nature of divine agency. What is more, the argument Albalag offers surprisingly suggests that the divine intellect and the *material* intellect, rather than the actual one, bear a likeness, sharing a principle by virtue of which they differentiate and choose among objects.

Albalag might have realized the difficulty lurking in this argument and therefore he immediately emphasizes the distinctiveness of God's will. Whereas human will (*ḥefeẓ*) depends on external stimuli, thereby implying imperfection, divine will is self-sufficient. Again, Albalag invokes the idea of equivocation. Attributing will to God is possible provided that one holds that this attribute applies to Him equivocally.[623] In another context, Albalag found it more adequate to deny divine will, saying that God has no will (*in lo ḥefets*). One can only think of God as having a principle ('*inyan*):

> that is particular to Him. This principle represents to God what will represents to us, for this principle is neither natural nor volitional, but a different transcendent type to which we refer in the human language as (*ḥefeẓ)* only by way of a metaphor (*ha'varah*). [624]

This brings us to the second argument, which Albalag deems demonstrative.[625] That Albalag holds a strong conviction of the unknowability of divine attributes is evident throughout the treatise. In his view, the utmost knowledge one can aspire to is the existence of the attributes, whereas we are totally barred from knowing their quiddity.[626]

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[623] *Tiqqun*, note. 23, p. 24.
[624] Ibid, note. 50, p. 77
[625] Albalag appropriates this reasoning from Averroes. However, Averroes does not refer to this reasoning as a demonstration. He only presents it to explain "the sense" in which philosophers attribute will to God; see *TT*, Eleventh Discussion, p. 264. This argument can be traced back to Aristotle's theory of the will in *Metaphysics* 1048a11. As Simon Van Den Bergh points out, the philosophers' reliance on this argument is unjustified.
[626] *Tiqqun*, note. 57, p. 80

Albalag is particularly emphatic on the unknowability of the nature of divine knowledge. Considering this, Albalag's argument for God's possessing a capacity by which He chooses between opposites proves to be fallacious, for it draws a conclusion based on unknown premise, namely that God's knowledge differentiates between contraries. If God's knowledge is unknown in the first place, how can it inform one about that capacity, metaphorically referred to as will, let alone demonstrate it?

Apart from this logical fallacy, the argument alludes to Albalag's indirect engagement with the debate over the issue of creation versus eternity. In the *Tahāfut*, Al-Ghazali raises a number of arguments against the philosophers' view that creation in time is impossible. Some of these arguments relate to the issue of divine will.[627]

One argument derives from the concept of "sufficient reason,"[628] the capability of an agent to make a reasoned preference of one of two identical actions. The philosophers' argument against creation, as al-Ghazali relates, proceeds from the assumption that choice between identical things is impossible. Therefore, claiming that God could have chosen a specific moment for the act of Creation from among identical moments is invalid:

> How will you theologians defend yourselves against the philosophers when they drop this argument, based on the necessity of thought and prove the eternity of the world in this way, saying that times are equivalent so far as the possibility that the Divine will should attach itself to them is concerned, for what differentiates a given time from an earlier or a later time? … we philosophers know by necessity of thought that one thing does not distinguish itself from a similar except through a differentiating principle, for if it would be possible that the world should come into existence, having the possibility of existing and non-existing, and that the side of existence, although it has the same possibility as the side of non-existence, should be differentiated without a differentiating principle. If you answer that the Will of God is the differentiating principle, then one has to inquire what

[627] For a study of al-Ghazali's critique of the philosophers' arguments for the eternity of the world see George Hourani, " The Debate Between al-Ghazali and the philosophers on the age of the Word," *Muslim World* 48: 183-191, pp. 309-14.
[628] Nicholah Rescher, "Choice Without a Preference: The Problem of 'Buridan's Ass," *Scholastic Meditations* (Catholic University of America Press, 2005), 7.

> differentiates the Will, i.e. the reason why it has been differentiated in such or such way.[629]

To undermine the philosophers' arguments against the creation of the world, al-Ghazali contends that choosing between identical objects is not unimaginable. When one is confronted by two identical dates, for instance, it is not impossible to make a reasoned preference of one. [630] Similarly, it is not unreasonable that God possesses a capacity through which He chooses between identical moments for creating the world.

For his part, Averroes points to al-Ghazali's misconception of the philosophers' doctrine of divine will. While theologians believe that all things attach themselves to God in an equivalent manner, the philosophers employed this premise regarding divine will only for the sake of argument. In reality, they deem it false, because choice is always between opposites rather than identical things. "Choice" is "an essential element of the definition of will."[631] The assumption that divine "will" attaches to one of two identical things eliminates the idea of choice altogether, and hence cancels the definition of will. This also applies to divine will. Averroes insists that attributing desire to God is not inadequate, for His desire, besides being not stimulated by external factors, always chooses what is good and leaves out what is bad. Because divine "will" eternally attaches to one choice of *opposites*, what is good, the divine essence remains immutable:

> It is in second way that the Primal Will is related to the existing things, for it chooses for them eternally the better of two opposites, and this essentially and primarily.[632]

This explanation is repeated almost verbatim in the *Tiqqun*: "The way of God's 'will' (*ḥefeẓ)* is that it always attaches to one desire (*raẓon*), and that is what is good of

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[629] Al-Ghazali, quoted in Averroes' *TT*, First Discussion, p. 18
[630] Ibid, p. 19
[631] Marmura, Michael, The *Conflict over the World's Pre-eternity in the Tahāfut of al-Ghazali and Ibn Rushed* (PhD Dissertation, University of Michigan, 1959), 76.
[632] *TT*, p. 22

two opposites." That divine "will" chooses (*boḥer*) between opposites does not entail imperfection in God, "because He eternally chooses (*boḥer*) and desires this [what is good]."[633]

"What is good" in this case, as Albalag explains, is "the order of *m'aseh breshit*."[634] This statement reveals that Albalag's conception of divine will serves to defend his view in the debate over the issue of creation versus eternity. By making connection to "*m'aseh breshit,"* which Albalag takes to be a "possible"[635] metaphor of the doctrine of eternity,[636] he indirectly resolves the incompatibility of that doctrine with the doctrine of divine will. Al-Ghazali's charges that the philosophers were compelled to deny divine will due to their adherence to the eternity doctrine can now be acquitted by redefining divine will as an eternal rather than a renovated will. To say that God possess will is to say that He possesses an immutable determining principle that is eternally attached to one choice: "what is good." Thinking of God as having a dynamic principle functioning in a separate manner that He can effect or prevent events according to His will is entirely false. For determining what is good does not occur instantaneously.

It should be noted that "what is good" (*ha-tov*) does not refer exclusively to the nature of things—even though Albalag takes advantage of the context and asserts that attributing will to God does not cancel causal efficacy or render the natural order subject to change. Albalag's thought points to a metaphysical system that relates causality to the inherent nature of things, i.e. forms and the disposition in matter to receive certain forms.

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[633] *Tiqqun,* note. 23, p. 24

[634] *Tiqqun*, note. 53, p. 78. Albalag seems to borrow the idea of the eternal divine will that implants a fixed order since *maseah brehsit* from *Maimonides' Sehmonah Peraqim*, pp. 399-400.

[635] Albalag exerts some interpretive efforts to reconcile scripture with science. But his efforts end by admitting that the true meaning of scripture is only known to prophets.

[636] Albalag speaks of "eternal creation." As we shall see in chapter five this expression aims to make the eternity doctrine less controversial from a theological perspective, whereas in fact Albalag's theory of eternity is purely Aristotelian.

In relation to God's acts, "what is God," as Albalag elucidates in another context, is tied to determining "existence" (*meẓi'ut*), as opposed to non-existence (*ne'dar*), the "evil" (*ra'*).[637] The function of divine will in bringing things into existence, we learn from Albalag's discussion of the eternity doctrine, consists in producing celestial motion, which is necessary for the occurrence and continuation of generation and corruption in the sublunary world. By virtue of being the ultimate mover of the spheres, God is the Supreme "Agent" (*ha-po'el*).

We return to Albalag's alleged "demonstration" of divine will, whose key premise is that God's knowledge alone is insufficient to determine existence as it is and therefore God must possess an "additional"[638] capacity by virtue of which He preponderates one side of two opposites. We raise the following question: if God's acts, by virtue of which He is called the Agent, are confined to producing celestial motion, what need is there for will? This question takes note of Albalag's theory of motion. According to Albalag, any type of motion follows from either "an imaginative or intellectual representation."[639] Unlike movements produced by animals, celestial spheres, follows exclusively from "intellectual representation.'' Desire and choice play no role in producing celestial motion. Indeed, Albalag repudiates al-Ghazali[640] for assuming that celestial motion follows from "a desire" (*ratson,*)[641] This assumption, Albalag contends, implies that celestial motion follows from imaginative representations, but this cannot be true because

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[637] *Tiqqun*, note. 37, p. 59. This view comes in the context of Albalag's examination of the problem of evil. Although Albalag relates evil to matter and privation, a view that was common in the medieval neo-Platonized thought, he rejects the emanative cosmology that underlies that solution of the problem of evil. For a discussion of this solution of veil see Idit Dobbs-Weinstein, "Matter as Creature and Matter as a Source of Evil: Maimonides and Aquinas," *Neoplatonism and Jewish Thought,* 1992.

[638] *Tiqqun*, note. 23, p. 24

[639] *Tiqqun*, note. 60, p. 86

[640] This part belongs to Albalag's commentary on *Maqasid*, p. 144. In this part, al-Ghazali reports the philosophers' theory of animated spheres.

[641] Albalag's opposition to al-Ghazali is part of his opposition to the triadic emanative scheme of Avicenna which considers the particular motions of the spheres to be produced by the spheres' souls; see *illahiyyat* IX:2 (p. 307)

movements that follow from imaginative representations must come to rest. This cannot be the case of the celestial motion which, it is has been demonstrated, is eternal.

In any event, it is obvious that Albalag's account of divine will responds indirectly to the controversy over creation versus eternity. What Albalag took to be the truth about the eternity of the world necessitated abandoning the traditional conception of divine voluntarism. The alternative, as shown, is a conception of divine will that not only accords with the doctrine of eternity but also supports it. In line with the philosophers, Albalag must have reasoned that the truth about the origin of the world follows from the nature of God. If God's "will," be that what it may, is eternal and unchangeable, its effect, the universe, must be eternal and unalterable.[642]

If my reading is correct, then we can understand why Albalag denies the involvement of "intention" (Arabic: *qaṣd*, Hebrew: '*kavanah*) in God's acts. Having established the concept of eternal divine will, Albalag differentiates, without details, between will and purpose in relation to divine acts. Again, speaking on behalf of the philosophers, he argues that God acts by virtue of will, not by virtue of purpose. Albalag does determine the specific difference between the two terms and only refers to al-Ghazali's report on that issue in the *Maqāṣid.*[643] What does it mean to say that God has purpose?

In a nutshell, attributing intention or purpose to the deity establishes a ground for the creation doctrine. In the *Tahāfut,* al-Ghazali attempted to show that the philosophers' proof of eternity, namely the one relying on the premise that a delay between cause and

[642] This reasoning was common in Medieval philosophy. Davidson sees the proof of the eternity of the world from the premise of the "unchangeability of the cause" as an extension of Aristotle's proof of the eternity of the world from motion; see H. Davidson, *Proofs of Eternity*, p. 57.
[643] See *Maqāṣid*, p. 123.

effect is impossible, is refutable.[644] To this end, he explains the difference between the relationship between natural causes and effects, on the one hand, and between volitional agents and their effects, on the other. The former is necessary, whereas the latter is voluntary. Whereas a delay between the cause and the effect is impossible in the case of natural causes, it is *not* impossible in the case of willful agents, "for the determining factor is not the existence of the agent but the agent's *intention* to realize a particular end."[645] From this perspective, one can argue that the creation of the universe does not require a novel will or entail a change in God, for it is God's intention that actualizes the decree of creation.

Similarly, the idea of divine purpose proves to be useful to Maimonides in his efforts to substantiate the doctrine of creation. Against one proof of the eternity doctrine,[646] Maimonides affirms that "what exists indicates to us of necessity that it exits by virtue of the purpose of the one who purposed."[647] Many phenomena in the universe testify to this, but it is precisely the inexplicable irregularities of the astral motions and positions that solidly account for God's purposeful acts.[648] From this, one can argue that the eternity doctrine is not logically necessary and that the creation doctrine is plausible.

If Albalag's account of divine will, as proposed, responds indirectly to the controversy over the issue of eternity versus creation, then it would seem reasonable that

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[644] Al-Ghazali, *Tahāfut al-Falāsifa*, p. 9-15.
[645] Kenneth Seeskin, *Searching for a Distant God: The legacy of Maimonides* (Cary: Oxford University Press, 2000), 79.
[646] Maimonides argues against the theory of necessity between the cause (God) and the effect (the world).
[647] *Guide* II:19. Cf. *Guide* III: 13 where Maimonides affirms that things with purpose are created through the purpose of an intelligent being. He calls this "the proof of purpose on the part of a binge possessing purpose."
[648] Maimonides' position on the nature of divine will is not consistent in all his works. Charles Manekin argues that Maimonides' earlier works present God's will as an eternal will, which seem to suggest that Maimonides did not mind, or were not fully aware, of the theological implications associated with this conception. In the *Guide*, he adopts a more theologically conservative view, attributing novel will to God. See Charles Manekin, "Divine Will in Maimonides' Later Writings," *Maimonidean Studies,* Vol 5, 2008.

many elements of this account follow from apologetic motivations rather than careful scientific examinations. The paradox of calling the argument for divine will a demonstration, despite the fact that its main premise clearly violates the criteria for demonstration, justifies this conclusion. Indeed, it would not be a mistake to say that Albalag advanced this account of divine will particularly to enhance the eternity doctrine and remove al-Ghazali's charges that the philosophers deprived God of free choice. Otherwise, it is hard to see how Albalag's claim for an "additional" voluntary principle in God reconciles with 1) the doctrine of divine unity, or 2) the doctrine of God's causal knowledge, which sees divine essence as a unified form of all existents, from which their material and intelligible existences come to be.[649] Unless Albalag would argue that divine essence (i.e. knowledge) is subject to the guidance of that additional principle, divine knowledge remains the only determining factor of the nature of all existents.

Conclusion

The aim of this chapter has been to reconstruct Albalag's conception of God based on an analysis of his discussions of three substantial topics: the relationship of God to the Prime Mover, divine wisdom, and divine will. Whereas Albalag provides sufficient reasoning for identifying God with the Prime Mover, he falls short of providing solid evidence for God's knowledge and will. Albalag himself admits that the views he presents regarding divine knowledge, for instance, are not properly scientific and thus he refers the reader to Aristotle's Metaphysics.

Does this mean that Albalag was committed entirely to the Aristotelian conception of God as a self-knowing intellect whose knowledge is confined to its essence?

[649] *Tiqqun*, note. 42, p. 66

The answer is a qualified yes. One should not deny that, along with the Aristotelian conception of God as a self-knowing intellect—a characteristic shared by God and human beings—Albalag offers many crucial remarks regarding God's un-knowability and absolute otherness. [650] Thus, we are left with a dual conception of God, and the tension between them is too pronounced to escape the reader's observation.

For Albalag, however, there seems no contradiction and the two aspects of this conception accord with Aristotle, as Albalag understands him. Regarding the *nature* of God's self-knowing, Albalag expresses agnosticism, the basis for which, as he shows, is Aristotle. Commenting on al-Ghazali's discussion of divine attributes, Albalag approves, with a modification in phrasing, the skeptical dictum with which al-Ghazali concludes the discussion and which he attributes to prophet Muhamed. According to this dictum, as Albalag rephrases it, "only those who can apprehend their incapability of apprehending God are the true knowers (*al-'arifin*.)"[651] Albalag appreciates this dictum, but he interestingly traces it back to Aristotle.[652] When it comes to questioning the quiddity, the *what* and *how,* of God's attributes, Albalag's Aristotle, just like Maimonides, is a skeptic.

Whether Albalag's *actual* conception of God is a superlative self-knowing intellect that knows only itself or an absolute unknown other, it is clear that the double

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[650] The same problem, as pointed out earlier, appears in the *Guide*, which many scholars considered to be a tension between the Aristotelian and the Neo-Platonist conceptions of God. The former is a supreme being enjoying the highest degree of perfection, and the latter is an absolute other sharing nothing of the attributes with His creatures. For this problem in Maimonides see Hanah Kasher, "Self-Cognizing Intellect and Negative Attributes in Maimonides" *The Harvard Theological Review*, Vol. 87, No. 4 (Oct. 1994), pp. 461-472.

[651] *Maqasid*, p. 132

[652] *Tiqqun*, note. 57, p. 80. The notion of the intellectual modesty of Aristotle regarding "obscure matters" seems to be derived from *Guide* II: 19 where Maimonides paraphrases Aristotle's statement in the *De caelo* II:12 291b25-29 in which he uses the expression "according to the capacity of our intellect." According to Kraemer, in this passage, Maimonides establishes the limitation of the human intellect and he provides a new interpretation of Aristotle that suggests the latter's "disavowal of boldness and excessive hast." Maimonides presents Aristotle as one who "strove to achieve correct beliefs to the extent that that object lies within the human capacity." Kraemer, J. L "Maimonides on Aristotle and Scientific Method," *Moses Maimonides and His Time*, edited by E. Ormsby (Washington, DC: Catholic University Press 1989), pp. 60-3.

truth claim plays no role in Albalag's discussion. What is more, Albalag never attempts to appeal to Scripture to compensate for the limitation of philosophy. He remains committed to philosophy, namely Aristotle, despite its limitation.

It remains to emphasize that Albalag's skepticism is confined to metaphysical knowledge, whereas he held confidence in the epistemological foundation of Aristotle's celestial physics. This point is worth emphasizing because the skeptical notes in the *Tiqqun*, which are largely indebted to Maimonides, might suggest that Albalag adopted Maimonides' assessment of this subject. In Maimonides' view, a view which is scholarly debated,[653] what Aristotle said regarding the rotation of spheres is "analogous to guessing and conjecturing," being "simple assertions for which no demonstration has been made."[654] This view is entirely alien to Albalag who, like Averroes, held strong confidence in Aristotle's theories about spheres and celestial motion. This shall become evident from the examination in the following chapter of Albalag's account of celestial motion, an issue which is closely tied up with the controversy over the origin of the world: the main point of contention between philosophy and Scripture that impelled Albalag, as I argued, to ostensibly resort to the double truth claim.

[653] For this debate see Zev Harvey, "Maimonides Critical Epistemology" Aleph: *Historical Studies in Science and Judaism*, Volume 8, 2008, pp. 213-2335.
[654] Ibid

Creation, Eternal Creation, or Eternity?

In his treatment of the issue of the origin of the world, Albalag expressly commits himself to the doctrine of eternity, which he refers to as eternal creation (*ḥidush neẓaḥi*). To this specific topic,[655] Albalag dedicates the lengthiest chapter of the *Tiqqun*, his goal being to defend the eternity doctrine. Despite his vigorous defense of the eternity doctrine, however, Albalag states that the biblical doctrine of creation is "true" (*emet*).[656] Indeed, the statement comes in a context wherein Albalag addresses and admits the contradiction between Scripture and philosophy; hence it hardly permits assuming that, in this specific context, Albalag considers the biblical doctrine to be a metaphorical representation of the eternity doctrine.

After elucidating the manner in which Scripture is the "opposite" (*hefekh*) of philosophy, Albalag considers the issue of eternity versus creation. [657] In his concluding remarks, Albalag admits that both the doctrines of the Torah and philosophy regarding

[655] For a French translation of the whole chapter see Vajda, *averroïste juif, traducteur et annotateur daḷ-Ghazâlî,* pp. 131-169.
[656] *Tiqqun*, note. 30, p. 52
[657] *Tiqqun*, note. 30, p. 44. On the basis of this context, Vajda considers the possibility of Albalag's adopting the double truth doctrine. See *averroïste juif, traducteur et annotateur daḷ-Ghazâlî* p. 167

the origin of the world are true and he accepts them both, the former by way of faith, and the latter by way of demonstration.

In another context, however, Albalag offers a different account of the conflict between religion and philosophy. He explains there that the Torah represents the truth in "a cunning (*he'rimah*) manner,"[658] so as to accommodate with the intellectual deficiency of the masses. A case in point is the account of the beginning of the world, which is a simple formulation of the philosophical doctrine of perpetual creation. [659] Albalag states this view in a context where his aim is clearly apologetic. In defending philosophy and the philosophers against the accusations of unbelief, Albalag attempts to harmonize philosophy with religion. He, thus, denies the existence of any *essential* conflict between them, explaining that their conflict is only apparent, resulting from their employment of different forms in expressing truth. Albalag further maintains that the Torah includes two layers of truth, prophetic and philosophic, which are exclusive to prophets and philosophers, respectively. Apparently, then, philosophers can have access to at least one of the two layers of Scriptural truth.

But that is not the case. In still another passage, Albalag indicates that neither the philosophical nor the prophetic layer of Scripture is accessible to philosophers, for "we cannot arrive at the intention of Scripture "*ha-Torah"* based on our "speculation" (*sevratinu*).[660] While Scripture can be interpreted in terms of philosophical doctrines, it is not guaranteed that such interpretation will accord with the text's true meaning. Thus, after interpreting the creation narrative in terms of the eternity doctrine, Albalag admits

[658] *Tiqqun*, Introduction, p. 2
[659] Ibid, p. 2-3
[660] Ibid, note. 30, p. 44

that "I cannot be certain that the demonstrative doctrine that Scripture bears represents its [Scripture's] true meaning"[661] … "My intention in all what I have explained to you is… to prove that it is possible (*'efshar*) for the Torah to accord with demonstrative doctrines just as it could accord with doctrines opposite [of the demonstrative ones] (*hefkhan*)."[662] This means that the correspondence between a given philosophical doctrine and a verse indicates nothing more than the *possibility* of the Torah's inclusion of that philosophical doctrine. This holds true for the assumed correspondence between the eternity doctrine—or as Albalag calls it eternal creation—and the Scripture's account of the beginning of the world.[663]

Based on these observations, Albalag seems to be trying to convince the reader of the following inconsistent standpoints:

1- Prophetic knowledge is inaccessible to non-prophets (including philosophers).
2- The surface meaning of the account of the world's beginning embodies a true *prophetic* doctrine and thus should be accepted on faith.
3- The eternity doctrine (perpetual creation) is true
4- The surface meaning of the account of the beginning is addressed to the vulgar masses. In fact, it is only a metaphor of the doctrine of perpetual creation.
5- The inner meaning of Scripture accords with the theory of perpetual creation.
6- The inner (philosophical) meaning of the Torah cannot be known *with certainty*.

Only with respect to Scripture does Albalag offer contradictory statements. Despite his repeated emphasis on the limitations of human knowledge, he, unlike Maimonides, deems philosophical investigation sufficiently capable of demonstrating the

[661] Ibid
[662] Ibid
[663] In addition to stating this explicitly (see for instance, note. 30, p. 43-44), Albalag carefully uses a language that indicates probability. For instance, he starts his interpretive remarks by stating "it is possible that our Rabbis meant…" "it is likely that the verse indicates…." Albalag eventually admits that all his interpretive remarks are mere dialectical attempts aiming to prove the multifaceted character of Scripture (p. 44.)

eternity of the world. [664] By referring to the logical tool of demonstration (*mofet*), Albalag indicates that this doctrine cannot be doubted.

The issue is different with respect to Scripture, or to be precise, with respect to our reading of Scripture, which hardly leads to a definitive position. On the one hand, Albalag expresses uncertainty regarding the Scripture's view on the origin of the world; he maintains that its exact meaning cannot be grasped by a philosopher, let alone by a non-philosopher. On the other hand, Albalag offers two mutually exclusive positive remarks: 1) eternal creation, rather than "deficient creation" (*ḥidush garua'*), i.e. creation in time, is one of the "foundations" (*'iqari*) of the Torah that cannot be denied, 2) The surface meaning of Scripture, i.e. Creation in time, is true, based on prophetic authority.[665]

This striking discrepancy underlines a tension between skepticism and dogmatism, the root of which lies in Scripture rather than philosophy, a tension, I believe, deliberately created by Albalag. His goal is not to conceal his commitment to the eternity doctrine, for this is something that he openly declares, but rather to justify and substantiate it. Claiming the unknowability of the exact meaning of Scripture renders the possibility of the Torah's inclusion of the eternity doctrine open, thereby absolving its supporters from the indictment of destroying the principles of the Torah. The dogmatic notes, on the other

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[664] Maimonides discusses the issue of creation versus eternity in Book II 13-14. For different interpretations of Maimonides' position on the issue of eternity versus creation see Shlomo Pines' introduction to *the Guide of the Perplexed.* Zev Harvey, "A Third Approach to Maimonides' Cosmogony Prophetology Puzzle," *The Harvard Theological Review* 1908-2013 (Vol. 1, No. 1 - Vol. 106, No. 4). Herbert Davidson, "Maimonides' Secret Position on Creation," *Studies in Medieval Jewish History and Literature*, edited by Isadore Twersky (Harvard University Press, 1979), pp. 16-40. William Dunphy, "Maimonides' Not so secret Position on Creation." *Moses Maimonides and His Time*, edited by Eric L. Ormsby (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press 1989), pp. 151-72. Lawrence Kaplan, "Maimonides on the Miraculous Element in Prophecy." Sara Klein Braslavy, "Maomonides' Interpretation of the Story of Creation." H. Kreisel, "Maimonides on the Eternity of the World." Kenneth Seeskin, *Maimonides on the Origin of the World* (Cambridge; New York : Cambridge University Press, 2005)

[665] *Tiqqun*, note. 30, p. 51

hand, emphasizes the notion of the eternal existence so strongly that scripture itself becomes the mean of this, while at the same time reinforcing the belief of the masses in the creation of the world for whom the idea of the world's eternal existence appears intolerable.

This chapter builds upon the conclusion I arrived at earlier, that Albalag adopts a single truth theory that deems Aristotelianism synonymous with truth. Regarding the conflict between Scripture and philosophy over the issue of creation versus eternity, it is unlikely that Albalag would hold both doctrines to be true. As discussed, the double-truth doctrine has no firm epistemological ground in the *Tiqqun*. Because in its epistemological scheme truth must be associated with certainty, a condition that can be fulfilled only through the logical tool of demonstration, undemonstrative doctrines are unsatisfactory to Albalag. Not only is the creation doctrine undemonstrative but also it contradicts a demonstrative one: the eternity doctrine. Considering the *Tiqqun's* epistemological premises, when speaking of *the* truth regarding the origin of the world, Albalag has in mind only the possibility that the world existed from eternity.

The chapter will strengthen this conclusion. By highlighting the extent to which Albalag subscribed to Aristotle's naturalism, it will become evident that Albalag could not have admitted the Creation doctrine along with the eternity one. I will examine the details of Albalag's theory of entirety and answer these questions: 1) what does Albalag mean by "perpetual creation" and does his theory rest on a solid scientific justification or is it a mere dialectical explanation of the Aristotelian theory of eternity? 2) When speaking of the universe's eternal existence, does Albalag have in mind the celestial

realm or the universe in its final shape? 3) How does divine agency contribute to the existence of the celestial and the physical realms? 4) What role, if any, does the emanation theory play in the exposition of the creation of the universe?

I will examine 1) Albalag's philosophical interpretation of *m'aseh breshit* (the account of the beginning) and 2) his analyses of al-Ghazali's exposition of Avicenna's modal ontology and conception of divine causality.

I consider Albalag's biblical interpretation of *m'aseh breshit* as a window to his philosophical theories rather than actual religious dogmas. As already mentioned, the tension between skepticism and dogmatism in the *Tiqqun* does not permit ascribing definitive religious dogmas to Albalag. Moreover, the *Tiqqun's* goal, as Albalag states, is not particularly "religious."[666] This strongly suggests that the interpretive notes on *m'aseh breshit* are not, consistently with the general framework of the treatise, intended to imply or define the Albalag's religious beliefs. Indeed, Albalag begins his interpretive notes by clarifying that their specific purpose is to show that "it is possible to draw the philosophical doctrine [eternal creation] from Scripture."[667] Yet this procedure is not compatible with Albalag's fundamental approach to religion and philosophy, therefore he immediately emphasizes that he pursues it without "believing in it" (*bli shi 'aaminho*)."[668] One may alternatively argue that Albalag's interpretive notes are primarily apologetic. They aim to show that the polyvalent nature of Scripture allows for the possibility of its inclusion of philosophical doctrines, hence accusing the philosophers

[666] *Tiqqun,* note. 30, p. 51
[667] Ibid, p. 33
[668] Ibid, p. 33

of adopting irreligious doctrines is unjustified inasmuch as the boundaries between religion and philosophy is not steadily determined.

Before delving into the discussion, allow me to highlight one point. In most of his discussions, Albalag refers directly to Aristotle, rather than Ibn Rushd. This raises the question of whether Albalag had direct access to Aristotle apart from that provided by Ibn Rushd's commentary or not. The scholarly consensus is that Jewish philosophers who lived in the period and area of Albalag had access to Aristotle through Averroes' commentaries—this, of course, with the exception of few instances, such Ibn Tibbon who engaged directly with Aristotle's meteorology.[669] It is possible that Albalag's references to Aristotle are based on Ibn Rushd's quotations from Aristotle, which explains why Albalag occasionally refers to Aristotle directly rather than Averroes.

1. Arguments for the Eternity of the World

Does the eternal existence of God necessitate the eternal existence of the universe? One fundamental argument that medieval philosophers advanced in favor of the eternity doctrine follows from the eternal nature of God. The philosophers argued, "It is impossible that the temporal should proceed from the eternal."[670] Thus, the act of an eternal agent, being in this case the universe, must be eternal.[671] In chapter ל, Albalag takes up a similar position, unambiguously stating that "if the Mover of spheres is

[669] For the usage of Aristotle's Meteorology by Ibn Tibbon see Aviezer Ravitzky " Aristotle's Meteorology and The Maimonidean Modes of Interpreting the Account of Creation" *Aleph: Historical Studies in Science and Judaism,* Volume 8, 2008, pp. 361-400. Gad Freudenthal. " Samuel Ibn Tibbon's Avicennian Theory of Eternal Creation" *Aleph 8,* 2008, pp. 41-129

[670] H. Davidson, *Proofs for Eternity,* p. 49.

[671] See al-Ghazali, quoted in *TT*, First Discussion, pp. 1-2

eternal… it follows that celestial motion is eternal," which implies that the "universe," is "eternal" (*netsaḥi*.)[672]

Just before positing this position, Albalag offers reviews different conceptions of divine agency and sharply criticizes al-Ghazali's theological conception of divine volunteerism. In opposition to al-Ghazali, Albalag proposes that God is neither a voluntary nor a natural agent. But this does not rule out that He is the ultimate Agent of the universe. Denying divine volition does not entail necessity of divine acts.

Albalag's chief claim is that the world does not proceed necessarily from God as light proceeds from sun. God does not act voluntarily, though His actions are in no way involuntary.[673] Divine agency, in Albalag's words, "belongs to a third type of agency," that stands "in the middle (*imitsa'i*) between two opposite types (*hafakhim*):" voluntary and natural agency.[674]

By making this distinction, Albalag apparently suggests that God possesses a power of acting that falls beyond the perception of human beings. Indeed, this suggestion finds support in Albalag's theory of equivocation which includes "will" and "power" among the attributes whose true quiddity cannot be known. But if divine power is unique, it follows that it is not subject to the defining criteria of our conception of agency or the restrictions of the law of nature. Hence, the assumed necessary link between God and His act, the universe, is no longer compelling. Conversely, the Creation doctrine emerges as a

[672] *Tiqqun*, note. 30, p.30
[673] Ibid, p. 30, 16
[674] Ibid, p. 23. Cf. *TT*, First Discussion, p. 4

reasonable possibility. If this is so, what is Albalag's rationale for adopting the eternity doctrine?

Unlike Maimonides, Albalag posits that the eternity hypothesis is demonstrative. Albalag offers another reason for his certainty regarding its veracity: the antithetical hypothesis is "naturally impossible" (*nimna' bi- ḥoq ha- ṭeva'*.) On this ground, the eternity hypothesis proves to be so necessary that Albalag "finds no reason for denying it." [675]

But what is that about nature that renders the eternity doctrine necessary; and does the analysis of nature lead to the eternity of the universe in its entirety or only to parts of it? According to Davidson, medieval philosophers employed different proofs for the eternity of the world, basing such proofs on either the nature of the world or the nature of God. [676]Generally, proofs of the two categories argue indirectly for the eternity of the world; rather than arguing directly for the eternal existence of the universe, they seek to prove the untenability of the creation premise. Of the six proofs from the nature of the universe—proofs from the nature of matter, possibility, vacuum, time, motion, and the celestial spheres –only proofs from motion and celestial spheres directly establish the eternity of the world. These proofs are not equal in their accomplishments. Whereas the first five argue in variable ways to the eternal existence of matter and the celestial realm, the sixth proof arrives at the eternity of the universe in its final shape.[677]

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[675] *Tiquun*, p. 51
[676] H. Davidson, *Proofs for Eternity,* pp. 9-12. Davidson follows Maimonides' *Guide* II:14 in this categorization.
[677] Ibid, p. 30

Many premises related to the nature of the universe can be found in the *Tiqqun,* especially in contexts where Albalag contends with al-Ghazali and Avicenna over metaphysical theories that he deems unsound on the grounds of their inconsistency with Aristotle's cosmology and theory of eternity. Based on these premises, I will reconstruct three arguments from the nature of the world in favor of the eternity of prime matter, separate intellects, and celestial bodies.

I. Prime Matter

In examining the source and nature of prime matter, Albalag focuses upon Avicenna's position as reported by al-Ghazali in the *Maqāsid*. As usual, Albalag adopts a critical stance toward Avicenna. His point of contention is Avicenna's theory of prime matter. According to this theory, the matter underlying all material things, the first matter, is a determinate and formed matter. It has no subsistence in itself (*almādah nafsaha lā qiwām lahā*) and does not exist without the corporeal form which turns it into a substance in actuality, capable of undergoing change and receiving different individual forms. [678]That said, prime matter is ontologically dependent on the separate intellect (*al-jawhar al-mufāriq*) that bestows upon it the form that renders it receptive of all forms and qualities. [679] In short, prime matter exists and becomes what it is in virtue of a divine cause rather than its own nature.

Albalag objects to Avicenna's account by raising the following question: what role does the separate intellect, i.e. the giver of forms, play in the existence of the prime

[678] For A discussion of Avicenna's theory of Corporeal form see Ayman Shihad, " Avicenna's Corporeal From and Proof of Prime Matter in Twelfth-Century Critical Philosophy: Abul-Barakat, al-Mas'udi and al-Razai"; *Oriens* 42 (2014) pp. 364-396

[679] *Maqasid*, p. 157. Cf. Avicenna, *Ilahiyyat* IX:5, p. 334.

matter, if, in reality, the prime matter is formless and potential? This inquiry points to the Aristotelian conception of prime matter. Unlike Avicenna who denies the existence of formless matter, Albalag, in line with Aristotle, conceives of the prime matter as a "pure potentiality," disposed to become all forms and possess all properties.[680] In his general analysis of natural changes, Aristotle arrives at the belief in the existence of some sort of a substrate that persists through changes. This substrate is completely indeterminate, having the capacity of taking any form and possessing the properties of all elements. Aristotle also proves that Prime Matter is eternal for if it were assumed to be subject to generation and corruption, another lower substrate from which it should come to be must be assumed to exist and so on *ad infinitum*.[681] By affirming that prime matter is in its own nature a pure potentiality, Albalag attempts to safeguard the correct Aristotelian theory of prime matter from the "absurdity" that ancient and contemporary commentators ascribed to Aristotelianism.[682]

In the course of his contention with Avicenna, Albalag focuses on establishing the formless nature of prime matter, rather than establishing its existence from eternity. But Albalag apparently takes it for granted that prime matter is eternal. In the beginning of his critique of Avicenna he affirms that a cause is that "which combines matter and form" or "transform a thing from potentiality to actuality."[683] These two conceptions of causality are not applicable to the prime matter because it is "formless" (*in lo ẓorah*), which means

[680] *Tiqqun*, p. 99
[681] For different reformulations of this proof see al-Ghazali, quoted in *TT*, First Discussion, pp. 58-59, and Maimonides, *Guide* (II: 14)
[682] *Tiqqun*, p. 97
[683] *Tiqqun*, p. 98

that its existence does not depend on a form, and "never exists in actuality", which means that it cannot be actualized. [684]

Furthermore, elsewhere in the *Tiqqun* we find the key premises underlying Aristotle's proof of the eternity of prime matter—namely that 1) generation is a process of change from potentiality to actuality,[685] and 2) all potentialities require matter, in which they reside.[686] We can thus reconstruct an argument for the eternity of prime mater in line with that of Aristotle: assuming that matter came into existence, a more rudimentary substrate from which it would arise must have existed. But since the nature of matter is precisely the substratum underlying all processes of change, this assumption would be self-contradictory. [687] Accordingly, prime matter is eternal.

Furthermore, Albalag's opposition to Avicenna's theory of prime matter throws light on some aspects of his conception of eternity. To Albalag, some existents exist from eternity independently of divine causation. This is the case with prime matter, whose essential feature, namely being the locus of all potential existents, has no cause. As Albalag clarifies, "only its nature [is what] necessitates [this characteristic,] otherwise, it would not be "prime matter."[688]

One point is worth highlighting. We will see in the context of the theory of perpetual creation that Albalag espouses ontology of form in view of which forms do not

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[684] *Tiqqun*, p. 98
[685] *Tiqqun*, p. 62
[686] Tiqqun, p. 27
[687] Aristotle's argument for the eternity of matter in *Physics* I:9 (192a 25-32) goes as follow: Matter, being the substratum of potentiality, does not come to be or cease to exist. "If it came to be, something must have existed as a primary substratum from which it should come and which should persist in it; but this is its own special nature, so that it will be before coming to be." For different formulae of the argument in Medieval philosophy see H. Davidson, *Proofs for Eternity*, p. 13
[688] *Tiqqun*, p. 99

exist independently of matter. Although this ontology seems to disagree the Aristotelian theory that Albalag defends here, the truth of the matter is that this ontology is Aristotelian. Indeed, the indicated disagreement is inherited from Aristotle. Aristotle's theory of prime matter does not lend itself to a fixed interpretation because, as Arthur Hyman notes, Aristotle explains the nature of prime matter in terms of two understandings of being: being in respect to the categories (or the substance) and in respect to potentiality and actuality. The former understanding, as opposed to the latter, assigns two characteristics to substance, independent existence and essence.

In Metaphysics, Aristotle explains that the matter "underlying all existents exists in potentiality."[689] That is, prime matter is a pure potentiality that exists independently of form. Of the two understandings of being, the one in regard to potentiality and actuality applies to this conception of prime matter. The former does not apply because prime matter, being a pure potentiality, "at no time possesses the two characteristics of the substance," essence and existence.

On the other hand, Aristotle's analysis of the four basic elements suggests that, in line with the understanding of being in regard to substance, prime matter does not exist independently of from. According to Aristotle, it is not possible for the ultimate self-subsistent four elements to transform to an independently existing matter, nor could there be matter that possesses a form apart from the rudimentary ones of the elements. Thus, Aristotle states, "there is a first matter… but it has no separate existence."[690] While the two explanations of the nature of prime matter appear in the Aristotelian corpus, Hyman

[689] Metaphysics VIII:2, 1042b, 9-11
[690] *On Generation and Corruption* I:I, 3292 24-26

suggests that Aristotle's final position is the one in Metaphysics according to which prime matter is a formless substrate possessing none of the characteristics of substance.

Avicenna as well as Averroes attempted to reconcile the duality in Aristotle's position by positing the theory of formed prime matter—in this theory, both Avicenna and Averroes[691] differentiated prime matter from its potentiality and affirmed its substantiality.[692] Apparently, Albalag did not see any inconsistency in Aristotle, and continued to hold Aristotle's metaphysical account of prime matter as pure potentiality, along with his ontology of form.

II. Separate Intellects

One common argument for the eternity of the world from the nature of the universe in the medieval literature derives from the concept of possibility or potentiality. The argument finds its origin in Aristotle's proof of the eternity of the world based on his analysis of coming-to-be. [693]In brief, the process of coming-to-be is a transformation from potential to actual existence. Nothing can ever come into being without prior potentiality. This means that nothing can come to be from absolute nothingness; things exist in a state of potentiality prior to their actual existence. [694]

[691] For Averroes' view on the nature of prime matter see *De Substantia Orbis,* pp. 49-52. According to Averroes, the corporeal form is the form for three-dimensionality. In Avicenna's view, by contrast, the corporeal form is that which has a disposition to receive three-dimensionality.
[692] Arthur Hyman, Aristotle's "First Matter" and Avicenna's and Averroes' "Corporeal Form," *Harry Austryn Jubilee Volume*: *On the Occasion of his seventy Sixth Birthday:* English Section, edited by Saul Lieberman (Jerusalem: American Academy for Jewish Research, 1965), pp. 385-406.
[693] Ibid, p. 28
[694] Ibid

Avicenna formulated a modified version of Aristotle's proof in line with his theory of possibility. [695] Before coming into actual existence, things must have been possible otherwise they would be necessary and already would have existed. From this, it is also concluded that matter is eternal. Since possibility in itself is not a subject, it must subsist in a subject before its actual existence. That subject is matter. If matter must necessarily exist prior to everything, nothing can come into existence from absolute nothingness. Additionally, in Avicenna's version of the proof, since matter does not exist without a form, then the mater-form compound of which the universe consists is eternal. [696]

Such an argument would appear absurd to Albalag if applied broadly to all existents in the universe; for how could possibility be attributed to immaterial existents such as separate intellects without impugning their immateriality? Based on the *Maqāsid,* Albalag correctly reports that Avicenna speaks of possibility (*efsharut*) with respect to existence that inheres in separate intellects. Avicenna expounds this view in the *shifā*' as follow:

> The effect in itself is possible of existence and, through the First, is necessary of existence. Its necessary existence consists in its being an intellect. It apprehends itself intellectually and necessarily apprehends the First intellectually. Hence, there must be in it, by way of plurality, the meaning of (a) its intellectual apprehension of its essence, as being, within its own bound, possible of existence; (b) its intellectual apprehension of its necessary existence, through the First, that intellectually apprehends itself; and (C) of its own apprehension of the First.[697]

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[695] For an analysis of Avicenna's version of this proof see John McGinnis, "The Eternity of the World: Proofs and Problems in Aristotle, Avicenna, and Aquinas" *Journal of the American Catholic Philosophical Association,* Spring, 2014, Vol. 88 Issue 2, p. 271

[696] Ibid, p. 281

[697] *Ilahiyyat* IX: 9, p. 331; Cf. *Maqasid*, 112

On account of the multiplicity of meanings inhering in the first intellect, possibility and necessity, a second intellect (*malak*) and a sphere (*falak*) emanate. Separate intellects, accordingly, contain possibility with respect to existence. It is precisely this view that arouses Albalag's criticism, for it implies that separate intellects are not immaterial, since matter is the locus of possibility, and subject to generation and corruption:

> I agree with Ibn Rushd that al-Ghazali is mistaken in his view regarding the first effect, [that is, the first] separate intellect, as he said, 'it consists in possibility in virtue of itself and necessity by virtue of its cause…' If the separate intellect contains possibility, it follows necessarily that it is composed of matter like all generable and destructible existents.[698]

That separate intellects could be subject to generation and destruction like material existents is an assumption that Albalag rejects by appealing to Aristotle:

> According to Aristotle, possibility attaches to matter. Therefore, every material thing is generable and corruptible. Since the separate intellect is immaterial it follows necessarily that it involves no possibility.[699]

Based on Aristotle's view that potentiality and immateriality are incompatible concepts, Albalag concludes that separate intellects do not involve possibility of any sort. It should be noted, however, that this view does not necessarily prove the eternity of separate intellects. What, then, is the ground for denying that separate intellects are subject to generation and destruction? Clearly, Albalag has in mind Aristotle's teaching that nothing imperishable and eternal "is in the full sense potential." [700] Albalag might have reasoned that separate intellects are eternal because they are entirely devoid of potentiality.

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[698] *Tiqqun*, p. 27
[699] Ibid
[700] *Metaphysics* IX, 1050b8-9

Albalag might have considered the fact that Aristotle pointed to some senses of potentiality that are predicable of imperishable things, such as the potentiality of a certain quality or potentiality with respect to a certain place. To avoid confusion, Albalag stresses the difference between the ontological status of potentially in relation to material things and separate intellects respectively. In relation to material things, potentiality is "true" (*efsharut 'ametīt*). It has actual existence and requires the presence of matter in which it inheres. Examples of this are the possibility of becoming a human being which inheres in the seed of man, and the possibility of becoming a wise man which inheres in the boy. In relation to immaterial things, by contrast, potentiality has no real existence, but the intellect relates it to the immaterial thing it qualifies. That is to say, it is a mere rational judgment. Only possibilities of this type are predicated of separate intellects without contradicting their immaterial and eternal nature. In concluding this discussion, Albalag thereby affirms that it is impossible for "something perpetual in virtue of itself," i.e. a separate intellect, to involve true possibility.[701]

III. Celestial Bodies

Eternity is not a feature exclusive to immaterial beings. Rather, it is an essential feature of celestial bodies as well. Albalag notes this while dealing with what he deems "false" ideas that clash with Aristotle's theory of eternity. Although Albalag does not provide a formal proof of the eternity of celestial spheres, his discussion of the subject of

[701] Here Albalag might be thinking, like Averroes, that intellects are eternal and necessary in virtue of their nature. Averroes presents this conclusion in his refutation Avicenna's argument to the effect that beings in the celestial realm are possible in themselves and necessary by virtue of their cause. In refuting Avicenna, Averroes points out that this argument contradicts Aristotle's view that the eternal and possible are mutually exclusive terms. If something is possible in itself it means that it is subject to corruption, and what is corruptible by nature cannot be made eternal by another cause; for further clarification see Carlos Steel, "Averroes' interpretation of the Final Section of Physics" in *Averroes Latinus,* 2002.

celestial motion allows us to underline the fundamental premises of Aristotle's proof.[702]

In *De Caelo* I: 2-3, Aristotle advances an argument for the eternity of spheres based on his conception of generation and corruption. Having demonstrated the primacy of the circular motion of spheres to all natural simple and composite movements, he investigates whether the body whose natural movement is circular is generated and corruptible or eternal. Aristotle concludes that such a body could not be subject to generation and corruption or alteration of any sort. Coming-to-be and passing away are contrary potentialities residing in the substrate. An object comes to be or passes away after it has transformed from one contrary to another. Since "the motions of contraries are contraries," and circular motion does not have a contrary motion, the body whose motion is circular is exempt from generation and decay.

In one context, Albalag proposes to evaluate the validity of the theory of the spheres' animation by soul against Aristotle's account of celestial motion. According to this theory, the spheres, like all living bodies, move by virtue of a force inhering in their bodies. Although Albalag admits that Aristotle's account of celestial motion does not provide a definitive standpoint on the specific issue of the spheres' animation by soul (*nefesh*), he is convinced that Aristotle could not have espoused such a theory inasmuch as it blatantly contradicts the theory of eternity. If spheres are assumed to be eternal, the cause of their motion can't be a corporeal force like the soul, for a corporeal force cannot produce motion infinitely.

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[702] *De Caelo*I: 3, 4

In refuting the theory of the spheres' animation by soul, Albalag presents an argument along the line of Aristotle's proof for the eternity of celestial spheres. The argument starts with an illustration of the difference between the structure of celestial and sublunary bodies and the implication of this structural difference for their respective movements. [703] Any living thing produces multiple movements in accordance with the natural movements of the elements composing it. These movements run contrary to the power of the intrinsic moving principle, the soul, which eventually results in a limitation of that power. Accordingly, bodies moved by internal forces cannot endure forever and must at some point come to rest. [704]

Unlike living beings, celestial bodies are "simple" (*pashut*); their nature is such that it is "neither heavy nor light." [705]This means that celestial bodies have no contrary motions, since the motions of heaviness and lightness are contrary to each other. Spheres produce only one type of motion, "circular motion." Because this motion has no contrary

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[703] *Tiqqun*, p. 86

[704] Albalag's explanation is very brief, but we can supplement it from Averroes' more detailed explanation in the *Long Commentary on De Caelo.* According to Averroes, "when we examine beings possessing a soul that are here below, we find in them two principles of two kinds of motions respectively. One of them is a principle for rectilinear motion, that is upward and downward motion, in which case the mover produces the motion without volition. [This kind of motion is not due to the soul in those beings described as possessing a soul. It is due to the nature of the four elements of which the bodies of these beings are composed.] The other principle is a principle for the motion of translation in place. [This kind of motion is due to the soul in those beings described as possessing a soul.] And we find that the latter motion is opposed to the motion of declination in each of them [that is, the already mentioned upward and downward motion, which is due to the soul]. And it is because of this motion of declination which is not due to the soul] that each of the [sublunar] beings possessing a soul is overtaken by fatigue and must necessarily come to rest." the Quotation is taken from Arthur Hyman's translation of *Averroes' Du Substantia orbis,* 1986, p. 76 note, 8. Moreover, motion could come to end due to the contrary movements produced by the different faculties of the soul. This is another explanation that Albalag alludes to in saying that "Aristotle said that the body moved by a force inhering in it comes to rest by that force," p. 86. Obviously, Albalag here refers to Aristotle's explanation in *De Anima* (III: 8, 432b9-10). According to Aristotle, the "movement of growth and decay, being found in all living things, must be attributed to the faculty of reproduction and nutrition."

[705] *Tiqqun*, p. 86

it does not come to rest. From this, it is inferred that celestial motion, subsequently the spheres, are ungenerated, for everything that is imperishable, has no beginning. [706]

Aside from the dispute over the animation of spheres by soul, Albalag's discussion removes any doubt about the eternity of celestial spheres. (I will discuss below the problem of the principles of celestial motion). Further, Albalag now can make a claim for the eternity of the universe in its entirety. Following Aristotle's argument in *De Caelo* I, 3, 270a, which infers the eternal existence of the entire universe from the eternal existence of celestial spheres, Albalag affirms—through a language that accords with the doctrine of eternal creation—that the eternal existence of celestial spheres entails the eternity of their dependent sublunary realm. [707]

2. The Doctrine of Eternal Creation

In the previous section, I reconstructed three arguments in favor of the eternity of celestial spheres, separate intellects, and prime matter. Throughout his treatise, especially in purely technical contexts, Albalag unequivocally describes the universe as "eternal" rather than created. Despite that, Albalag paradoxically devotes a lengthy chapter whose aim is to establish, not that the universe is eternal *per se,* but that it is eternally created.[708] But is there really a substantial difference between "eternity" as such and "eternal creation"? Assuming the answer is positive, does the theory of eternal creation rest on a solid scientific ground or does it only serve political and apologetic goals, whereas

[706] In the *Guide* II:14 Maimonides points out that the premise maintaining that "everything that will not pass away has not been generated" is fundamental to Aristotle's proof for the eternity of the celestial spheres.
[707] *Tiqqun*, p.30
[708] The same problem emerges in Averroes; see Barry Kogan, *Averroes and The Metaphysics of Causation,* p. 204.

Albalag's actual scientific conviction accords with Aristotle's understanding of eternity?

One clue regarding the difference between "eternity" and "eternal creation" appears in a statement wherein Albalag differentiates between two understandings of the meaning of "eternity": the one held by "the philosophers,"[709] which Albalag defines as "the doctrine of perpetual creation"[710] and the Epicurean worldview. Whereas the two understandings share the conviction that the universe had no "temporal beginning" (*ṭḥilah zmanīt,*) they disagree on whether it is self-subsistent or depends upon a transcendent cause.

Those who follow the Epicurean view regard the universe as ontologically self-subsistent entity. Its existence is independent of any transcendent causation. This view, which Albalag labels as "irreligious" (*kefirah*), must be distinguished from the "correct" (*nakhûn*) doctrine of the philosophers, according to which the universe depends on a divine agent productive of its existence. If this agent were supposed to "disappear from existence for a twinkling of an eye (*heref 'ayn*)," the existence of the universe "would be nullified forever." [711]

By highlighting the distinction between the philosophical and Epicurean senses of eternity, Albalag defines the framework through which the theory of eternal creation can be understood. To speak of God as a creator and the universe as created, is to posit a

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[709] *Tiqqun*, note. 30, p. 51
[710] *Tiqqun*, p. 51
[711] *Tiqqun*, note. 30, p. 30. Cf. *Guide* I: 69 where Maimonides speaks of God as the Form of the forms, the ultimate cause upon which the existence and stability of all forms depends. If the non-existence of this Form were supposed, "all that exists will likewise be non-existent." Also, Cf. *Yesodi ha-Torah* I:1-4

certain philosophical theory of divine causation. Thus, understanding eternal creation is a matter of understanding the sense in which God causally relates to the universe.

There are different ways in which God can be described as a cause of the universe. However, the theory of eternal creation, as construed by Albalag, specifies one: God creates the universe by way of *generating* motion. What Albalag states regarding the conception of eternal creation suggests that the mere act of generating motion suffices to make God a cause of the universe. Generating motion is not confined to time but occurs constantly from eternity and everlastingly. To accord this conception of creation religious legitimacy, Albalag suggest that the *Shaḥrit* (the morning prayer) could refer to God's constant act of creation.

Before delving into the issue of causality, I offer some observation regarding Albalag's conception of the universe. The doctrine of perpetual creation is rooted in a conception of the universe as a moving unit whose *being* and *endurance* are fundamentally dependent on motion. All existents, whether simple or complex bodies, exist on account of motion. An elaborate presentation of this conception of the universe can be found in the *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut*, to which Albalag is clearly indebted.

Responding to al-Ghazali's critique of the theory of eternal creation on the grounds that it combines two contradictory premises, that the universe is eternal and caused, Averroes elucidates that the universe in its totality is "something moved" whose individual movements are composed of "originated parts." [712]As Kogan explains, Averroes' draws a distinction between "a world that eternally exists in itself and a world that exists eternally by being moved." Based on this distinction, Kogan concludes that the

[712] B. Kogan, *Averroes and The Metaphysics of Causation,* p. 206.

agent responsible for preserving an everlasting production of motion is, for Averroes, its cause.[713]

In line with this conception of the universe, Albalag divides existents into two classes according to the role of motion in their coming-to-be and/or endurance. The first class includes things that require a mover *only* for their coming-to-be, while the second, endurance, depends on other factors. Things belonging to this class do not require a mover to attain their actual being. The existence or non-existence of a mover plays no role in preventing or enhancing their subsistence.

Albalag offers an example to clarify what he means. After a house has been completed, the existence of the builder is no longer necessary. [714]The house could continue to exist even after the death of its builder due to other factors such as "dryness" (*yevvûsh*) of the matter from which it is made. But since the endurance of the house is not dependent on a principle of motion, it remains for a *limited* time (*zman qaẓûv*).[715]

This is not the case with the other class of existents, whose "*subsistence*" (*qeyumû*) requires a mover. These things, Albalag argues, deserve to be described as caused than the former class of beings. His rationale is:

> Individuals of the second class of existents, whose subsistence depends on motion, require a mover the whole time of their existence. With respect to these existents, the mover is their sustainer and cause. Such existents need a cause more than existents of the first class—those whose continuation does not rely on motion—*for if the mover were to cease the act of moving for a twinkling of an eye, they would be annihilated*

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[713] Ibid

[714] Cf. Aristotle, *Metaphysic* V, 2 1014a 20-25. Avicenna uses the same example to clarify that the real cause is that which "bestows existence permanently, as long as the effect exists." Things, being contingent, require a cause, not only for coming to be, but also for their continuing existence. In Avicenna's system, it is the Giver of the Forms, ultimately God, which maintains this role; see *Illahiyyat* VI: I, p. 200.

[715] Cf. *Guide* I:69 where Maimonides criticizes the *mutaklimun* for considering God a maker rather than a cause. In his view, a maker is not necessarily required for the permanence of the effected object. Also Cf. Averroes, *TT,* Fourth Discussion, p. 156.

> *forever.*[Since there] exist things, as has been demonstrated, whose subsistence depends on motion, [we conclude] that they need a cause more than other [types of] existents.[716]

In this passage Albalag seems to suggest that motion constitutes the substantial feature in which the being of some existents consists. [717] Unlike a house whose actual being does not consist in motion, the actual being of some existents consists in continuous movements. One such thing, as Albalag clarifies, is "wind" (*ruah*.) In order for wind to be what it is, air must be in motion. When motion comes to an end, there is no wind, even though air remains.[718]

Following this example, Albalag mentions the celestial spheres, however, without explaining how motion represents to spheres what it represents to wind. In another context, he points out that the "being"[719] and "perfection" of spheres is based on circular motion. This is equivalent to saying that circular motion constitutes the essential feature by virtue of which spheres exist and remain what they are. Were this motion to come to end, spheres would definitely perish. Accordingly, we can understand Albalag as saying that the mover of spheres, being the ultimate cause of their essential feature, i.e. circular motion, is also the cause of their existence.

Likewise, motion is the primary feature of existence in the sublunary realm; it is involved in all natural processes in the sublunary realm, from the generation of elements to the generation of complex animals. The endurance of the species which make up the totality of the sublunary realm rests on motion. In several contexts, Albalag specifies that the motion necessary for the endurance of life, the process of generation and corruption

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[716] *Tiqqun*, note. 30, p. 30. Cf. *TT*, The Fourth Discussion, p. 156.
[717] See B. Kogan's analysis of this idea in Averroes, *Averroes and the Metaphysics of Causation*, p. 207.
[718] Cf. *TT.* The Fourth Discussion, pp. 156-8.
[719] *Tiqqun*, note. 65, p. 92

of all species, in the sublunary realm is celestial motion. (We will examine below the specific role of celestial motion in the formation of sublunary beings)

> In this sense, it is said of the Creator that He is the efficient cause of all bodies, given that He is the mover of the first sphere and the producer of the locomotion which precedes all types of movements. By virtue of this motion, natural causes produce natural effects in things. [720]

With this conception of the universe, any account of creation involving belief in a creator must perforce explain the role the creator plays in producing and maintaining the dynamism of the world-system. The doctrine of eternal creation, which Albalag ascribes to the philosophers,[721] proceeds from this consideration. A summary of this theory is presented in the *Tiqqun* as follow:

> Since the *parts* of [the spheres'] motion do not exist separately… but in a successive manner, one after another, [the parts of the spheres' motion] *endure* and *come to be,* and *the mover continues to originate each part of the motion one after the other…* this mover is eternal, never ceased [to exist] and constantly generates the parts of the spheres' movements. [722]

The key concept in this doctrine is the "parts" of celestial motions, a concept that Albalag does not explain. But we can turn to Averroes for a clue, since he too presents a similar explanation of the doctrine of eternal creation. By "parts," as Kogan explains, Averroes means the "state of affairs which can be characterized as potential and actual."[723] Supposing that Albalag has in mind a similar understanding of this term, then the "parts" of the spheres' motions would refer to the transition of motion from potential

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[720] Ibid, note. 30, p. 29

[721] Albalag does not specify who are the philosophers, but it is obvious that Albalag is drawing upon what al-Ghazali mentions in the *Maqasid,* regarding the renovation of celestial motion. Renovation occurs on the level of the parts of motion only. As a whole circular motion is not created; see *Maqasid*, p.142

[722] Ibid, note. 30, p. 30

[723] B. Kogan, *Averroes and The Metaphysics of Causation*, p. 209.

to actual. This reading is reasonable given that Albalag defines origination (*ḥiddush*) as "a transition from potentiality to actuality."[724]

However, the origination, or transition from potentiality to actuality with respect to celestial motion, is unlikely to refer to circular motion *per se*. To speak of a created circular motion would imply that that motion existed in a state of potentiality prior to its actual existence and that there was a time when spheres did not exist in actuality and that they came to be after non-being—recall that motion is the feature in which the "being" and "perfection" of spheres consists. But since these two consequences clash with the nature of eternal things, which, according to Aristotle have no true potentiality "with respect to substance and motion" we conclude that potentiality does not refer to circular motion. [725]

Although Aristotle proves that the spheres involve no true potentiality, he speaks of celestial spheres as potential *only* with respect to "place."[726] Albalag presents a number of premises that point to a similar notion of potentiality in a technical note dealing with the characteristics of celestial motion. In this context, he considers the arguments of contemporary philosophers who say that circular motion is not locomotion. Their reasoning goes as follow: since locomotion results in the body's "leaving its place" to another place and spheres never leave their places, but they continuously occupy the same places, celestial motion is not a locomotion. Albalag agrees with the premises of this argument, but he rejects the conclusion. He argues that celestial motion is locomotion.

In supporting his counterargument, Albalag describes the condition of the moving body in the case of rectilinear, as opposed to circular, motion. In the former case,

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[724] *Tiqqun*, p. 62
[725] Emil L. Fackenheim, "The Possibility of the Universe in Al-Farabi, Ibn Sina, and Maimonides," *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research"* Vol. 16 (1946-1947) pp. 39-70
[726] Ibid

the entire body leaves its place to another place. In the latter, the body as a whole remains in place, but its *parts* (*helqav*) take different positions with respect to the object around which it rotates.[727] Let's imagine a circle rotating around X. Every point on the circumference of the circle, say for instance A, B, C, G, etc, has a certain spatial relation to X. As the circle rotates, each point leaves its place and moves to another place, A moves to B and B moves to C, changing by this its position with respect to X. In this way, it is possible to say that spheres move in place, since "the movement of the parts of a celestial body occurs from one place to another."[728]

Viewed against this explanation, one can construe the transition from potentiality to actuality in the spheres' motion as referring to the transition in the parts' spatial relation to the center around which the whole body rotates, the earth. Yet the fact that circular motion consists of individual originated movements does not mean that these movements are prior to circular motion or that circular motion is dependent for its existence on them. At one point, Albalag emphasizes what Aristotle said regarding the primacy of circular motion to all movements,[729] concluding that change in the positions of the "parts" is consequent upon "the *existence* of circular motion and not vice versa."[730] In short, circular motion, in which the being of spheres consists, is not created, but constantly exists in actuality.

Whatever Albalag means by "the parts" of the spheres' motion, it is clear that the only kind of creation with respect to celestial spheres that he accepts is that which accounts for the continuation of states of moving. This explains why Albalag emphasizes

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[727] Cf. Averroes, *Treatise on the Prime Mover*. The treatise is lost, but parts of it were restored by Harry Wolfson in "Averroes' Lost Treatise on the Prime Mover," Hebrew Union College Annual v23 n1 (19500101): 683-710.

[728] *Tiqqun*, note. 73, p. 102
[729] *Physics* VIII, 265a 14-13
[730] *Tiqqun*, note. 73, p. 102

in another context that if we are to speak of "creation" (*ḥiddush*) in the celestial realm one must bear in mind that "celestial spheres are not generated in themselves. [Rather] they are [said to be generated] only insofar as the *parts* of their *movements* are generated." [731]

As with the celestial spheres, creation in the sublunary realm pertains to the parts only: "The generation of the *parts* of the universe that come to be and pass away… is eternal."[732]

Again, the exact meaning of the "parts" is not specified, but we can deduce what Albalag has in mind from several notes on related concepts: origination, agent, and, cause. Within the context of the doctrine of eternal creation, Albalag maintains that a thing is said to be "originated" when it "is *moved* from non-existence to existence."[733] This note can be understood in different ways depending on the manner the concepts "non-existence" and "existence" is defined, but since Albalag's ontological worldview is generally based on a division of existence into potential and actual, moving from non-existence to existence would reasonably mean a transition from potential to actual existence.

Further evidence of this reading emerges in one note, in which Albalag offers a conjectural scientific reading of the *ma'seh breshit*. In this note, Albalag informs us that potential existence does not mean that the thing is utterly non-existent, but that it exists in

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[731] Ibid, note. 39, p. 62. Cf. *Maqasid*, p. 142
[732] Ibid, p. 30
[733] This conception of generation derives from the conventional Aristotelian sense of generation as coming-to-be from privation, i.e. from possibility. For the characteristics of this conception see B. Kogan "Eternity and Origination: Averroes' Discourse on The Manner of the World's Existence," *Islamic Theology and Philosophy*, Edited by M. Marmura (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984), p. 203.

an intermediary state between "absolute non-existence" and "actual existence."[734] In essence, this state corresponds to the state of privation that Aristotle describes in his analyses of coming-to-be.

According to Aristotle, things come to be based on three principles: matter, form and privation. The latter is the constant state of the absence of forms, which allows matter to undergo change and alternate into different particulars by acquiring new forms.[735] Quite in line with this understanding of coming-to-be, Albalag interprets the words *tohu* and *vohu* as "matter" and "form," respectively, and elucidates their connotations regarding the act of creation. *Vohu*, or "form" is that by virtue of which "a thing exists and acquires its defining features." [736] In contrast, *tohu*, or matter in itself, has no actual existence but is in an intermediary state between existence and non-existence that Albalag describes as privation, "*he'edear*". [737] *He'edear* is what renders matter capable of undergoing change by receiving and loosing forms. Generation and corruption in the sublunary realm occur and continue because of the constant lack of "perfection," meaning the state of privation "attaching to matter as shadow attaches to body," inhering in matter. This state of imperfection lies at the basis of all sublunary existents.[738]

This interpretive remark allows us to conclude that "origination," or the transition from potentiality to actuality, is a process in which matter is transformed from a privation of form to its actual existence. Thus, the "parts" of the universe that comprise the scheme of creation refer to sublunary things whose coming-to-be consists in and through the composition of matter and form. We might further infer that these, were they assumed to

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[734] *Tiqqun*, p. 52. Albalag presents this view, which he borrows from *TT*, p. 98, in response to Avicenna's division of reality.
[735] Also, Cf. *Guide* I:17
[736] *Tiqqun*, note. 30, p. 33
[737] Ibid, p. 33-4
[738] *Tiqqun*, note. 30, p. 33

exist separate from each other, do not enter into this scheme. Indeed, even within the context of the theory of eternal creation, Albalag hardly describes any sense in which either matter or form comes to be. The process of origination to which he tailors the account of the beginning is limited to describing the continuous dynamism of the world-system which results in a continuous origination of new things from pre-existing ones.

In conclusion, the theory of eternal creation, which Albalag presents in the name of the philosophers, seeks to combine two otherwise contradictory doctrines: that the universe exists from eternity and that it is created. Yet such a theory would require accommodating the meaning of "creation" to the scientific objectives of the philosophers.

Based on the Aristotelian worldview, the philosophers describe a dynamic universe in which all processes of generation and corruption rest on celestial motion. Motion is thus *the* principle for all that exits in the universe; it allows the philosophers to stake a claim for the ontological dependence of the universe on the ultimate cause of motion. By extension, the philosophers make a further claim for the creation of the universe, provided that creation should not be understood as limited to a certain moment. The ultimate cause of motion has created the world since eternity and will continue to create forever. As Albalag puts it, "there is no moment in which the universe is not created." [739]

Although Aristotelian physics, with its analysis of coming-to-be on the basis of motion, furnished philosophers with a conceptual framework through which a claim for the eternal creation of the universe was established, the theory of eternal creation involves major gaps, including that it is hardly all-inclusive. This is most evident from two facts. First, Albalag excludes the realm of separate intellects from creation, arguing

[739] *Tiqqun*, note. 30, p. 30

that they do not admit being created because they are essentially actual and involve no potentiality. Separate intellects exist from eternity without alternation or transformation. Even the fact that they are ontologically dependent on God, on account of the knowledge they derive from Him, allows us to speak of them as created *only* in "a metaphorical sense." [740]

Second, creation relates only to the parts, rather than the totality, of the universe. Right after summarizing the philosophers' theory of eternal creation, Albalag maintains that, "the world originates in its parts, but subsists in its totality."[741] This seems to be another way of saying that the universe was not created but has existed from eternity. Only these segments of the world, which Albalag identifies as "parts," enter into the scheme of creation. But even with respect to them, the theory of eternal creation is hardly convincing. One major shortcoming is that it associates the divine act of creation *exclusively* with the parts of celestial motion, which presumably comprise the circular motion in which the *existence* and *endurance* of spheres consists. Elsewhere, however, Albalag firmly posits that celestial motion is "not divisible" and "has no parts." [742] Because celestial motion is not divisible into parts, and the transition from potentiality to actuality does not describe real states of transition in celestial motion, there is no solid ground for speaking of the "creation" of the celestial realm, and the term "creation" seems to describe God's causal relation to spheres only in a metaphorical sense, just as is the case with separate intellects.

This also seems true regarding the sublunary realm. God did not create the sublunary realm in its totality, but created the parts of which it is composed, specifically

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[740] *Tiqqun*, note. 39, p. 62
[741] Ibid, note. 30, p. 30
[742] Ibid, note. 61, p. 88

by transforming matter from a lack of a certain form to its actuality through the intermediary of celestial motion. But if this motion is itself eternal rather than created, the sublunary realm would no longer admit the term "creation" except metaphorically. Consider too the fact that the primary components of existents in the sublunary realm, matter and from, are themselves uncreated. Does there remain, then, a valid ground to speak of the universe's (eternal) "creation"?

Ultimately, one can conclude that, as far as Albalag's scientific viewpoint is concerned, the universe is not "created," either temporally or eternally. This, of course does not mean that Albalag held the universe to be self-sufficient; God remains the ultimate principle that sustains the perpetual motion, and hence existence, of the universe. But Albalag's understanding of the God-world relationship proves to be far more radical than the theory of eternal creation suggests. The next chapter will investigate this issue.

3. Divine Causation and Celestial Motion

This section aims to explore divine causation with respect to celestial motion; divine here refers to the Prime Mover and separate intellects. The central point of examination is Albalag's statement that spheres move in virtue of movers that produce motion by being efficient, formal, and final causes. [743] The highest of these movers is the mover of the outermost sphere to which all motions revert. My examination considers the discrepancy between this statement and a number of other statements that present celestial motion as natural. This discrepancy was bequeathed to Albalag from Aristotle's

[743] Ibid, note. 64, p. 92 In *Guide* I: 69 Maimonides too claims that God is the three causes. As examined in the former chapter Maimonides and Albalag consider God's causal agency in different ways, the former in regard to existence and the latter in regard to motion.

two conflicting accounts about celestial motion in and *De Caelo* and *Metaphysics*. While Albalag, like his predecessors, Avicenna and Averroes, combines the two accounts in his analysis, he seems inclined to privilege one of them: the naturalistic account.

In accordance with his definition of nature as "an internal source of motion and rest," Aristotle shows, on the one hand, that "the fifth body of the sphere moves around the center by virtue of *its nature*."[744] As Silvia Donati explains, Aristotle indicates in *De Caelo* I that spheres move by virtue of their nature, "not requiring the causality of immaterial psychic movers."[745] On the other hand, in other passages of the *De Caelo*, parts of *Physics* VIII, and *Metaphysics* XII, Aristotle relates the motion of the spheres to a principle that he describes as a transcendent, purely intellectual, unmoved mover that moves spheres as an object of love and desire.[746]

As with many of Aristotle's theories, ancient and Medieval commentators sought to harmonize the conflicting accounts of celestial motion into a coherent one. [747] With this goal in mind, Avicenna offers a twofold account of spherical motion. According to him, celestial motion can neither be "compulsory" (*qasriyyah*) nor "natural" (*tabi'iyyah*) because both types of motion come to end, whereas the spheres' rotation is endless. That being said, celestial motion must be based on a "will" that has the capacity of "imagining" (*takhayyul*) particulars so that to allow for the renewal of motion. A voluntary capacity as such cannot be intellectual. It must be a function of the spheres' proximate mover, the soul.[748] Movements produced by soul, even though not strictly

[744] Silvia Donati, "Is Celestial Motion a Natural Motion? Averroes' Position and Its Reception in the Thirteenth and Early Fourteenth-Century Commentary Tradition of Physics," *Averroes' Natural Philosophy and Its Reception in The Latin West*, edited by Paul J.J.M. Bakker (Leuven University Press, 2015), 90.
[745] Ibid
[746] Ibid
[747] Ibid
[748] *Illahiyyat*, IX, Chapter 2, p. 308

speaking "natural," can be called natural on the grounds that they are inevitable and are "not opposed to the nature of the [celestial] body."[749] On the other hand, since the proximate movers of spheres are "corporeal," "transformable," and "changeable," they are not sufficient to account for the spheres' unceasing activities. In addition to the spheres' souls, incorporeal, fully immaterial, and unchangeable beings must be in charge of perpetuating the motion of spheres. These are the separate unmoved intellects corresponding to the concentric spheres. They are "prior" causes of motion, each intellect moving its respective sphere by being an object of "desire" and "love" of the sphere's soul.[750]

In concluding his account of celestial motion, Avicenna elucidates that Aristotle's apparently conflicting accounts, namely that celestial motion is both natural and produced by an external object of love and desire, should not be understood as isolated from each other. Rather, they form a single coherent account.[751] Avicenna arrives at this conclusion because, in his view, the endless celestial motion requires two principles: an internal corporeal and immaterial principles, soul and intellect.

Avicenna's account of celestial motion, though providing a systematized reading of Aristotle, is rejected by Albalag, particularly because it is based on the doctrine of the sphere's animation by soul, a doctrine that Albalag dismisses as philosophically incorrect. Albalag differentiates between two concepts, celestial souls and intellects. These two concepts, according to Albalag, are used by the philosophers to differentiate between two motive principles of spheres. Moreover, philosophers consider celestial souls and

[749] Ibid
[750] Ibid, p. 312
[751] *Illahiyyat*, IX, Chapter 2, p. 316

intellects to form two different "classes" (*kitot*) of angles. Albalag rejects this division of angels because he thinks that spheres have no souls.

> Abu Hamid's doctrine about the angels is that they are two classes: the separate forms, these are called by him the upper angels, and the souls of the spheres, these are called by him the spiritual angels. This division of angels follows from his view and the view of the later philosophers that the spheres have souls. However, the ancients do not ascribe souls to spheres.[752]

Albalag's rejection of the theory of the spheres' animation by soul derives from many considerations.[753] Most specifically, as Albalag states, this doctrine runs into the obscurity of ascribing the endless motion of spheres to a corporeal finite power. [754]Avicenna's attempt to overcome this obscurity by engaging other infinite forces, the separate unmoved movers, is also erroneous. Albalag understands Avicenna, through the *Maqasid*,[755] as saying that celestial motion stems from ontologically different causes working in tandem: the "efficient cause" and the "final cause," the former being the internal finite force of the sphere, the soul, and the latter being the infinite force extraneous to spheres, the separate intellect. The act of the two causes on spheres varies in duration: whereas the former produces motion for a limited time, the latter produces it endlessly.

Efficient causality according to this understanding is prior to final causality with respect to the existence of motion, yet it is not the essential factor underlying the

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[752] *Tiqqun*, note. 58, p. 81
[753] This tendency is not something peculiar to Albalag. Some medieval philosophers refuted it because they held the view that celestial motion is natural. For a survey of the philosophers who rejected the theory of the spheres' animation see Richard. C. Dales, "The De-animation of the Heavens in the Middle Ages," *Journal of the History of Ideas,* Vol. 41. No. 4 (Oct-Dec 1980); pp. 531-550
[754] Cf. Aristotle, *Physics* VIII, 266b 25-30
[755] *Maqasid*, p. 150

endurance of the spheres' motion.[756] What truly accounts for the continuation of eternal motion is final causality. Unsatisfied with this account, Albalag exclaims:

> How could [it be said] that the effect of a finite efficient cause is infinite just because its final cause is infinite?... in what way does the final cause give [spheres] the force to continue if they have no efficient cause? [757]

For his part, Albalag subscribes to the view that motion must necessarily come to rest as soon as the efficient cause ceases. Final causality does not continue the activity of the expired efficient causality.

Albalag's reasoning is not without problems. Once one argues, as Albalag forcibly does, that spheres have no *internal* motive forces, the remaining and sole account of motion would be final causality.[758] Indeed, this is confirmed in one note where Albalag describes celestial motion as exclusively dependent on separate intellects, specifying that separate intellects move their respective spheres by being an object of "desire." [759] Albalag, thus, falls in the error for which he criticizes Avicenna: how could final causality alone account for celestial motion? After all, there must be a principle or a force that moves the celestial body towards its final goal. If it is not a soul, what else could it be?

In spite of the fact that Albalag rejects the account of the spheres' animation by soul, he still emphasizes that spheres are alive; the mark of life in spheres is motion. Not unlike natural living bodies, celestial spheres have a first perfection that pertains to their bodies.

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[756] For the difference between efficient and final causality in Avicenna see R. Wisnovsky, *Avicenna's Metaphysics in Context*, p. 9. According to Wisnovsky, Avicenna explained that the two causes work in a complementary way; "the final cause has explanatory priority with respect to essence, while the efficient cause has explanatory priority with respect to existence."

[757] *Tiqqun*, note. 64, p. 91

[758] It should be noted that ascribing souls to spheres was seen by some philosophers as an indubitable account of celestial motion. Maimonides, for instance, argues that the spheres' locomotion is an indubitable proof that they move by means of an intrinsic principle, which he is content to call "a soul"; see *Guide*II:4

[759] *Tiqqun*, note. 64, p. 92

> The celestial sphere is eternal in its nature on the grounds that it has no matter or contrary, its parts are not subject to rectilinear motion, and it has a first perfection by way of [being] a body. [This perfection] is the *motion* in which the life of natural things consists… [the Celestial sphere] moves continuously without end.[760]

Albalag does not clarify in any detail what he means by first perfection with respect to spheres. Nonetheless, it is obvious that he has in mind a type of perfection that *itself* is a motion. Because spheres are "eternal," in turn their motion, in virtue of which spheres exist, first perfection is unlikely to describe a state of *becoming* perfect. Unlike sublunary beings, first perfection is not something potential to celestial bodies, but itself is a state of *being* actual. [761] Drawing upon Averroes, we can further determine that the motion in which the first perfection of spheres consists is "locomotion" of which "circular motion is the first kind."[762]

Albalag leaves out a very important detail: he does not clarify whether this type of perfection causally depends on a certain principle or not. In sublunary beings, first perfection relates to the agency of the internal principle of motion, the soul. As Aristotle explains, the soul is the first perfection of "a natural instrumental body possessing life in potentiality."[763] If spheres are not ensouled, as Albalag constantly contends, wouldn't this mean that their first perfection (the continuous locomotion marking their life) is not causally dependent on any principle, being something inherent to their substance? This emerges as a strong possibility in one note discussing the nature of celestial substance.

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[760] *Tiqqun*, note. 64, p. 91
[761] That superlunary entities always exist in a state of perfection is a corollary thesis of the eternity doctrine. Medieval philosophers indicated this view in their writings. But, as Robert Wisnovsky explains, philosophers specified the state of *second perfection*. In the emanation system of al-Farabi and Avicenna, being in a second perfection means to be always performing causal activities. That is to say, eternal things "cannot help but cause their effects." See R. Wisnovsky. *Avicenna's Metaphysics in Context,* pp. 110-111.
[762] Averroes, *Commentary on Book Lam,* pp. 155-6.
[763] *On the Soul* II 412a, 20-23

> A thing [i.e. the celestial substance] that is simple (*pashut*) in every respect (*mi kol tsad*)[764]… and is neither heavy nor light, has no passive power (*koah meqabbel*). [It] does not require a disposition beside itself for its motion.[765]

As we read this remark against some aspects of Albalag's conception of causality further information regarding celestial motion can be inferred. Causality, specifically efficient causality, is not a unilateral operation tied exclusively to the capacity of the acting agent. Any causal operation requires engagement of the recipient's passive power which is the capacity of the recipient to be acted upon. [766] Thus, Albalag illustrates, the act of an agent takes effect only when the active power of the agent and the passive power of the recipient are working in tandem. [767] Since spheres, as the note indicates, have no passive powers, they seem to lack the capacity that would render them subject to the operation of any motive principle. But spheres still move, which means that celestial motion involves no efficient causality in the strict sense; they are self-moved, not in virtue of a moving principle, but in virtue of their own nature. In other words, celestial substance is naturally endowed with motion.[768] In this way, Albalag seems to follow Averroes in endorsing Aristotle's account of celestial motion as stated in *De Caelo* I. In his commentary on *Book Lam* and *Du Substantia Orbis*, Averroes speaks of celestial bodies as possessing a natural circular movement on account of their special substance.

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[764] Cf. Aristotle, *On the Heavens*, II 269a 6-7
[765] *Tiqqun*, note. 60, p. 86
[766] *Tiqqun*, p. 86. That causality is a combined function of active and passive powers is a view that can also be found in Averroes *TT*, p. 59
[767] *Tiqqun*, note. 64, p. 91. Albalag repeats this principle in several contexts. The principle does not pertain particularly to the agency of separate intelligences on spheres, but also to the agency of God; see *Tiqqun*, note. 6, pp. 12-13
[768] This view is not without a scientific grounding; see discussion on Aristotle's naturalistic account of celestial motion by Silvia Donati, "Is Celestial Motion a Natural Motion? Averroes' Position and Its Reception in the Thirteenth and Early Fourteenth-Century Commentary Tradition of Physics," 2015, p. 90. See also Vajda's reference to Albalag's theory of celestial motion. According to Vajda, Albalag adopted the view that celestial motion is natural. *averroïste juif, traducteur et annotateur daḷ-Ghazâlî*, p. 187.

This substance has no contrary and cannot change into other elements. It is eternal due to itself. [769]

Yet, this Aristotelian account of celestial motion involves a difficulty; one that provided al-Ghazali with a ground for criticizing the philosophers.[770]According to Aristotle, all movements must admit a distinction between an agent and a recipient of motion. [771] "When a thing moves itself it is one part of it that is in movement and another part that is the moved."[772] Thus, on the assumption that spheres are self-moved, they must admit a distinction between the mover and the moved. Albalag was aware of this Aristotelian premise and he takes upon himself the task of proving its applicability to all cases of natural motion, including the case of simple elements. (We will shortly see how the basic idea underlying Albalag's explanation of the distinction between the mover and the moved in simple bodies contributes to his account of celestial motion). This case posed a challenge to Aristotle's account of natural motion because it offers an example of things whose natural motion does not involve a distinction between the mover and the moved. In one note, Albalag rejects the assumption that the bodies of the four elements are not self-moved and that their motion results from external movers, because their structural simplicity does not allow for a distinction between the cause of motion and the subject that suffers from motion. In opposition, Albalag makes the point that this distinction exists in the basic bodies.

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[769] Charles Genequad, Introduction to *Averroes' Commentary on Book Lam*, p. 45.
[770] See TT, Fourth discussion, specifically p. 287-8. Averroes restates al-Ghazali's critique of the philosophers' view on celestial motion and responds to it.
[771] *Physics* VIII, 254a 15-20. From Averroes' Fourteenth discussion in the *TT*, it is obvious that this premise compelled Averroes to endorse the theory of celestial soul, albeit with a major qualification. There is yet a scholarly debate on whether Averroes really believed in the spheres' animation by soul. Relying on different treatises of Averroes, Hyman concludes that Averroes ascribed celestial motion to the separate forms associated with each sphere, but distinguished different aspects of the causal activity of the form, one of which corresponds to the activity of the soul; see Arther Hyman's introduction *to Averroes' Du Substantia Orbis,* p. 33. In contrast, Silvia Donati argues that in Averroes' view soul and form are different entities in the spheres; see Silvia Donati, "Is Celestial Motion a Natural Motion? Averroes' Position and Its Reception in the Thirteenth and Early Fourteenth-Century Commentary Tradition of Physics."
[772] *Physics* VIII, 257b 14-15

Albalag's argument rests on Aristotle's hylomorphic model of the natural world. Like all concrete objects, bodies of the four elements, despite being simple in structure, are composed of matter and form.[773] In addition to the three-dimensional corporeal form characterizing their matter, each elementary body has a substantial form, its essence, that makes the elementary body comes to be and determines its substantial features. Specifically, the substantial form is what makes the elementary body what it is thereby determining the motion "it is disposed to receive."[774]

At this point Albalag introduces the term "nature," which is nothing but a synonym for "form."[775] Besides its role as a determining factor of the thing's kinetic disposition, nature is also the *active* principle responsible for producing motion. [776] In other words, nature is tantamount to the efficient cause of motion. In view of this account, Albalag thinks that Aristotle's distinction between the moved and the mover is valid in case of simple bodies, the mover being the substantial form and the moved being the composite body of matter and corporeal form. In short, the natural movements of a simple body derives not from any an external mover, but from the moving principle within it, its particular form or "nature."[777]

That "nature" or "form" is the principle responsible for both the thing's constitution and its movement is a premise that applies to all simple bodies, including

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[773] *Tiqqun*, note. 74, p. 103. In this argument, Albalag draws upon Aristotle's account of natural motion of elementary bodies. Aristotle considers the motion of elementary bodies to be natural insofar as they contain within themselves their natural inclination to move toward their natural position (*Physics* VIII, 255b 20-30.) This inclination is not, properly speaking, a cause of motion. Aristotle differentiates between two powers in elementary bodies: the active and passive powers. The former is that in virtue of which the body comes to be, and hence produces its natural inclination to move toward a certain direction. The latter is its natural inclination of being moved toward that direction, Ibid, 256b 1-4.
[774] *Tiqqun*, note. 74, p 103
[775] This conception of form parallels Aristotle's conception of nature. In *physics* II, 198b 1-12, nature is identified with the four causes, which also explain change, coming to be and passing away of a thing.
[776] Cf. Aristotle, *Physics* II, 192b 22- 4
[777] For a discussion of this conception of nature in Aristotle and Averroes, which Albalag adopts here, see Catarina Belo, "The Concept of Nature in Aristotle, Avicenna, And Averroes"

celestial spheres.[778] Albalag uses this premise to explaine the distinction between the mover and the moved in the spheres. As with any self-moved body, the motive principle in spheres is their forms. What differs is the nature of the relationship between form and body in the celestial realm. In regard to this, Albalag explains:

> The truth is that the sphere is *moved by itself in* virtue of a mover that is different from it in *essence* and *existence*, yet not intrinsic to it. If it is asked: supposing that the mover [of spheres] is not intrinsic to the sphere as is soul to the living body, *how could it be said that it is self-moved*? We answer: each moved [body] whose mover is not extrinsic to it is said to be moved by itself. But this [the fact that the mover is not extrinsic to the body] does not necessitate that the mover must be intrinsic [in the sense of] being force in a body. It is possible that the mover exists; nothing necessitates that that mover is either extrinsic or intrinsic. This is the case of separate movers. [779]

In accordance with his rejection of the theory of the spheres' animation by soul, Albalag calls attention to what he believes to be a common misunderstanding regarding the relation of the moving principle to a self-moved body, namely that the motive principle of a self-moved body must subsist *in* the body. Against this misunderstanding, Albalag argues that a thing is said to be self-moved when its mover is not external to it. The determining factor of this characteristic, i.e. being self-moved, is the non-extraneous position of the moving principle with respect to the moved body. Albalag thus contends, if the motive principle is non-extraneous, this does not necessarily mean that it is intrinsic. For it could be separate. This is the case for the moving principles of spheres. Albalag does not explain what he means by "separate," but it is obvious from the opening remark, namely that the movers of the spheres differ from spheres in "essence" and "existence," that he refers to a state that involves no physical contact.[780] As Albalag examines more

[778] Cf. Aristotle, *Physics* II, 192b 1-25
[779] *Tiqqun*, note. 60, p. 85. Cf. *On the Heavens*, II 269a 6-7
[780] Cf. Averroes, *Du substantia Orbis,* pp. 68-9, and *Guide* I:70

closely the relationship of separate movers to spheres we are led to the conclusion that the relation of separate movers to spheres is a relation of form to body.

> What Abu-Hamid said regarding the sphere's body, namely that it has no will or representation, [because] these two aspects pertain to a specific nature and form, is true. But it is not true that, in respect to every body, this nature is a soul. For in respect to the sphere this form is not a force inhering in the body, but something separate. *For this reason, separate intellects are called the forms of the spheres. Since the word body applies to spheres and other bodies equivocally, the word form applies [to spheres and other forms] equivocally.* That beings said, this form [of sphere] must differ from other forms [so much so] that it is not necessary for it to exist within [the body of the sphere.] [781]

The idea that separate movers are the forms of the spheres, Albalag warns, needs to be understood with major qualifications; for here we are not dealing with a regular case of natural hylomorphic composition. Neither celestial matter nor form resembles the matter and form of sensible objects. Celestial body is not a body properly speaking. It differs from sensible bodies in every possible respect so that the term body applies to it only "equivocally." The same is true with respect to separate forms. By invoking the idea of equivocality Albalag is not suggesting that the nature of celestial spheres and motion lies beyond human perception. Indeed, Albalag shows acquaintance of a good deal of details regarding this subject and he speaks confidently, unlike his discussion of the issue of divine wisdom. His particular aim is to stress the distinctive nature of celestial matter and form, on the one hand, and their relationship, on the other hand. [782]

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[781] *Tiqqun*, note. 60, p. 86-7

[782] This view can be found in Averroes' *Du substantia Orbis* which seems to have provided Albalag with a fair background regarding celestial motion. Averroes explains that separate forms do not relate to spheres in the way forms relate to sublunary bodies, being forms in bodies, but they are separate: "since it became clear to Aristotle concerning the celestial bodies that their forms settle upon their subjects in such a manner that they are not divisible by the division of their subjects, and the reason for that is that they do not settle upon the subjects insofar as they are divisible, it followed that these forms do not subsist in the subject, but they are separated from the subject in respect to existence," *Du substantia Orbis,* pp. 68-9.

Nonetheless, when Albalag describes the state of second perfection of celestial spheres, we obtain a very different view regarding the relationship of celestial bodies and separate forms.

> Since celestial sphere has a second perfection by way of being a *thinking body* (*gof maskīl*) [that thinks] the intellectual representation from which motion follows, the represented thing, [that is,] the separate form, is the final cause [of motion] due to the fact that representing [this form] is desired and loved by [the sphere]. It follows also that this [separate form] is the efficient cause of the sphere and motion on the ground that it gives the form by which the sphere's essence subsists thereby it's [the sphere's] motion follows. [The separate form] is also a formal cause because it is apprehended [by the sphere]. [But] *the apprehender is nothing but the object of apprehension*. … for this reason Aristotle said *that all spheres are separate forms and these are the separate intellects*.[99] [emphasis added]

Two fundamental points are worthy of attention. Firstly, spheres are intelligent beings, the mark of their intelligence is thinking. Due to this cognitive capacity, spheres are said to have a second perfection. In essence, this state of second perfection resembles the state of second perfection of rational human beings. In both cases the intellect engages in active thinking thereby gaining identity with the object of thinking, abstract forms. There are, however, two major differences that distinguish spheres from human beings: 1) whereas the second perfection of human beings is realized through abstractive knowledge, the second perfection of spheres does not involve *external* knowledge for spheres contemplate the immaterial content of their respective forms. In this way, separate form *is* the actuality of the celestial body. 2) The second perfection of human beings involves a transformation from potentiality to actuality, whereas the second perfection of spheres doesn't. To stress the latter point, Albalag contrasts the human rational faculty, the "passive faculty disposed (*mukhan*) to [attain] actualization," with the intellect of the sphere. Unlike human intellect, the spheres' activity of thinking involves no aspects of potentiality. Inasmuch as the spheres' motion follows from

thinking separate forms, the activity of contemplation must itself be eternal just as motion is eternal. [783]

Secondly, Albalag raises a very radical idea regarding the nature of the relationship of separate forms to spheres. In the present passage, Albalag sets spheres and separate forms in a clear relation of unity to the extent of eliminating the distinction between them.[784] Celestial forms in this context are no longer described as different in "existence" and "essence" from celestial bodies. Rather, they themselves constitute the essence of spheres. This is so due to the cognitional identity between spheres, which are thinking bodies, and separate forms, the objects of cognition of the spheres. What is more, as the passage suggests, the cognitional identity holds not only between spheres and separate forms but also between spheres and separate intellects. Albalag phrases this odd idea, which he attributes to Aristotle, as follow: "all spheres are separate forms and these are the separate intellects." (*ha galgālīm kulām tsurot nivdalot ve hem ha-sekhālīm ha-nivdalīm*).

In his notes on the *Tiqqun*, Vajda expresses unease about this view. To his surprise, all manuscripts include the same phrasing except for one manuscript which contains *mani'ī ha- galgālīm* (the movers of the spheres) instead of the *galgālīm* (the spheres). In translating this passage, Vajda adheres to the original phrasing, but he

[783] *Tiqqun*, note. 60, p. 86

[784] Albalag's view on the relationship of matter and form seems to be derived from Aristotle's *Physics* where he equates matter and form with body and soul. As M. Digiovanni illustrates, by equating matter and form with soul and body Aristotle indicates that form is the actuality of matter. Even though the notion of body and soul are deemed distinct things, the idea of potentiality and actuality means that form "is identical with matter though in different states of being"; see Matteo Digiovanni, "Substantial Form in Averroes Long Commentary on Metaphysics," *In the Age of Averroes: Arabic Philosophy in the Sixth/Twelfth Century*, 2011, pp. 175-6. For Albalag, because the separate form is the object of contemplation it is the actually of the celestial body. Thus, it is identical with the sphere.

suggests in the footnote that Albalag means the movers of the spheres, rather than the spheres themselves.[785]

While the view arising from this passage strikes the reader as radical, it appears inescapable. Albalag describes spheres (i.e. celestial bodies) as thinking bodies that contemplate the "separate forms" (*ha-ẓiyûr ha-sikhlī*). After setting forth this description, Albalag stresses the Aristotelian principle of the cognitional identity between the knower and the known, which leads to the conclusion that spheres and separate forms are identical—this is so whether we read it according to Vajda's suggestion or according to the original phrasing. But if celestial bodies contemplate separate forms, which at the same time are identical with separate intellects, does not this mean that the spheres are identical with the separate intellects as well? At least, the identity between spheres and separate forms cannot be denied. If the second perfection of the spheres consist particularly in thinking the separate from, and it is known that the knower is nothing but the object known, there is no escaping the conclusion that spheres are identical with the forms.

This view regarding the body-form relationship in spheres is not alien to the history of philosophy. The ancient commentators Alexander advanced a similar view in order to resolve the conflict around Aristotle's accounts of motion. Averroes reports this view in his commentary on *Book lam* and it might be the case that Albalag learned this view through his commentary on Aristotle.

> Alexander says: having proclaimed that the causes which are the causes of substances must be the causes of everything because substances are the causes of everything, he adds to that a mention of soul and body either because these two are the causes of animals, or because it is believed that these two in particular are separate substances. This is why he did not mention matter and nature, because these substances are not separate. He

[785] Vajda, *averroïste juif, traducteur et annotateur daḷ-Ghazâlî* , p. 102, note.1.

> (Alexander) says: therefore he adds "perhaps" because some people think that the soul is separate, although he himself thinks that it is not separate, but that the first form in relation to soul is separate. He says: on this interpretation, he means by "intellect" the first mover of the celestial bodies, and by "desire", the soul which is in the celestial bodies, I mean moved in a circle.[786]

According to Wolfson, Alexander thought that "the rational soul of the heaven… is not something distinct from and other than the body, but rather a function of the nature of the body of rational living beings." [787] Based on this understanding of the body-soul relationship in spheres Alexander argues in favor of Aristotle's natural account of motion as presented in *De Caelo* I. Part of his arguments aims to remove the assumption that the natural motion of spheres depends on an intrinsic principle such as soul. Alexander considers the case of celestial spheres to be similar to the case of simple bodies, such as fir and air, which move their particular movements by "nature." [788]

Assuming that the phrasing in the above quoted passage is authentic, we can interpret Albalag's account of celestial motion in terms of what Alexander explains. By showing that there is no distinction between body and form in spheres, Albalag seems to suggest that spheres are self-moved; the *main* principle of their motion is neither a force in body nor an external mover but their own forms, which are identical with their bodies. The continuous motion of the spheres follows from the activity of contemplation, each sphere contemplating its form. This activity is essential to the sphere *qua being a rational body,* and this means that spheres can not but think, and hence cannot but move. This explains why Albalag uses the word "*tiṯḥayeiv"* in describing how motion follows upon the sphere's thinking its form. This word indicates necessity and obliterates the

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[786] Averroes, *Commentary on Book Lam* (p. 125)
[787] Wolfson, "The Problem of The Souls of The Spheres from Byzantine Commentaries on Aristotle Through the Arabs And ST. Thomas To Kepler," *Studies in the History of Philosophy and Religion,* 1973, p. 25.
[788] Ibid

volitional feature of the acting agent, which, as Albalag stipulates in another context, must characterize any non-natural moving agent.[789]

In any event, whether Albalag really thought that separate forms are identical with spheres or related to them in another way, it is obvious from the foregoing discussion that Albalag attempts to push his account of celestial motion toward naturalism. Despite that, Albalag, like Averroes before him, found no conflict in espousing a naturalistic account of celestial motion and at the same time relating celestial motion to transcendent immaterial principles, separate intellects, hierarchically culminating in the Prime Mover.[790] Having established that spheres are self-moved and identified the principle of their self-motion, Albalag explains that celestial motion involves other transcendent movers, i.e. separate intellects, that move spheres by way of efficient, formal, and final causation. This view rests on the assumption, which Albalag attributes to Aristotle, that the three causes in the divine realm are ontologically identical. Obviously, this view is not based on Aristotle. In *Metaphysics*, Aristotle refers to the incorporeal movers of spheres as only final causes moving spheres by being an object of desire.[791] Moreover, Aristotle explains that continues motion is possible only if the mover "remains *always invariable*, so that its relation to that which it moves remains also invariable and continuous."[792]

Both Avicenna and Averroes, however, introduced other modes of causation in God's action in the universe. As Wisnovsky explains, "Avicenna thought that God was at one and the same time efficient cause, the origin of all existence, and final cause, the

[789] See, for instance, *Tiqqun* note. 30, p. 29.
[790] Averroes, *Commentary on Book Lam*, p. 165.
[791] *Metaphysics* XII, 5. 1072b 20-35
[792] *Physics* VIII, 267b 15-16

good or end of all essential perfection."[793] Avicenna presents this "complementary" idea of efficient-final causality in terms of the procession-revision cosmology; God causes the world in the two modes by being the original source of procession and the ultimate cause of reversion. Averroes admits these two modes of causation in the realm of separate intellects, but he expresses the idea in a finalistic system where there is no mention of procession—this is so, at least, insofar as his commentaries on Aristotle's works are considered. In his commentary on *Book Lam* he explains how separate intellects include three modes of causation.

> …this mover [of the spheres] is an intellect, and it is a mover insofar as it is the agent of motion and the end of motion. This is distinct and multiple only in us, I mean that which moves us locally as efficient cause and that which moves us as final cause, because it has two modes of existence, one in the soul and one outside the soul. Insofar as it exists in the soul it is the efficient cause of motion, and insofar as it exists outside the soul, it is mover as end… one must understand that the movers of the celestial bodies are movers in both ways without being multiple. Insofar as these intelligibles are their forms, they impart motion as efficient causes; insofar as they are their ends, these are moved by them by means of their desire.[794]

We can simply understand Albalag's statement regarding the three-fold role of intelligences, i.e. being efficient, formal, and final causes, with respect to celestial motion in light of Averroes' explanation. Insofar as separate intellects provide spheres with the object of cognition, i.e. the separate form, on account of which they subsist, and hence move, they are efficient and formal causes of celestial motion. Insofar as separate intellects provide spheres with the object of love and desire, they are the final causes of motion. In other words, there is no *real* distinction in the function of separate intellects in producing motion, and the threefold role of causation could, more or less, be reduced to final causation.

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[793] R. Wisnovsky, *Avicenna's Metaphysics in Context*, p. 185.
[794] Averroes, *Commentary on Book Lam* (p. 149)

Yet it remains to be asked what is that about separate intellects that spheres desire? Unlike many philosophers, for instance Maimonides, Albalag does not consider God to be the object of desire—and of course we know that knowing God's essence is not possible except for God Himself. This means that what spheres desire and apprehend is not God's essence. Instead, Albalag specifies, spheres desire and apprehend "what is good in their view"[795] and what is "achievable according to their nature." This turns out to be nothing but the form of "the eternal circular motion."[796] The goal of spheres is, accordingly, movement itself, a goal, as the discussion has shown, that is not something to be fulfilled, but always exists in spheres in a state of actuality.

One last point need be addressed. When Albalag speaks about desire in spheres, he seems to be contradicting himself. On the one hand, he criticizes Avicenna for attributing sensible qualities, such as sensation and imagination, to spheres. Circular motion, in Albalag's view, cannot follow from an imaginative representation because movements associated with such representations seek "to fulfill a desire or escape a danger." [797]Albalag thus insists that spheres have "no sensory faculties" and that only intellectual activities can be ascribed to them. On the other hand, he states that spheres desire and love their final cause. But desire is closely associated with the sensory and imaginary faculties. Why, then, does Albalag claim that the perception of the spheres is exclusively intellectual?

One way to answer this question is to say that desire applies to spheres in an equivocal manner just as matter and form apply equivocally to spheres. Alternatively, by desire Albalag might mean the natural inclination of the spheres' substance to move in

[795] *Tiqqun*, note. 61, p. 87
[796] *Tiqqun*, note. 65, p. 93
[797] Ibid, note. 60, p. 86

their peculiar circular motion. This suggestion maybe supported by Wolfsan's observation that some ancient commentaries interpreted Aristotle's reference to "the appetence" of spheres in the light of one note in the *Eudemian Ethics* in which Aristotle relates motion of inanimate and animate things to their internal essential impulse. Animate beings may be moved by their impulse when they are not compelled to move contrary to it by external forces; impulse being the "power of being moved naturally in a certain way." Arguing from the point that spheres are animate "appetence" or "desire," according to Wolfson's reading of Alexander, is equivalent to essential impulse. The commentators used the two words, essential impulse and desire in relation to spheres in the same sense.

Wolfson's reading finds support in Averroes' exposition of the "desiderative power" of spheres. In *Du Substantia Orbis*, Averroes maintains that the power of desire exists in body alone. Each celestial sphere, like every animated body, "moves toward the loved object through a power existing in it."[798] Kogan takes Averroes' statement at face value, concluding that the desiderative power of spheres constitutes "a dynamic behavior" of the celestial body that operates in congruity with the active powers of the intelligences. [799]Arthur Hyman, contrary to Kogan, argues that these powers are states characterizing the spheres' form, that is to say, they are the function of the form. In his view, both the desiderative and rational faculties of the celestial body are nothing but two aspects of the same celestial form.[800]

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[798] Wolfson, "The Problem of The Souls of The Spheres from Byzantine Commentaries on Aristotle Through the Arabs And ST. Thomas To Kepler," *Studies in the History of Philosophy and Religion,* 1973, p. 25.
[799] B. Kogan, *Averroes and The Metaphysics of Causation,* p. 200-1
[800] Arthur Hyman's introduction to Averroes' *Du Substantia Orbis*, p. 33. Silvia Donati offers a different interpretation of Averroes. She proposes that Averroes differentiated between soul and form in spheres, which means that the appetitive powers of spheres are the function of the soul. Silvia Donati, "Is Celestial Motion a Natural Motion? Averroes' Position and Its Reception in the Thirteenth and Early Fourteenth-Century Commentary Tradition of

Whether Albalag takes the spheres' desiderative power to be a function of the body or a function of the form, is not clear. As we saw in the passage above, there is a possibility that Albalag might have thought that celestial bodies and forms are identical. Assuming this were the case, there would be little difference whether we consider the spheres' desiderative power a function of the body or a function of the form.

In conclusion, Albalag's analysis of the nature of spheres and causation in the terrestrial realm gives rise to different accounts of celestial motion that correspond to Aristotle's conflicting accounts in the *De Caelo*, *Physics*, and *Metaphysics*. On the one hand, celestial motion appears to be natural, being independent of external agency. This view is openly suggested by Albalag's affirmation that spheres are self-moved and that spheres *qua* bodies are naturally endowed with the motion in which their first perfection consists. On the other hand, Albalag maintains that celestial motion requires the agency of immaterial movers, the separate intelligences, of which the Prime Mover is the highest in rank, and which move spheres, primarily, by being objects of love and desire. Despite this discrepancy, the clearest result of Albalag's treatment of the issue of celestial motion is that he eliminated the theory of the sphere's animation by soul, which assumes that the motive forces of spheres, being finite, can not move spheres continuously. Instead, Albalag argues that the motive principles of spheres, in virtue of which they are self-moved, are separate forms.

In view of this, Albalag's statement that the Prime Mover is the efficient, formal, and final cause of motion of all spheres need to be understood with some qualifications. The Prime Mover is not the *immediate* motive principle of spheres. Motion is ascribed to

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Physics," *Averroes' Natural Philosophy and Its Reception in The Latin West*, edited by Paul J.J.M. Bakker, (Leuven University Press, 2015)

the Prime Mover insofar as their respective moving principles are ontologically dependent on Him. It appears that it is only with respect to the outermost sphere that Prime Mover is the immediate motive principle.

4. Motion, Knowledge, or Nature? The Cause of Coming-to-be

Several notes in the *Tiqqun* touch upon the issue of divine providence. The purely philosophical notes give rise to a non-personal conception of divine providence that watches over species, specifically by supplying the necessary requirements for their enduring existence. Divine Providence takes place through the intermediary of celestial spheres whose motion results in the coming-to-be and continuity of all existents. Concerned with satisfying the features of the Aristotelian conception of divine perfection, Albalag emphasizes that divine providence is unpurposive, for "the superior does not exist for the sake of the inferior." No goal is sought in the coming-to-be of things, but because God "is perfect and above perfection,"[801] He completes goodness on earth by bringing forth existents through the intermediary of spheres. Similarly, spheres move their continuous circular motion for their own sake and things come forth from their motion only by way of secondary intention—secondary intention means, as Charels Genequad explains in the context of Averroes,[802] a concomitant effect of an action as opposed to its specifically intended result. These notes imply that divine providence,

[801] Cf. *Guide* II: 10. Here Albalag uses a language that apparently accords with the theory of plentitude. Because God has abundance of being, He "overflows" existents. It should be noted, however, the word overflow plays a merely explanatory role in Albalag's discussion. God brings existents not through an outgoing and communicative process of emanation, but through the continuous rotation of spheres. In another context, Albalag refutes the primary premise on which the emanation theory rests, namely that from the one only one thing may proceed, explaining that existents do not proceed from God in a downward process of emanation. God maintains His role as a cause of existents as well as His absolute simplicity by being the source of the unitary motion of spheres without which the celestial order, subsequently the natural order would collapse. For a discussion on the theory of plentitude in the middle ages see Arthur Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being: A Study of the History of an Idea*, Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1964), pp. 66-98.

[802] Ch. Genequand's introduction to *Ibn Rushed's commentary of Book Lam,* p. 25.

which is equivalent to existence, is necessary. It follows from the non-volitional and mechanical impact of spheres on the sublunary realm which is necessitated by their continuous motion.

The main theme of the theory of eternal creation appears to be in tune with this conception of divine providence. Existents beneath the sphere of the moon come to be and pass away in virtue of celestial motion that comes to be and endures on account of the agency of God. In this way, God is said to be the ultimate creator of all existents.

Nonetheless, Albalag prefaces the theory of eternal creation with some remarks that allude to a voluntary and purposeful creation.[803] Truly, most natural phenomena occur through the agency of natural causes. However, natural causes are neither entirely autonomous nor aimless. They ultimately depend on the agency of God and contribute to fulfilling His Will. In this connection, Albalag argues that God's agency in the universe involves will and knowledge, albeit of different kinds from human will and knowledge. His will is such that it invariably chooses to create what is good.[804] His knowledge, which Albalag describes as an internal speech of God (*davar pinimi,*)[805] encompasses an immaterial paradigm of the forms of all existents and the natural order according to which He continuously creates the universe.

> The beginning (*hatḥalah*) [indicated in this verse] referrers to Divine Wisdom… the order characterizing all existents is derived from the order existing in the Wisdom of the creator.[806]

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[803] *Tiqqun*, note. 30, p. 30-2
[804] Cf. *Guide* III:25
[805] Obviously, by *davar penimi* Albalag wants to make the point that God's act of intellection is directed exclusively to His own essence. It is an inward act based on His essence rather than external objects, see *Tiqqun*, note. 30, p. 47
[806] *Tiqqun*, note, 30, p. 31

Moreover, God's knowledge is the "instrument"[807] (*klī*) through which He creates the universe. It is "the wisdom by means of which all existents come to be."[808] In other words, God's knowledge is not only an exemplar according to which the universe has been made, but itself is cause of the universe. [809]

> [Having made it clear that the letter *bet* in Hebrew has different linguistic connotations,] we say that 'in the beginning God created' means that *reshit* is the instrument through which He created the universe and that this *reshit* is nothing but His Wisdom.[810]

In the context of his discussion of the issue of Divine knowledge, Albalag assigns a more obvious causal function to God's knowledge. Clearly stated, God causes the universe by thinking His own essence. His causal knowing is not limited to the celestial realm, but extends to the physical world. As we read the theory of eternal creation in light of this conception of Divine knowledge, Albalag appears as saying that God's continuous act of creation is intellectual. All processes of generation and corruption in the sublunary realm proceed *according to* and *through* God's self-intellection.

As usual, Albalag leaves us with many lacunas. His positive remarks on the causal feature of Divine Wisdom lacks rigorous supportive argumentation and scientific explanation. Other than stating that the whole universe is a product of God's self-intellection, nowhere does Albalag explain how Divine wisdom performs the metaphysical role of bringing things into being. We might recall from our discussion of

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[807] In his analysis of Albalag's interpretation of the account of creation, Symour Feldman considers Ravitsky's note in which he includes Albalag among "the group of the post-Maimonidean philosophers" who "make wisdom a hypostasis, an independently existing entity serving as a paradigm akin to the Forms in the *Timaeu* and Philo's Logos." Feldman agrees with Ravitsky in principle that Albalag's language invites a hypostatic conception of Divine wisdom, but he offers an alternative reading in the light of Sadya Gaon's reading of Job 28 where wisdom plays no actual metaphysical role but is used in an adverbial sense, that is to say, "God created the universe wisely." It seems to me that both readings don't consider Albalag's theory of God's knowledge to which the idea of God's causal knowing is central; see Ravitzky, Aviezer, "The Hypostatization of the Supernal Wisdom" (Hebrew), *Italia* 3 (1982), 36. Seymour Feldman, "An Averroist Solution to a Maimonidean Perplexity," p. 25.

[808] Ibid

[809] Vajda considers this idea to be the essence of Albalag's conception of Divine causality. In his view, Albalag perceives of divine causality as nothing but a collation of forms, see *averroïste juif, traducteur et annotateur daḷ-Ghazâlî* (p. 105)

[810] *Tiqqun*, note. 30, p. 32

divine knowledge that God's essence, which is identical with His knowledge, is the totality of the forms of existents. Knowing that "creation" in the sublunary realm, according to the theory of eternal creation, consists in transforming things from potential to actual existence by unifying forms and matter, the crux of the theory of causal knowing would be an explanation of how the intelligible forms existing in God's mind are communicated to the physical realm through the very act of God's self-intellection.

A possible explanation would follow the guideline of the Avicennan Neo-Platonist model of emanation with its descending chain of emanative intelligences. God's thinking His own essence, causes separate intelligences to proceed successively from Him in a downward manner. The lowest of these intelligences, the Active Intellect, plays the metaphysical role of bringing sublunary things into existence by imprinting on them their specific forms.

Another possible explanation rests on the Aristotelian paradigm of final and formal causation. This explanation is proposed by Kogan in the context of his interpretation of Averroes' theory of causal knowing. Kogan points to two premises repeated in the *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut* several times: 1) form in immaterial existents is identical with end, and 2) form determines the thing's specific act. Based on these two premises, Kogan argues that Averroes understood God's causal knowing only in the sense of His final and formal causation. With respect to separate intellects, God's causal knowledge consists in thinking His own essence which embraces the particular forms of separate intellects. In thinking these forms, God provides intelligences not only with the objects of thought, their forms, without which they could not be actualized as

intelligences but also with "a map or kinetic code of their functions."[811] Moreover, God is the final cause of the intelligences because He thinks their ends, which are, in the case of immaterial beings, identical with their forms.

With respect to sensible existents, Kogan quotes Averroes' following explanation:

> And as to His relation to sensible existents, He is—since He bestows upon them the unity which causes their plurality and the unification of their plurality—the cause of all them, being their agent, form and end, and all the existents seek their end by their movement towards Him, and this movement by which they seek their end is the movement for which they are created, and in so far this concern all existents, this movement exist by nature.[812]

The unification of plurality consists in bringing together matter and form, a process that results in drawing things from potentiality to actuality. In other words, "unification" signifies the movement or change through which things "seek their end" and "for the sake of which they were created."[813] Motion here refers to both celestial motion and the natural movements of things for which God is the formal and final cause, namely because of Him thinking the patterns of their specific natures, forms, and their final ends. Kogan, thus, concludes, "beyond this, there is no special act of contemplative production seem necessary to explain" how God's causal knowing brings things into existence. "God knows" things "into being by being cognitionally identical with the ends at which their efficient causes aim."[814]

Let us return to Albalag. Although Albalag does not explain how God's causal knowledge contributes to the coming-to-be of the sublunary things, we can readily rule out the emanation model for several reasons. Firstly, Albalag often criticizes the main principles on which the theory of emanation rests and argues against ancient and contemporary commentators who falsely attribute it to Aristotle. In some contexts,

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[811] B. Kogan, *Averroes And the Metaphysics of Causation*, p. 242
[812] Ibid
[813] Ibid, pp. 242-243
[814] Ibid, p. 243

Averroes is included in Albalag's critique particularly for being inconsistent in his rejection of the theory of emanation.[815] Secondly, Albalag never assigns a metaphysical role to the Active intellect, the fundamental agent in the process of coming-to-be in the physical realm according the emanation scheme. In point of fact, the omission of the active intellect is a remarkable feature not only of Albalag's analysis of coming-to-be but also of his theories of knowledge and prophecy. The entire system of emanation with its ontological and epistemological merits has no substantive utility in the *Tiqqun*.

Conversely, the model of final and formal causation would seem to fit more adequately within the *Tiqqun.* In his analyses of the ontology of separate intellects and celestial spheres, Albalag provides a model of divine causation in accordance with Averroes' finalistic model: God is the final cause of the separate intellects insofar as He is their object of desire and thought. Separate intellects subsist and maintain their actual existence on account of being constantly desiring and thinking, each according to its rank, the ultimate intellect in act, God.[816] The mode of final causation, as explained previously, accounts for the permanence of celestial spheres and motion. Celestial spheres move on account of their desire to the corresponding intelligences, which, as explained formerly, embrace the form of their ultimate goal, i.e. circular motion. Although Albalag speaks of efficient and formal causation in the divine realm, these two modes, as we explained, are more or less different ways of describing different aspects of the mode of final causation.

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[815] Albalag's point regarding Averroes is correct. As scholars point out, Averroes changed his mind over time regarding the validly of the theory of emanation. At some point, he dismissed the entire system, but managed to maintain the role of the active intellect in the sublunary realm. Still, in his later writings Averroes is hesitant to attribute a siginifcant role to the Active intellect. For Averroes' account of the theory of emanation, see *TT*, Third Discussion. For studies on Averroes' theory of the Active intellect see Davidson, H. "Averroes on the Active Intellect as a cause of Existence," *Viator* 18, 191-225. B. Kogan, *Averroes and the Metaphysics of Causation*, p. 248.

[816] *Tiqqun*, notes. 42, 65.

With respect to the sublunary realm, Albalag is less clear. In one context where he proposes to offer an account of the physical universe alternative to the emanation account, he follows Averroes' lead in explaining the existence of the universe in terms of "unification." According to Albalag, the world's "perfection" consists in the "unification" of its diverse parts.[817] This "unification," takes place due to the agency of God that acts on things by way of formal causation. As Albalag explains, that which endows things with forms is the real cause of existence. The ultimate giver of form is God. The way He gives forms is not such that He communicates forms to existents successively and individually through the intermediary of the Active Intellect. Rather, God is the giver of forms insofar as He is the source of the unified form of existence without which the actual existence of individual forms would not be possible.

Again, Albalag leaves us with a lacuna. It is not obvious how and to whom God provides the unified form and how it unifies the parts. Let's assume that the parts here refer to matter and form, as explained in the theory of eternal creation. If matter does not receive individual forms directly from an external agent, this means that forms are not acquired. They have no separate existence and their coming-to-be consists in their actualization in matter, as Aristotle explained: "forms are never generated." Only "the

[817] Ibid, note. 69, p. 97

concrete thing which gets its name from this—the composition—is produced."[818] In one context Albalag stresses this ontology of form explicitly:

> … pay attention to the principle that follows form this [discussion] because it is very valuable. The principle is that: there are compound things whose parts have no separate existence before composition. Only composition is the cause of their existence."[819]

One way to understand God's role in unifying the parts, i.e. making the matter-form composition, is to assume, as Averroes proposes, that the "unification" signifies the movements through which things "seek their ends" and "on account of which they were created."[820] In this way we conclude, following Kogan's conclusion in the context of his analysis of Averroes' theory of causal knowing, that God is the formal and the final cause of things because He is "cognitionally identical" with the forms, in virtue of which things move, and the ends toward which things move. God's knowledge is causal only in the sense that it is identical with the ends toward which the efficient causes of things aim. [821]

Let it be noted that although the model of formal and final causation proposed by Averroes fits the *Tiqqun's* philosophical outlook more than the emanation model, it cannot be affirmed that it represents Albalag's understanding of God's causal knowing. After all, Albalag is generally silent about the nature and the manner of God's causal knowledge. The reason might be epistemic. In many places, Albalag emphasizes, usually in opposition to al-Ghazali and Avicenna, that human perception falls short of

[818] *Metaphysics* VII: 8, 1033b18-19. For a discussion of this ontology of form in Aristotle see Dag Nikolaus Hasse, "Spontaneous Generation and The Ontology of Forms in Greek, Arabic, and Medieval Latin Sources," *Classical Arabic Philosophy: Sources and Reception,* 2007. Averroes also endorses this Aristotelian view in his commentary on *Book Lam*. He repudiates the Avicennan account of hylomorophic compounds. He says: "The third doctrine is the one we have borrowed from Aristotle and it is that the agent produces only the compound from matter and form by moving matter and changing it to reduce the potentiality it has for the form into actuality. This view is similar to the view of those who think that the agent merely assembles and organizes discrete things; this is the view of Empedocles. We had neglected this opinion concerning the agent when we mentioned the different schools; the agent, in Aristotle, does not really unite two things, but makes them pass from potentiality into actuality, putting together, as it were, potentiality and actuality, I mean matter and form, by making potentiality become actuality, without suppressing the substratum which receives the potentiality," p. 109.

[819] *Tiqqun*, note. 11, p. 16-17
[820] B. Kogan, *Averroes and the Metaphysics of Causation*, p. 243.
[821] Ibid

understanding God's essence and attributes, in specific the attribute of knowledge. Albalag's skeptical statements are relatively decisive and seem to include every aspect of Divine knowledge. He usually gives the impression that nothing whatsoever can be known with *certainty* about Divine knowledge. With this emphasis on the epistemic limitation of human beings, we can understand why the issue of causal knowing is surrounded with many lacunae in the *Tiqqun*.

At best, we can understand the unsubstantiated mention of God's causal knowing, whether in the context of the theory of eternal creation or divine knowledge, as an attempt to satisfy the theological need of assigning a fundamental causal role to God in the physical universe without having to deviate from Aristotle's metaphysics and cosmology by employing the emanation theory which Albalag deemed far removed from Aristotelianism. Albalag might have drawn upon this Averroian theory without necessarily accepting it as a demonstrative philosophical account of divine causation.

If this is so, then, the theory of eternal creation emerges with another notable gap, namely it fails to provide supporting evidence for one of its primary thesis that the physical universe is continuously created by the very act of God's self-intellection. With this gap in mind, it seems obvious that God plays no substantial role in the physical universe. The remaining account of creation in the sublunary realm would be that through celestial motion as Albalag's concept of divine providence suggests. Indeed, even within the context of the theory of eternal creation, the notion of God's causal knowledge has no obvious application. Albalag expounds all the details of the process of creation in the sublunary realm exclusively in relation to spheres with almost no mention of Divine Wisdom or Will. What exactly is role of spheres in the creation of the physical universe

is a question whose answer can be gathered from Albalag's interpretation of the metaphor of The River.

The Metaphor of the River

In the context of the theory of eternal creation, Albalag proposes that diverse interpretations, including philosophical interpretations, could be attributed to scripture due to the Torah's polyvalent nature. Although it is possible to interpret Scripture in accordance with scientific doctrines, one must bear in mind that these doctrines do not necessarily represent the true meaning of Scripture. On this basis, Albalag proposes to read the philosophical thesis regarding the non-temporal creation of the universe into scripture. The difficulty arising from this reading, of course, is that *m'aseh breshit* clearly describes a progressive temporal creation of the universe; one that has a starting and ending time.

One way to understand this biblical account, Albalag proposes, is to consider it a metaphor of the natural order of beings. The universe in its entirety exists in its current shape since ever and forever. Its parts "are all like one thing," meaning that "they don't precede one another in the time of their creation,"[822] but they all exist simultaneously. However, the parts are "naturally" dependent on one another. The step-by-step creation of the universe described in scripture embodies this idea.

In interpreting the details of *m'aseh breshit,* Albalag concentrates all his effort to discover the main theses of Aristotle's analysis of coming-to-be in Scripture. Aristotle,

[822] *Tiqqun*, note. 30, p. 47. Cf. *Guide*, II:30 specifically when Maimonides account for the creation of man. For Maimonides' interpretation of the account of the beginning and the exegetical problem involved in his interpretation see Sara Klein-Braslavy, *Maimonides as Biblical Interpreter* (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2011), 21-86.

followed by Averroes,[823] explains that things are composed of matter and form which in themselves have no separate existence. Anything whose coming-to-be consist in combining matter and form is itself a substrate for a new thing. That is to say, "everything always comes-to-be something and out of something."[824] Aristotle offers a terse statement that summarizes this notion of coming-to-be: "we speak of 'becoming that from this' instead of 'this becoming that.'[825]

The four elements—fire, water, air, and earth— are the most basic substances in the sublunary realm. They are the constitutive principles of all sub-celestial substances. Out of these elements, all things come-to-be and they are eventually decomposed into them. The four elements themselves are generated out of each other. Aristotle explains, in light of his thesis that the coming-to-be of one contrary results from the destruction of its contrary, that the coming-to-be of elements is reciprocal in the sense that the contrary qualities of elements—hot, cold, dry, and moist—give way to one another. For instance, fire changes into earth if the mixture of hot and dry characterizing it changes into a mixture of cold and dry.[826]

Albalag forms his interpretation of *m'aseh breshit* in terms of this Aristotelian account. Three main principles, he states explicitly, underlay his interpretation 1) all sublunary existents are composed of matter and form, 2) everything comes-to-be on account of the destruction of another, and 3) coming-to-be involves reciprocal conversion of the contrary qualities of things. When scripture describes the gradual production of all

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[823] See *Commentary on Book Lam*, pp. 88-99
[824] *On Generation and corruption,* I, 317a 34-5
[825] *Physics*, I, 190a 21-22
[826] *On Generation and Corruption*, chapters 3 -5. For a discussion of this Aristotelian theory see Friedrich Solmsen, *Aristotle's System of the Physical World: A Comparison with His Predecessors* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1960)

types of existents, it alludes to the arrangement of things according to their natural priory and the manner in which things come out of each other.

A summary of Albalag's interpretation can be presented in the following selected lines which I arrange according to the sequence of the above-mentioned three principles.

> Scripture explains that all generable and destructible things on earth has existed as they are without a change [in their essential qualities.] It also explains that the existence on earth is everlasting…immediately after that, scripture points to the main principles of coming-to-be and passing away; these are the four elements. They are mentioned according to their natural order[827]… scripture names matter *tohu* for neither it nor form exists separately, and named form *vohu* because a thing is what it is on its [the form's] account.[828]

> The book mentions all elements according to their nature and the direction of their [natural] motion. It includes the first two elements, fire and air, in the word *ruah* because they share the same characteristics of lightness and warmness. Generally speaking, fire is nothing but dry and hot air, as Aristotle explained. Scripture includes the second two elements, water and earth, in the word *mayim*, because they share the same characteristics of heaviness and coldness[829]…. After that scripture informs that all existence in the physical world comes out of these basic principles, i.e. the four elements … All existents have a natural order. [Thus,] vapor precedes plants and plants precede animals… till the order culminates in man… *The existence of every concrete sublunary substance results from the destruction of another*. The book, therefore, named destruction, which is the end of another existence, evening, and named the coming-to-be, which is the beginning of a new existent, morning. The word day, *yom*, includes the destruction of something and the coming-to-be of another thing, that is, it indicates a complete process of destruction and coming-to-be… Destruction is prior to existence; for this is the nature of matter. Nothing comes out of matter until something else passes away.[830]

> We return to what we have proposed and say that what our Rabbis mentioned, namely that this and that (the heaven and earth) were created as one thing, corresponds to the doctrine of the people of speculation according to which 'there is nothing in existence that temporally precedes the other, and that nothing can exist without the other'[831]… *With respect to this verse they also explained that if it were not for the contraries, the physical world could not have existed. They also explained that an opposite can not exists if its opposite does not exit.* [832]

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[827] *Tiqqun*, note. 30, p. 33
[828] Ibid
[829] Ibid, p. 39
[830] Ibid, p. 44. Cf. *Guide*, I: 74
[831] Ibid, p. 47
[832] Ibid

Up to this point, Albalag's account of generation and corruption is, in essence, Aristotelian. The transformation of elements into one another and the coming-to-be of things out of the destruction of others seem to be a mechanical process consequent upon celestial motion and their natural movements. His emphasis on the inseparability of matter and form rather indicates, as explained formerly, that forms are not generated, but actualized in matter which exists in a constant state of privation of certain forms.

However, as Albalag turns to explain the exact role of celestial spheres in the mutual transformation of elements and coming-to-be of animate beings his explanation, at first glance, seems to break with the Aristotelian account of coming-to-be.

> Scripture compared the universal natural form that proceeds from the heaven to a river because it continuously overflows. Because celestial bodies are the principles and the sources of this form and this form overflows on the realm of generation and corruption, the immobile center of the universe, and gives *being* to every existent, each according to its nature, it is said that "a river comes out from Eden and waters all the garden." [833]

Here Albalag attempts to establish a causal link between heavens and the world of becoming.[834] All things in the physical universe go back to celestial spheres which bring them into being through the intermediary of what Albalag calls "the universal natural form," or as scripture symbolically refers to as "*the River of fire* (*Dinor*)*"*[835] Furthermore, the obvious emanation terminology of this passage alludes to the Avicennan ontology of forms and the role of the Active Intellect as a giver of forms. Even though Albalag omits the Active intellect, its role in communicating forms to matter can arguably be ascribed to spheres. No doubt, such a formulation gives rise to an account of coming-to-be that stands in a stark contradiction with Albalag's persistent critique of the Avicennan emanation cosmology and ontology of form. Could such an inconsistency have escaped Albalag's

[833] *Tiqqun*, note. 30, p. 47
[834] Cf. Commentary *on Book Lam*, p. 111
[835] *Tiqqun*, note. 30, p. 47, note. 68, p. 95. Daniel 7:10

mind? Or, should we assume that the talk of overflowing is merely motivated by the need to explain the biblical river whereas in fact it does not aim to define the nature of the causal link between the heaves and the world of becoming? [836]

The confusion arising from this account disappears as Albalag explains the "mystery" of the River of *Dinor*, which is a metaphor of "the universal natural form" emanating from spheres. According to Albalag, the specific name of the river alludes to one of the secrets of philosophy as regards the manner and cause of coming-to-be in the physical universe.

> This river, which goes out from Eden and splits into four parts, is named by Daniel the river of *Dinor*. This naming follows from a mysterious reason, which is one of the philosophical secrets. … [As philosophers] say, there is some sort of spiritual heat emanating from celestial bodies on the elements, and this heat is the cause of the generation [of elements.][837]

The philosophical secret on the river of *Dinor* turns out to be a brief version of Aristotle's account of coming-to-be formulated in emanationist terminology. In the *Epitome of Metaphysics*, Averroes presents two accounts of coming-to-be with respect to elements which, as he notes, vary according to the science in which the issue is examined. Firstly, Aristotle's "physical account," appears in *De Caelo* I, 2-3. Gad Freudenthal summarizes the main arguments underlying the physical account as restated by Averroes in the *Epitome of Metaphysics.* I cite his summary:

> The great sphere produces *heat*, which in turn generates lightness, which is the form of fire. By the same token, the absence of motion at the center creates heaviness, which is the form of the element earth. The intermediary elements, water and air, come to be inasmuch they are heavy or light with respect to the two extreme elements. Similarly, the great sphere needs an immobile center on which to revolve and this is the earth at the center; the existence of earth entails that of its contrary, i.e. of fire, and, in a further move, that of the intermediate elements.[838]

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[836] I am thankful to professor Fraenkel for pointing out this to me.
[837] *Tiqqun*, note. 30, p. 48
[838] Gad Fruedenthal, "Medieval Astrologization of Aristotle's Biology: Averroes on the Role of Celestial Bodies in The

In view of this account, the generation of the four elements occurs "mechanically" due to the continuous motion of celestial spheres. The role of spheres is not strictly speaking emanating the specific forms of the four elements, but producing a *heat* that functions to actualize one of the two contrary qualities, i.e. lightness as opposed to heaviness, inhering in matter. The form of fire follows from the form of lightness. Conversely, the absence of motion in the center of the universe, the earth, results in the actualization of the form of heaviness which in turn results in the form of the element earth.

Secondly, "the metaphysical account"[839]which Averroes attributes to contemporary philosophers. In view of this account, forms of the four elements go back to the giver of forms, the Active Intellect. Averroes endorses this account, but he assigns the role of the Active Intellect to spheres. In his view, the four elements receive their forms from celestial bodies rather than the Active Intellect.

Although the terminologies employed in Albalag's exposition of the mystery of the river of *Dinor* draws him close to the second account, it can readily be recognized that Albalag has in mind the first account. First, what emanates from spheres is only one form, which Albalag defines as a sort of "spiritual heat." On account of this heat, the four elements and what they imply come to be. Albalag clearly states:

> This form branches out into four essential forms [the forms of the four elements]; which are the basic components of all beings. [840]

Moreover, this heat plays no substantial role in determining the characteristics of things. It bestows things with "being" in accordance with their dispositional

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Generation of Animate Beings," *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy*, vol. 12 (Cambridge University Press, 2002), 111-137. Quotation is taken from note, 9

[839] Ibid, see also H. Davidson, *Al-Farabi, Avicenna, and Averroes on Intellect*, 1992, pp. 236-8.
[840] *Tiqqun*, note. 30, p. 48

characteristics, "their nature." When Albalag describes the formation of animate beings and plants the role of this spiritual heat is rather reduced to the modest role of "*bishûl*." Albalag does not explain what he means by "*bishûl*," but the account he offers alludes to the process of "concoction" which, in view of Aristotle's theory of coming-to-be, is the "process in which the natural heat of an object perfects its corresponding passive qualities," thereby leading to "the realization of the form that defines the living being." [841] Albalag explains the role of the spiritual heat in the coming to be of things as follow.

> The heat associated with the element of fire is not the only cause for coming-to-be because this heat [of fire] is burning and it is known that burning causes destruction rather than generation, let alone [maintaining the efficacy] of the organized powers inhering in the forms of animals and plants. For this reason, philosophers say that there is some sort of a spiritual heat (*ḥom ruḥani)* emanating from celestial bodies on the elements, and this heat is the cause of coming-to-be. *This heat causes the coming-to-be of things because it concocts and it is known that concoction is the cause of coming-to-be.* On account of this celestial heat, which *inheres in fire and the rest of elements*, the basic substances underlying all creatures came to be. [Also,] all creatures, which have a specific order by means of the force carried by the spiritual heat, named nature, came to be.[842]

Underlying this passage is another Aristotelian theory related to the analysis of coming-to-be. In accounting for the mutual adjustment of the contrary qualities of elements and the formation of balanced compounds, Aristotle provides a physiological theory at the center of which lies the notion of vital heat. [843] Vital heat is an active factor that operates on the "passive factors" (hot, cold, moist, and dry) to bring about concoction and combine elements into a stable and balanced substances. [844] The typical example of the function of vital heat is Aristotle's account of human reproduction. A summary of this

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[841] The quotation is taken from Thomas Johnsen, *The Powers of Aristotle's Soul* (Oxford : Oxford University Press, 2012), 108. Reference to this role of heat is made by Averroes in his commentary on *Book Lam* in the context of discussing the issue of spontaneous generation; see *Commentary on Book Lam*, pp. 110-111.
[842] Ibid
[843] J. Stern, *Maimonides Matter and Form*, 2013, p. 127.
[844] Gad Freudenthal, *Aristotle's Theory of Material Substance: Heat and Pneuma,* Form and Soul (Oxford Scholarship Online 2011), chapter, 1, p. 15)

account is set forth in the phrase "man begets man," which specifies that the offspring receives its form from the father whereas matter comes from the mother. The impact of form on matter, the menstrual blood, occurs through the action of the vital heat carried in the male sperm. This heat has the power to concoct the female blood and create the fetus, which has the form of the father. In the context of medieval philosophy, the notion of vital heat was substituted by a metaphysical explanation that ascribes the generation of animate beings and plants either to the Active Intellect and or the heavenly bodies.[845] Likewise, Averroes in his commentaries on Aristotle adds a translunar element to Aristotle's account of the generation of animals and plants, arguing, as Freudenthal and Davidson show,[846] that a principle "from without" must take the role of in-forming sublunary substances with their specific forms. This principle is the Active intellect, according to Averroes' early works, and celestial bodies, according to his later works.

In the first part of the present passage, Albalag seems to follow Averroes in suggesting the need of a principle from without to carry out the process of generation. Celestial heat plays this role specifically by serving as an active factor that operates on the opposing elemental qualities to generate elements and set them in a state of equilibrium. As Albalag notes, the destructive effect of the quality of heat characterizing fire would not permit the coming-to-be of elements or what follows from them. The mutual transformation of elements into one another requires maintaining balance between the pairs of passive factors (hot and cold & moist and dry) in ratios corresponding to the specific substantial features of each element. The absence of this balance would preclude

[845] For a brief review of the views of al-Kindi, al-Farabi, and Avicenna on the matter see Stern, *Maimonides Matter and Form*, 2013, pp. 128-9.
[846] H. Davidson, *Al-Farabi, Avicenna, And Averroes on Intellect*, 1992, p. 239. Cf. Gad Fruedenthal, "Medieval Astrologization"

the process of mutual transformation, and here comes the role of celestial heat in maintaining the required condition of equilibrium.

In the second part, Albalag revises his account of coming-to-be so as to draw it close to Aristotle's notion of vital heat. Firstly, he removes the translunar character of this heat by describing it as a heat *inhering* in the constitutive principles of all sublunary substances, i.e. the four elements. Its source, in the first place, is the celestial realm. In specific, celestial heat (*ḥom ha-galgali*) reaches out to all types of minerals, plants, and animate beings through the "sun" and "moon" which facilitate the coming-to-be of fire and water respectively. These two elements, in turn celestial heat, enter in the composition of all sub-celestial bodies in varied degrees of predominance. Secondly, Albalag ascribes to this heat, like Aristotle's vital heat, the role of concocting, specifying that concoction *is* the cause of coming-to-be. On this basis, Albalag goes on to argue that this heat is called "soul" (*nefesh*) because it includes a power that has the capacity of "in-forming" matter into actual particulars. A similar view is reported by Averroes in the *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut* in the name of ancient philosophers.

> … this is a warmth which is not a fire and in which there is not a principle of fire; in this warmth, there are the souls which create the sublunary bodies and those which inhere in these bodies. And none of the philosophers is opposed to the theory that in the elements there is heavenly warmth and that this is the substratum for the potencies which produce animals, and plants, but some of the philosophers call this potency a natural heavenly potency whereas Galen calls it the forming power and sometimes the demiurge.[847]

In Albalag's view, this heat does not function haphazardly. It maintains regularity in the sublunary world because it brings things into being according to their same order and essential features. In other words, as Albalag puts it explicitly, this heat is "nature."[848] By identifying the in-forming heat with nature, it becomes evident that the essential cause

[847] TT, p. 357
[848] Albalag identifies this celestial heat with nature in different contexts, see for instance note. 68, p. 95

of coming-to-be in the physical universe is not an extraordinary translunar agent, but nature, which in this context appears to be analogous to the concept of nature ascribed by Maimonides to the philosophers as

> forces proceeding from the sphere toward us that cause either the generation of all that is generated or the preservation of what is generated… this is the meaning of nature, which is said to be wise, having governance, caring for the bringing into existence of animals by means of an art similar to that of the craftsman and also caring for their preservation and permanence through the bringing into existence of formative forces, which are the cause of existence of living beings.[849]

Albalag too maintains that "nature is wise"[850] (*ṭeva' ḥakham*) because it brings things into existence according to a fixed and orderly arrangement. A clearer picture of the intelligent character of nature can be found in Albalag's examination of separate intellects where Albalag describes nature as a wise "craftsman" whose mind embodies the forms of all sensible existents. Although the reference to nature in a context discussing separate intellect raises the assumption that nature is a separate agent, Albalag radically states that there is no intermediary (*imẓa'i*) between sensible existents and the forms comprising the "mind of nature" (*data ha-teva'*.) This immanentist view of nature is consistent with what Albalag alluded to in the metaphor of the *River,* namely that celestial heat, which is identical with nature, is contained in the four elements underlying all existent.

To support his argument regarding the generative role of nature/heat in in-forming matter and bringing about animate beings, Albalag appeals to the same phenomenon which Aristotle considers in elucidating the function of vital heat in coming-to-be: the phenomenon of spontaneous generation. That the heat contained in the four elements has

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[849] *Guide* II: 10

[850] *Tiqqun*, note. 58, p. 83. Interestingly, Albalag here deviates from Averroes who says that nature in and by itself "is not intelligent," *Commentary on Book Lam*, p. 111.

the capacity of in-forming matter and generating animate beings, Albalag notes, "is attested by the generation of some plants that come to be without planting and animals that come to be spontaneously without birth."[851] Concerning the phenomenon of spontaneous generation, Averroes advances a significant argument.[852] He argues that this phenomenon threatens Aristotle's cosmology and physics because it raises the assumption that things come to be on account of an external agent that endows matter with form. To safeguard Aristotle's system, Averroes proposes that spontaneous generation is possible provided that we postulate that a principle from without carries on the role of actualizing the potential forms contained in water and earth. Both Albalag and Averroes share the Aristotelian ontology of form. But, unlike Averroes, Albalag does not find fault in speaking of the spontaneous generation of animals without assigning a role to a principle from without. For Albalag, the celestial heat contained in the four elements, or simply put, nature, suffices to endow matter with form, even with the absence of biological progenitors.

In sum: although Albalag is brief and leaves out many details, it is not hard to see how he strives to remain faithful to Aristotle by naturalizing, to an extreme extent, the process of coming-to-be. This is obvious from the fact that Albalag abandons the theory of emanated forms, substituting it for a theory of coming-to-be in which the key principles are celestial motion and, most importantly, the material principle of "heat." Overall, Aristotle's physical and mechanistic account of animate and inanimate change finds enough attestation in Albalag's interpretive remarks. To be sure, the emanation

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[851] Gad Freudenthal, *Aristotle's Theory of Material Substance: Heat and Pneuma,* Form and Soul (Oxford Scholarship Online 2011), chapter, 1, p. 17.

[852] See Averroes' Commentary on *Book Lam*, p. 90-3. For a discussion on this issue see Dag Nikolaus Hasse, "Spontaneous Generation and The Ontology of Forms in Greek, Arabic and Medieval Latin Sources," *Classical Arabic Philosophy: Sources and Reception*, edited by Peter Adamson (London : Warburg Institute, 2007), 150-15.

terminology that Albalag employs interrupts the harmony of his overall Aristotelianism. However, a closer examination of the *Tiqqun* reveals that the emanation terminology is concentrated exclusively in the context of the theory of eternal creation. The theological and apologetic underpinnings of this theory might have necessitated the use of terminologies that would define a genuine causal link between the heaven and the sublunary realm beyond mere "secondary intention" and concomitance.

Conclusion

We started this chapter by drawing attention to Albalag's conflicting views on the compatibility of *maa'seh bereshit* with philosophy. These views vary from negation to affirmation of their compatibility. At some point, Albalag offers an unusual view, namely that scripture and philosophy advocate opposing doctrines that are simultaneously true. As has been discussed in the first chapter of this study, this view, which draws Albalag close to the double-truth doctrine, does not rest on a scientific or epistemological ground. It can thus be ruled out on that basis. Additionally, the analysis offered in the present chapter proves that Albalag could not have embraced two opposing doctrines regarding the origin of the world. His affinity is to philosophy, which may or may not coincide with scripture.

What philosophy teaches about the origin of the world can not be identified at a first reading of the *Tiqqun*. Despite his avowed commitment to Aristotle, Albalag does not explicitly state that the universe, as Aristotle demonstrated, existed from eternity, but says instead that it is eternally created. The core purport of the theory of eternal creation is that the universe is causally dependent on God. God creates the universe specifically by transforming its parts from potentiality to actuality. This applies to the celestial and physical realms. With respect to the former, God is creator because He creates (transforms

from potentiality to actuality) the parts of celestial motion thereby creating spheres whose being consists in motion. With respect to the latter, God is the creator in two ways: 1) He is the cause of the physical universe, by being the cause of celestial motion on which all processes of generation and corruption rely, and 2) due to the act of causal knowing, God brings matter and form together, thereby causing things to transform from potential to actual existence.

A close analysis of the *Tiqqun* reveals that the doctrine of eternal creation does not accord with Albalag's scientific convictions. Albalag's technical analysis of celestial motion leaves no doubt that the criteria defining the process of creation are not applicable to celestial spheres. Although Albalag does not deny that celestial motion ultimately depends on the separate intellects and the Prime Mover, he espouses the view that celestial substance exists in act on its own and offers a number of notes suggesting that motion is something congenital to celestial substance. No wonder, then, that Albalag's thesis regarding celestial motion made him susceptible to charges of heresy, namely because it removes any ground for the creation doctrine and asserts that the world existed from eternity. This difficulty was highlighted by some of Albalag's opponents who deemed his thesis of celestial motion pernicious and heretical.[853]

Similarly, when Albalag discusses the process of coming-to-be, he provides additional evidence that the theory of eternal creation does not represent his well-considered view. Albalag's explanation of coming-to-be is rooted in Aristotle's natural philosophy. In this explanation, we find no practical applications of the theory of causal knowing, and the role of divine agency is limited to subsisting celestial motion. At some point, Albalag gives the impression that generation and transformation in the universe are

[853] See reference to opponents of Albalag in Vajda. *averroïste juif, traducteur et annotateur daḷ-Ghazâlî*, p. 271.

structured and continuous processes that are grounded in the force to which he refers as nature.

In sum, Albalag's analyses of the nature of the causal link between the Prime Mover and the universe prompt the conclusion that the universe is neither created nor eternally created, but eternally existent.

Conclusion

The focus of this study has been the philosophical treatise of the Jewish Averroist Isaac Albalag (*Sefer Tiqqun ha-de'ot*). In this study, I have examined Albalag's approach to the question of the relationship between religion and philosophy. In particular, I have aimed to examine the compatibility of Albalag's claim regarding the existence of two contradictory truths, the truth of Scripture and the truth of philosophy, with the fundamental epistemological premises and the general philosophical framework of the *Tiqqun*. I demonstrated that this claim has no ground in the philosophy of the *Tiqqun* and that it was socio-politically motivated.

I was led to this conclusion by a number of considerations, most importantly the fact that the double truth claim flies in the face of the ideal of certainty lying at the very core of the *Tiqqun's* epistemology. A staunch Aristotelian philosopher like Albalag would hardly deviate from the Aristotelian criterion for scientific knowledge, namely knowing by way of demonstration why the thing is what it is and that it cannot be otherwise, without providing a strong justification.

The sole justification that Albalag provides for the double truth claim centers on a conception of prophecy according to which prophets possess a supra-rational mode of cognition that allows them access to a level of reality that lies beyond philosophy. Due to this mode of cognition prophets also arrive at knowledge that contradicts the conclusions of demonstration. Based on Albalag's persistent critique of the limitation of the human

intellect, I concluded that this angelic level of cognition is unachievable, and hence the whole idea of prophecy in the *Tiqqun* proves to be groundless. Albalag fails to provide a scientific explanation of the phenomenon of prophecy. Conversely, in every statement regarding prophecy Albalag seems intentionally to be pushing his narrative away from the philosophical account of prophecy adopted by his contemporaries and predecessors. Perhaps the most obvious fact about Albalag's treatment of the issue of prophecy is his eagerness to shroud prophecy in mystery in order to set prophetic knowledge in a transcendent state that admits no investigation or interpretation. While Albalag's apparent goal is to propagate a fideist acceptance of Scripture, which ostensibly applies to the multitude and philosophers alike, a closer examination, however, reveals that philosophers are exempted from this fideism.

The political theme with which Albalag initiates his treatise confirms this view and provides more evidence against the double truth claim. Unhesitatingly, and in obvious deviation from Maimonides, Albalag relegates the role of the Torah to a socio-political one. By drawing a dichotomy between the happiness of the select few, the philosophers, and the happiness of the multitude, Albalag places the Torah and philosophy in two different domains that scarcely coincide.

The three aspects of Albalag's thought; his epistemology, theory of prophecy, and political thought, shed light on Albalag's attempt to separate religion and philosophy and his deviation from the Maimonidean-Averroist philosophical approach to religion. Further evidence emerges from the fact that Albalag, unlike his predecessors, is far from being systematic in interpreting Scripture in terms of philosophy. Indeed, the only context in which he extensively engages with philosophical interpretations of Scripture involves

obvious apologetic aims and, ironically, emphasis on the impenetrability of the inner meaning of Scripture. Albalag does not think, as Maimonides arguably does, that philosophical interpretations of Scripture lead one to the *true* meaning of Scripture. Rather, he constantly emphasizes that the intention of the prophet and Scripture cannot be known. Despite that, he attempts to justify philosophical doctrines by suggesting the *possibility* of their compatibility with Scripture. It is ironic that for Albalag Scripture may also be compatible with many other doctrines that contradict philosophy. A curious understanding of the Torah, indeed!

My examination of Albalag's treatment of a number of fundamental questions in physics and metaphysics provides further insight into the issue of the double truth. I have shown that Albalag unyieldingly committed to Aristotelian naturalism, as taught by Averroes. Philosophically speaking, there is no natural and anti-natural truth. The claim of the double truth loses all credentials within the framework of Albalag's philosophical analyses which leave no doubt that truth *is* identical with Aristotelian naturalism. Due to his profound confidence in Aristotle, Albalag adopts many doctrines that would later open him to charges of heresy. The eternity doctrine is one as such, but not the only one.

In spite of the enormity of the theological implications arising from the eternity doctrine, Albalag openly advocates it and defends its epistemic validity. Against doubts raised by Maimonides, Albalag professes that the eternity doctrine is demonstrative, and reveals the latter's secret standpoint on the issue. To conceal his audacity in defending this Aristotelian doctrine, and to protect the masses' belief, which is tied up with the creation doctrine, Albalag advances the double truth claim without truly accepting it. By ostensibly admitting the existence of truth that contradicts demonstration, Albalag

eliminates the constraints of religion on philosophy, and renders it permissible to openly adopt philosophical doctrines without the need for twisting the *truth* to fit with Scripture.

Although Albalag describes the relationship of Scripture and philosophy in a manner that jarringly deviates from Averroes, who affirms that truth does not contradict truth, Albalag is truly an Averroist in the scientific domain. His indebtedness to Averroes is readily recognizable throughout the treatise. Most importantly, Albalag draws heavily from Averroes in his steady critiques of Avicenna and al-Farabi. Convinced that Avicenna and al-Farabi, as well as ancient commentators, brought many misconceptions to philosophy, Albalag takes upon himself the goal of purging philosophy from their errors and restoring correct Aristotelianism. First on his agenda is the emanative cosmology of Avicenna, which Albalag regards as one of the major deviations from Aristotle. Albalag engages critically with the premises underlying this system with a view to providing an alternative understanding of the universe and the God-world relationship in a more Aristotelian fashion. On the whole, Averroes provided Albalag with the theoretical framework on which he based, not only his critiques of Avicenna, but also his account of causation in the celestial and sublunary realms. Throughout the treatise, Albalag tirelessly attempts to reinforce Aristotelian naturalism. He does so generally through Averroes' lens. However, Albalag occasionally, as we saw with the analysis of celestial motion, seeks to offer an independent understanding of Aristotle. Despite his indebtedness to Averroes, Albalag's avowed loyalty is to Aristotle first and foremost. He generally refers to Aristotle instead of Averroes and renders him homage.

The second most important theme, after the issue of eternity versus creation, to which Albalag devotes his energy, is the conception of God. In his discussion of different

aspects of God Albalag is at pains to stay in concord with the norms of the Aristotelian conception of divine perfection. As with the domain of physics, Albalag admiringly refers to Aristotle. One who seeks the truth must resort to the books of Aristotle. What is interesting about Albalag's Aristotle are the skeptical notes put in his mouth. Aristotle's rationalism, however, is merged in the *Tiqqun* with obvious, albeit partial, skepticism. Albalag's analyses of metaphysical issues give rise to an obvious tension between dogmatism and skepticism that is sometimes resolved in favor of the latter. Although Albalag's skepticism is in essence Maimonidean, Albalag never fails to justify his skeptical approach by appealing to Aristotle. Indeed, this significantly enhances the view that Albalag adheres to a single truth theory that deems Aristotle the only source of truth. Even in case of skepticism, Albalag derives legitimacy from Aristotle.

If my interpretation of Albalag's approach to the question of the relationship between religion and philosophy and the practical goals behind the double truth claim is correct, then we found ourselves confronted with a medieval philosopher who deviated from the fairly standard philosophical approach to religion. Albalag's approach can be described as Spinozist, *avant la lettre*, in that it indirectly demands separation of religion and philosophy. His style and core arguments are certainly different from Spinoza. Albalag chooses a less revolutionary approach. To separate religion and philosophy, he emphasizes the gap between their natures, sources, and contents. Instead of following Maimonides' conciliatory approach, Albalag stresses the tension. And instead of affirming the connection between Scripture and philosophy, Albalag expresses uncertainty and scepticism regarding the possibility of grasping the intention of prophets and the true meaning of Scripture. By this means Albalag eliminates the ground for

connecting religion and philosophy and secures their separation without causing offense or harm to adherents of religion. Although much less well known than many of his contemporaries, Isaac Albalag was an interesting thinker who provided challenging and radical perspectives regarding the philosophical questions of his day.

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