Ariel Malachi

Scepticism at the Service of Revelation? Preliminary Observations on Logic and Epistemology in Judah Halevi's *Kuzari*

Introduction

How we should define scepticism is a fascinating question. Depending on differing definitions, we will arrive at different conclusions as to who can or cannot be characterized as sceptic. However, whether our answer to this fundamental enquiry be wide or narrow, inclusive or exclusive, casting doubt is clearly at its base.[1]

According to the logical and epistemological Islamic-Aristotelian tradition, the distinction between arguments whose conclusions are certain and arguments whose conclusions are uncertain depends on the distinction between demonstrative arguments on the one hand and dialectical and rhetorical arguments on the other.[2] While demonstrative arguments are indeed accepted as certain, dialectical and rhetorical ones are bound to be doubtful to some degree. These epistemological distinctions between what is necessary and what is possible and what is certain and what is convincing or merely satisfactory were laid down by Aristotle and his commentators[3]

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1 One might argue that classical forms of scepticism, such as Pyrrhonian or academic scepticism, do not naturally correspond to the medieval Jewish philosophical notion of doubt, although a few similarities can be found. Be that as it may, it seems that Jewish thinkers in Halevi's time were generally less interested in the general question of the possibility of attaining knowledge and more interested in the question of the possibility of attaining knowledge of specific issues, be those issues philosophical or religious. Therefore, even if they cannot be regarded as sceptical in the original sense, such thinkers do use sceptical strategies to one extent or another.

2 Cf. Arthur. J. Arberry, "Farabi's Canons of Poetry," *Rivista degli Studi Orientali*, 17 (1938): 266–278, esp. 268 (Arabic with English translation); Al-Fārābī, *Ihsa al-Ulum*, ed. Ali Milham (Beirut: Dar wa-maktaba al-Hilal, 1996), 38–41 (Arabic); Ibn-Sina, *Remarks and Admonitions: Part One: Logic*, Mediaeval Sources in Translation 28, trans. Shams Constantine Inati (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1984), 148; al-Ghazali, *Maqased Al-Falasifa,* ed. Mahmud Beju (Damascus: Al-Dabbah, 1998), 45 (Arabic). For an extensive scholarly discussion of these positions, see Deborah L. Black, *Logic and Aristotle's Rhetoric and Poetics in Medieval Arabic Philosophy* (Leiden: Brill, 1990). For these positions in the twelfth-century Jewish world, see for example Israel Efros, *Maimonides' Treatise on Logic* (New York, 1939), 47–48 (The original Arabic text was republished fully; see Israel Efros, "Maimonides' Arabic Treatise on Logic: Introduction," *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* (1966): 42–155).

3 Aristotle, *Topics*, 100a25, trans. E.S. Forester (London & Massachusetts, 1966), 271; L. G. Westerink, "Elias on the Prior Analytics," *Mnemosyne*, Fourth Series, 14 (1961): 126–139; Elias, "Eliae in Categorias Prooemium," in *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca,* 18, ed. Adolf Busse (Berlin: Reimeri, 1900), 117.

and were discussed and developed extensively by Islamic philosophers in their logical treatises.[4]

The focus of this paper is Judah Halevi (d. 1141).[5] In this paper, I will try to point out some preliminary observations regarding the way in which Halevi used sceptical aspects and strategies based on Aristotelian logic and epistemology at the service of revelation, that is, not only in the sense of criticising philosophy but also for establishing revelation itself.

First and foremost, Halevi was a renowned Spanish Jewish poet, arguably the most prominent Jewish poet in the Middle Ages.[6] However, in addition to hundreds of poems,[7] Halevi left us a unique theological-philosophical work whose impact on later Judaism was profound.[8] This work, entitled *The Book of the Kuzari*, is an artfully styled dialogue between a Khazar king and a Jewish sage, polemically aiming mainly to criticise philosophy and to defend Jewish revelation.[9]

Many scholars acknowledge Halevi's harsh criticism of philosophy in the *Kuzari*.[10] Some have even pointed out Halevi's use of philosophical tools to establish this criticism,[11] in a way that might be regarded as a sceptical approach towards philosophy.[12]

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4 For the connection between the Greek commentators and Al-Fārābī, see Dimitri Gutas, "Paul the Persian on the Classification of the Parts of Aristotle's Philosophy: A Milestone between Alexandria and Baghdad," *Der Islam* 60 (1983): 231–267, esp. 255.

5 There are many scholarly sources discussing Halevi's biography. Among the relatively recent and important ones is Joseph Yahalom, *Yehuda Halevi: Poetry and Pilgrimage* (Jerusalem: Magness Press, 2009) (Hebrew).

6 Judah Alharizi, a respected twelfth-century Jewish poet himself, considers Halevi as second only to Ibn-Gabirol (Avicebron). See Judah Alharizi, *Tahkemoni, or, The Tales of Heman the Ezrahie*, ed. Joseph Yahalom and Naoya Katsumata (Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi Institute for the Study of Jewish Communities in the East, Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2010), 225.

7 Apart from very short and specific sections, they were mostly written in Hebrew.

8 For the impact of *The Book of the Kuzari* on Judaism, see Adam Shear, *The Kuzari and the Shaping of Jewish Identity: 1167–1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

9 Unlike his poetry, Halevi wrote the *Kuzari* in Judeo-Arabic. The critical edition of the Judeo-Arabic text is Judah Halevi, *Kitab al-radd wa-'l-dalil fi'l-din al-dhalil (al-kitab al-Khazari)*, ed. David H. Baneth (Jerusalem: Magness Press, 1977). All of the following quotations from the original Judeo-Arabic text of the *Kuzari* correspond to this edition.

10 Several studies were devoted to Halevi's attitude towards philosophy and its criticism. For a brief review of Halevi's scholarship, see Diana Lobel, *Between Mysticism and Philosophy: Sufi Language of Religious Experience in Judah Ha-Levi's Kuzari* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2000), 6–9, and the bibliography mentioned.

11 For example, see Raphael Jospe, *Jewish Philosophy in the Middle Ages: from Sa'adia Gaon to Maimonides*, vol. II (Raanana: Academic Studies Press, 2006), 205; 271.

12 Barry Kogan explicitly argues that Halevi and al-Ghazali "Both turned the scepticism originally directed by philosophers against their respective religious traditions against the claims of philosophy itself. In doing so, they both made an important contribution to philosophy." See Barry S. Kogan, "Al-Ghazali and Halevi on Philosophy and the Philosophers," in *Medieval Philosophy and the Classical Tradition*, ed. John Inglis (Richmond: Routledge, 2002), 64–80, esp. 77.

Nevertheless, the general impression from many scholarly studies is that the criticism of philosophy is merely subsidiary to the main goal of the *Kuzari,* namely establishing revelation as an alternative to philosophy and accepting the authority of revelation over philosophy in a most unsceptical manner.[13] This may explain why scholars tend not to give a consistent and systematic analysis of Halevi's criticism of philosophy, but rather a mere description of it. It would perhaps explain why, after years of research, Halevi's attitude towards philosophy is the subject of an ongoing debate, with almost as many perspectives as the number of scholars discussing this attitude.

Be that as it may, the most important reason for this debate is probably the fact that Halevi seems to contradict himself regarding his attitude towards philosophy in his *Kuzari*. These alleged contradictions are present in enough passages in the *Kuzari* that we can say that there are two competing tendencies throughout the book: a pro-philosophical tendency and an anti-philosophical one.[14] Nevertheless, one might try to generalise prior research regarding the question of Halevi's attitude towards philosophy, with all the flaws inherent in such a generalisation, as an effort to measure the extent of his anti-philosophical approach. In this regard, one must not forget that some scholars maintained both competing tendencies simultaneously, justifying them with pedagogical or esoteric motives that Halevi may have had.[15] Others simply argued that Halevi was ambivalent.[16]

One example of the contradictions within the book is Halevi's attitude towards two important issues in contemporary religious thought: the question of creation vs. eternity and the question of God's corporeality as described in the Bible. With regard

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13 For example, see Eliezer Schweid, "Halevi and Maimonides as Representatives of Romantic versus Rationalistic Conceptions of Judaism," in *Kabbala und Romantik*, ed. Eveline Goodman-Thau, Gert Mattenklott, and Christoph Schulte (Tübingen: Walter de Gruyter, 1994), 279–292, esp. 284–285; Dov Schwartz, *Contradiction and Concealments in Medieval Jewish Thought* (Ramat-Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 2002), 57–62 (Hebrew).

14 Examples will follow in the next passage.

15 For the pedagogical motive, see Eliezer Schweid, "The 'Haver' as Pedagogue in The Book of The Kuzari," in *Judah Halevi's Thought*, ed. Haya Schwartz (Jerusalem: Ministry of Education, 1977), 33–40 (Hebrew). For the esoteric motive, see Leo Strauss, "The Law of Reason in the Kuzari," *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research*, 13 (1943), 47–96, and Dov Schwartz, *Contradiction and Concealment in Medieval Jewish Thought*, 57–62 (Hebrew).

16 See Sara Wilenski-Heller, "The Relation Between Faith and Reason for Rabbi Judah Halevi," in *Judah Halevi's Thought*, 42 (Hebrew). Yochanan Silman, *Philosopher and Prophet: Judah Halevi, the Kuzari, and the Evolution of His Thought* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), argued that Halevi's book was written over a long period of time, that Halevi changed his mind, and that his early thought and his later thought are both present in the book. Silman's approach earned some (one might add, quite justifiable) criticism; see Daniel Lasker, "Silman's Thinker and Seer," *Jewish Quarterly Review, New Series* 78 (1988): 314–315; Robert Eisen, "Yochanan Silman: Philosopher and Prophet," Book Review, *Speculum* 73 (1998): 596–598; Raphael Jospe, *Jewish Philosophy in the Middle Ages: From Sa'adia Gaon to Maimonides*, 308–318 (Hebrew); Yishai Glazner, "On the Writing of Judah Halevi's *Kuzari*," *Daat* 77 (2011): 5–16 (Hebrew), and more.

to the question of creation, the philosophical position in Halevi's time was that of eternity, and the opposing religious position was that God had created the world. In this matter, Halevi criticised the philosophical position and defended the religious view as he understood it. As he writes: "That which gives more weight to [the world's] complete innovation is the tradition from Adam, Noah, and Moses, peace be upon them, based on prophecy, which is more trustworthy than reasoning."[17] Nevertheless, when it comes to the question of the corporeal attributes of God, he seems to argue differently. Through the Khazar king, Halevi raises the notion presented in the literal text of the Bible, which describes God as possessing hands, fingers, eyes, and so on, only to reject it completely due to reason:

> The Khazar said: someone who hears your words to the effect that God addressed the multitude of you, wrote two tablets for you, and other such things would certainly be excused if he ascribes the idea of His being corporeal to you [...] Thus, you have an excuse for rejecting reason and intellectual speculation.
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> The sage said: God forbid me from [accepting] what is impossible and anything the intellect denies and posits as impossible.[18]

These passages might be read as a contrary stance towards two different philosophical positions. However, if we try to follow Halevi's arguments for his position on each passage, we will find them to be not merely contrary, but contradictory.

In the first passage, Halevi does not accept the philosophical position of the eternity of the world because he states as a principal position that tradition and prophecy are more trustworthy than reason and philosophy. That seems to be a mostly unsceptical approach aimed entirely against reason and philosophy in order to emphasize the superiority of revelation over any reasonable deliberation. However, in the second passage, the Haver seems to be almost agitated when the king raises the possibility of corporeality, as seems to be evident in the same prophetic tradition. Here, Halevi states as a principal position that revelation is subject to the scrutiny of reason. Therefore, one cannot regard the prophetic text as it is and must explain it according to the conclusions of reason. Here one might ask: if Halevi rejects the philosophical position of eternity because prophecy is more trustworthy than reasoning, then what would be the problem with God's corporeality? These corporeal properties are part of the prophetic text, and allegedly more truthful than conclusions based on reason. If so, why can we not accept them as they are in the prophetic text? On the other hand, if

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17 Kuzari I, 67. In the original Judeo-Arabic: ירגח אלחדת' אלנקל ען אדם ונוח ומוסי ע'ה' באלנבוה אלתי הי "אצדק מן אלקיאס". In this article, I use Professor Barry Kogan's unpublished translation. I would like to thank him for giving me the kind permission to do so. The source is cited following the critical edition by Baneth-Ben Shammai, as mentioned in note 9 above.
18 Kuzari I, 88–9: "קאל אלכ'זרי, אן מן יסמע כלאמכם אן אללה כ'אטב גמהורכם וכתב לכם אלואחא וג'יר ד'לך למעד'ור אן ינסב אליכם ראי אלתגסים [...] ותעד'רון פי אטראח אלקיאס ואלנט'ר אלעקלי. קאל אלחבר: ואעוד' באללה מן אלמחאל ומא ינפיה אלעקל ויצ'עה מחאלא".

reason and philosophy prevail over prophetic tradition and corporeal attributes are to be allegorised, why does reason not prevail over the prophetic tradition when it comes to the question of creation and force us to accept eternity?

This example and others mentioned in studies dealing with Halevi's attitude towards philosophy[19] raise the following questions: how did Halevi construct his arguments? What made him lean towards philosophy in some issues and towards revelation in others? Is there really no coherence in Halevi's thought? Alternatively, is there a method underlying his attitude towards philosophy and reason? And if so, what are the implications of this method regarding the defence of revelation?

In trying to answer these questions, I would like to approach the ongoing debate from a different point of view. My attempt is to identify the principles of Halevi's criticism of philosophy. In this regard, I will try to argue that (a) the criticism of philosophy represents a use of sceptical strategies based on the logical and epistemological principles of Aristotelian logic, and (b) surprisingly, the same sceptical strategies are used by Halevi not only to criticise philosophy, but also to positively establish revelation. Consequently, I will try to suggest that for Halevi, not only can revelation be a legitimate alternative within the philosophical domain, but also that the same sceptical strategies elevate revelation over other philosophical alternatives. I will also try to argue that this approach can explain the apparently contradictory approaches towards philosophy in this text.

The main premise of my argument is Halevi's acquaintance with knowledge and the use of Aristotelian logic as presented in Islamic philosophical writings, i.e. the works of the *falāsifa*. Methodologically, this premise is to be primarily established using historical and philological discussions. The first stage is a historical discussion regarding the possibility of Halevi's acquaintance with logic, namely tracing historical evidence that the *falāsifa*'s logical writings were present in Al-Andalus by the first half of the twelfth century and that Halevi had access to them. The second stage is to analyse Halevi's text; that is, I will track and investigate the occurrences of logical terms in the *Kuzari*, the way in which they were used, and the implications of their use. Naturally, if a correct use of logical terms is found, this philological discussion alone can support Halevi's acquaintance with logic. Based on this premise, and after I establish it, I can begin to analyse Halevi's text and ideas from a new perspective and try to address the challenge of investigating the aforementioned issues.

Obviously, a complete discussion of these arguments and a full presentation of the arguments in relevant contemporary literature as well as in Halevi's *Kuzari* exceeds the limits of this article.[20] For this reason, I will present my arguments concerning Halevi's acquaintance with logic, his proper use of logical terminology, and his use

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19 For some of those studies, see notes 10–13 above.
20 Such a study is the main focus of my current research project, which is a monograph dedicated to the discussion of Halevi's approach to reason and philosophy.

of the same sceptical strategies both for criticising philosophy and for defending revelation by examining few telling examples. These examples will naturally include those regarding creation and God' s corporeality. From these examples, I will attempt to draw my conclusions.

Islamic-Aristotelian background

How much Aristotelian logic could Halevi have known? This question is not that hard to answer. We have evidence that the logical writings of Al-Fārābī had reached Andalusia as early as the eleventh century and that Jewish scholars had studied and mastered this subject; at least, that is the testimony of Ibn Said al-Andalusi in his *Tabaqat al-Umam* (Categories of Nations).[21] We can also find traces of this acquaintance in the writings of Jewish thinkers such as Bahya Ibn Paquda,[22] Yosef Ibn Tsadiq,[23] and Moshe Ibn Ezra,[24] all more or less relatively close predecessors of Halevi. Nevertheless, this only proves that Halevi could or might have known Aristotelian logic, not his actual knowledge of the subject. For his actual knowledge, we must consult Halevi's *Kuzari*. As I will show, in the *Kuzari* one can find not only Halevi's actual acquaintance with Aristotelian logic, but also the proper use of its principles.

However, before I turn to Halevi's text, I would like to begin with a short description of some of the logical and epistemological principles relevant to the forthcoming discussion regarding Halevi's sceptical strategies. As we know, at the heart of Aristotelian logic lies the Aristotelian syllogism. Indeed, in contemporary scholarship most of the discussion of syllogisms deals with the ways to establish whether a specific syllogism is formally valid. However, as will follow, Aristotelian logic in the Middle

21 Ṣāʿid ibn Aḥmad al-Andalusī, *Science in the Medieval World: Book of the Categories of Nations*, trans. Semaʿan I. Salem and Austin Alok Kumar (University of Texas Press, 1996). Chapter 12 of the book deals with science in the Arab orient, including Al-Fārābī's work on logic. Chapter 13 of the book deals with philosophy and science in al-Andalus, and chapter 14 deals with the science of the people of Israel and also mentions a few Jewish scholars who studied and mastered logic. Though some of Halevi's arguments can be traced to Saadia Gaon's *Book of Beliefs and Convictions*, this does not mean they shared the same notion of logic. Saadia's logic, although possibly stoic, was not Aristotelian, and was not considered logic (*mantiq*) by the Muslim Aristotelians. See Charles H. Manekin, "Logic in Medieval Jewish Culture," in *Science in Medieval Jewish Cultures*, ed. Gad Freudenthal (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 113–135, esp. 116. It is interesting to mention that Ṣāʿid al-Andalusī does mention Saadia in his book, but not as a logician, only as a great religious scholar.
22 Bachya ben Joseph ibn Paquda, *Duties of the Heart*, trans. Rabbi Yosef Qafih (Jerusalem: Akiva Yosef Press, 1973), 35.
23 Yosef Ibn-Tsadik, *Microcosmos* (Leipzig, 1854), 5–6 (Hebrew). Ibn-Tsadik mentions a book he wrote about logic. To the best of my knowledge, this book has not yet been discovered.
24 Moshe ben Yaacov Ibn Ezra, *Kitāb al-muḥāḍarah wa-al-mudhā-karah,* trans. Avraham Shelomo Halkin (Jerusalem: Mekitsey Nirdamim, 1975), 12–13, 117–119.

Ages, as presented by Islamic thinkers, stressed not only the validity of the syllogism, but also its soundness in relation to the epistemological value of its premises.

According to Islamic-Aristotelian logic, the soundness of a syllogism is based on the truthfulness of its premises. How then can we know if our premises are true? That is the task of epistemology. Islamic-Aristotelian logic recognised several sources for primary knowledge to be used in the premises of a syllogism. These sources were presented in the writings of the most dominant figures of the *falāsifa* predeceasing Halevi, such as Al-Fārābī, Ibn Sina, and Al-Ghazālī.[25] The author of *Millot ha-Higgayon* (Treatise on Logic), presumably Maimonides,[26] summarised some of these principles in the eighth chapter of the treatise, though more in Al-Fārābī's style than Ibn Sina's, as follows:

> The propositions which are known to be true and require no proof for their truthfulness are of four kinds: *perceptions*, as when we know that this is black, this is white, this is sweet, and this is hot; *first ideas*, as when we know that the whole is greater than the part, that two is an even number, and that things equal to the very same thing equal each other; *conventions [generally accepted] (mashhūrāt)*, as when we know that uncovering the privy parts is ugly, that compensating a benefactor generously is beautiful; and *traditions (maqbūlāt),* i.e., whatever is received from a chosen person or from a chosen assembly.[27]

The most important terms for the discussion that will follow are these conventions and traditions. In the next stage, Maimonides discusses the differences between these primary sources of knowledge, from which he will draw later in the categorical epistemological distinctions:

> Now as to perceptions and ideas, there is no difference among those of the human species that possess normal senses and intuitions, nor is there any contention for superiority among them with reference to their truthfulness. But as to *conventions [generally accepted],* there is difference and rivalry for superiority, since there are propositions that have become known among one people and not among another; and whenever a precept is known among many peoples, its acceptability is stronger. Similarly, in the case of *traditions*, a tradition among one group may be lacking in another.[28]

According to Maimonides, a thing that is obtained from whatever is perceived by means of a healthy sense is undoubtedly true. The same applies to first and second principles. He concludes:

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25 To the extent that we can include him amongst the *falāsifa* for his philosophical writings. Examples were mentioned in note 2 above.

26 Davidson thinks otherwise; see Herbert A. Davidson, *Moses Maimonides: The Man and His Works* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 313; Herbert A. Davidson, "Ibn al-Qifṭī's Statement Regarding Maimonides' Early Study of Science," *Aleph* 14 (2014): 245–258. Stroumsa disagrees, see Sarah Stroumsa, *Maimonides in his World: Portrait of a Mediterranean Thinker* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 122–123; Sarah Stroumsa, "On Maimonides and on Logic," *Aleph* 14 (2014): 259–263.

27 Moses Ben Maimon, *Maimonides' Treatise on Logic, The Original Arabic and Three Hebrew Translations*, trans. Israel Efros (New York: American Academy for Jewish Research, 1938), 47.

28 Ibid, 47–48.

> After these preliminaries, you must know that every syllogism both of whose premises are apodictic, we call a demonstrative syllogism (burhān) [...] When, however, one or both premises of the syllogism belong to conventions [generally accepted], we call it a dialectic syllogism (jadal) [...] When one or both premises of the syllogism belong to traditions, we call it a rhetorical syllogism (khiṭāba).[29]

This analysis of syllogisms differentiates between the epistemological value of demonstrative arguments (burhān), which is certainty (yaqīn), and the value of dialectical and rhetorical arguments, which is persuasion (iqnā'),[30] all in accordance with the epistemic value of the premises.[31] This analysis is based on the Islamic-Aristotelian tradition that exists, for example, in the writings of Al-Fārābī, Ibn Sina, and Al-Ghazālī.[32]

One way or another, the important thing is that all of these thinkers who wrote about Aristotelian logic share the notion that syllogisms have a hierarchical structure that is dependent on the epistemological value of the premises used. As a result, the epistemological value of the conclusion is also hierarchal and is classified in relation

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29 Ibid., 48. Two more syllogisms later mentioned by Maimonides are the sophistic syllogism and the poetic syllogism. The *falāsifa* considered that each of these five kinds of syllogisms had been discussed in a separate book of Aristotle's *Organon*: demonstrative syllogisms in the *Posterior Analytics*; dialectical in *Topics*; rhetorical in *Rhetoric*; sophistical in *On Sophistical Refutations*; and poetical in *Poetics*. It is worth mentioning that there are differences between Aristotle's notion of these the premises of these syllogisms and those of the *falāsifa*. This is not the place to discuss them, and I will mention as an example only what Aristotle said in *Topics* 100a25: "Now reasoning is an argument in which, certain things being laid down, something other than these necessarily comes about through them. (a) It is a 'demonstration,' when the premises from which the reasoning starts are true and primary, or are such that our knowledge of them has originally come through premises, which are primary and true: (b) reasoning, on the other hand, is 'dialectical,' if it reasons from opinions that are generally accepted. Things are 'true' and 'primary' which are believed on the strength not of anything else but of themselves: for in regard to the first principles of science it is improper to ask any further for the why and wherefore of them; each of the first principles should command belief in and by itself." For an elaboration regarding Aristotle and Maimonides' *Treatise on Logic*, see Arthur Hyman, "Demonstrative, Dialectical and Sophistic Arguments in the Philosophy of Maimonides," in *Moses Maimonides and His Time*, ed. Eric L. Ormsby (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1989), 35–51.

30 Another term used is "*Sukun al-nafs*," and it usually, but not exclusively, describes the epistemological value of the rhetorical syllogism. For the connections between dialectical and rhetorical arguments and for the fact that one can attribute persuasion to both arguments (to a different extent), see Al-Fārābī, *Ihsa al-Ulum*, 41–42.

31 In this sense, what one is certain of is the truthfulness of the conclusions. It does not mean that dialectical and rhetorical arguments cannot be true. Their truthfulness is possible (and might even be probable) but is never certain.

32 For a detailed analysis including many references to the original sources, see Deborah L. Black's excellent discussion in *Logic and Aristotle's Rhetoric and Poetics in Medieval Arabic Philosophy*, 94–101. There are differences between all these thinkers regarding the classification of the premises, but they all agree that the epistemic value of the syllogism is based on the epistemic value of its premises. Maimonides' analysis is closer to Al-Fārābī's position and al-Ghazali is closer to Avicenna.

to the epistemic value of the premises that comprise the syllogism. To summarise briefly, one can say that:

a. Methodologically, syllogisms based on perceptions and/or first and second principles are demonstrative (burhān); syllogisms based on conventions (generally accepted, literally "well-known notions" – mashhūrāt) are dialectical (jadal), and syllogisms based on tradition (literally "accepted" – maqbūlāt) are rhetorical (khiṭāba).

b. Epistemologically, the conclusion of a demonstrative syllogism (burhān) is certain, while the conclusion of other syllogisms can only be persuasive or satisfying (iqnā') at most.

c. Epistemologically, persuading arguments may have different degrees of persuasion depending on the epistemic value of the premises.

d. According to the *falāsifa*, all kinds of syllogisms fall under the purview of logic.[33]

Halevi's *Kuzari*

Now we can turn to Halevi's *Kuzari*. Halevi was obviously familiar with these logical and epistemological principles: he mentioned them in his book. For example, in the fifth chapter of the book, while extensively paraphrasing Ibn Sina and following his original text known as *On the Soul*, he specifically mentions all five kinds of syllogism.[34] Furthermore, he used these logical principles correctly. A good example is a telling reference to the epistemological hierarchy of the different syllogisms, discussed during the Jewish sage's first attack on philosophy. In the very first paragraphs of the discussion between the king and the Jewish sage, the sage points out the diversity of the philosophers' views and practices regarding their notion of religion. Then the Jewish sage says: "they are [merely] claims. Some of them, they are able to demonstrate. Some of them, they can support persuasively and some of them they cannot even support persuasively, let alone demonstrate."[35] Another example is when the king is impressed by philosophical arguments. Then the Jewish sage says: "This is what I was afraid of concerning you – that you would let yourself be deceived and calmly accede to their opinions. After their demonstrations in the mathematical sciences and logic turned out to be sound, according to them, people willingly

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33 This includes not only dialectical and rhetorical syllogisms, but also poetic ones. See Black, 1–13.

34 For a discussion regarding Halevi's use of Ibn-Sina's *On The Soul*, especially regarding logic and this classification of syllogisms, see Ariel Malachi, "*On the Soul* by Ibn-Sina: A Remark To The Hebrew Translation and Its Implication For Judah Halevi," *Daʻat*, 82 (2016): 111–121 (Hebrew).

35 Kuzari 1, 13: "אד' הי דעאוי, מנהא מא יקדרון אן יברהנוא עליהא ומנהא מא יקנעון פיה ומנהא מא ליס יקנעון פיה פצ'לא ען אלברהאן". For the connections between dialectical and rhetorical arguments and for the fact that one can attribute persuasion to both arguments (to a different extent), see for example, Al-Fārābi, *Ihsa al-Ulum*, 41–42.

accepted everything they said about physics and metaphysics, [wrongfully] think-ing all they said was demonstrative."[36] These examples and others demonstrate that Halevi not only knew the *falāsifa*'s logical-hierarchal-epistemological methodology, but that he also used it and its terminology correctly. For someone who is ignorant of the background of Aristotelian logic, these examples might seem to merely describe Halevi's criticism of philosophy; however, for one who is familiar with this back-ground, these examples are much more than that: they locate the criticism of phi-losophy in its pretension to certainty even where it lacks it. I think this is the key to unveiling Halevi's attitude, not only towards the criticism of philosophy, but also towards the establishment of revelation.

How then did Halevi use these logical and epistemological distinctions? I wish to demonstrate this through the same telling example I used to demonstrate the contra-dicting tendencies within the *Kuzari*, namely the questions of creation and of God's corporeality. I think that these are among the few places in the *Kuzari* in which the learned reader, a reader who knows logic and pays attention to the logical terms, can wholly grasp Halevi's argument.

Let us turn to the text again, but within a wider context. Naturally, as a Jewish religious thinker, when Halevi discusses the question of the origin of the world, he confronts Aristotle's notion of eternity with what he believes to be the Jewish position on creation. He first criticises Aristotle and then turns to defending Judaism. This is how he criticises Aristotle:

> He demanded of his mind and his own thinking, since he had no knowledge from someone he could trust in tradition. Thus, he reflected [...] Now, it was as difficult for his way of thinking to conceive of a beginning [for the world] as it was [to conceive of its] eternity in the past; but he [ultimately] gave greater weight to those of his deductions that assert the eternity [of the world] in the past by means of his abstract thinking. He didn't think of asking about the chronology of those who had lived before him or about how people were related to one another. If the Philo-sopher had lived within a nation [in which] he had inherited *traditions* and *generally-accepted* [beliefs] that could not be rejected,[37] he would have used his reasoning and demonstration to establish the possibility of the [world's] complete innovation.[38]

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36 Kuzari 5, 14: והד'א אלד'י כנת אכ'אפה עליך מן אלאנכ'דאע וסכון אלנפס אלי אראיהם למא צח ענהם אלברהאן"
פי אלעלום אלריאצ'יה ואלמנטק טאבת אלנפס עלי כל מא קאלוה פי אלטביעה ופי מא בעד אלטביעה, וט'ן אן כל מא
קאלוה ברהאן".

37 The fact that such premises cannot be rejected does not entail that they are certain, but at most that they are possible alongside other possibilities one cannot reject, in this case the eternity of the world.

38 Kuzari 1, 65, emphasis added: נעם אנה כלף ד'הנה ופכרתה למא לם יכן ענדה כ'בר מן ית'קה תקלידא, פתפכר"
[...] פצעב עלי פכרה תצור אלאבתדא כמא צעב איצ'א אלקדם, לכן רגח קיאסאתה אלקאילה באלקדם במגרד פכרה, ולם
יר אן יסאל ען תאריך' מן כאן קבלה, ולא כיף כאן אנתסב אלנאס, ולו כאן אלפילסוף פי אמה ירת' מקבולאת ומשהוראת לא
מדפע לה פיהא, לצרף קיאסאתה וברהאנה פי תמכינה אלחדת'"".

This passage from Halevi's discussion of creation, I believe, presents the careful reader with a coherent and rational attitude towards the relationship between reason and revelation, all through the prism of contemporary principles of logic and its sceptical strategies, methods, and aspects. As I mentioned above, a conclusion is as sound as its premises. If we analyse what Halevi says here, we can see that he criticises Aristotle's opinion of eternity as one that is based on mere speculation[39] rather than on sound premises. He then suggests that, although he could have, Aristotle but did not try to search for premises that were well-known or generally accepted ("He didn't think of asking").[40] Such probable premises, though not certain as those derived from perceptions of first intelligibles, are sounder than mere speculation; therefore, their conclusions will be sounder as well. All of this is in accordance with Aristotelian logic as described earlier. We can also note the seeds of the defence of the Jewish creational attitude: the lack of tradition[41] is soon to be fulfilled by Jewish tradition, functioning as "mashhūrāt" and "maqbūlāt."

Consequently, the king understands that if the Jewish sage raises issues from the realm of logic and epistemology, then that means we need to strive for "burhān," meaning demonstrative proof based on perception and/or first and second principles that lead to certainty, something lacked by both tradition and speculation. The king is still in search of certain demonstration; therefore, it is not surprising that he is not satisfied and immediately asks the Jewish sage: "The Khazar said: In demonstration, is there such a thing as giving greater weight [to one opinion rather than another]."[42] The Jewish sage understands that the king has grasped the heart of his sceptical criticism of Aristotle's philosophical position and, therefore, he can develop the defence of Judaism. He answers:

> Who, indeed, could provide us with the [decisive] demonstration on this question? God forbid that the Law should teach something that repudiates [the testimony of] direct sense experience or [the conclusion of] a demonstration! [...] The question of the [world's] eternity in the past and of [its] complete innovation is profound, and the proofs [in favour] of the two arguments counterbalance one another. In that case, then, that which gives more weight to [the world's] complete innovation is the *tradition* from Adam, Noah, and Moses, peace be upon them, based on prophecy, which *is more trustworthy than reasoning*.[43]

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39 "Abstract thinking" (במגרד פכרה).

40 The text does not specifically state "premises," but Halevi uses the words "mashhūrāt" and "maqbūlāt" (משהוראת ומקבולאת), which are the original Arabic terms for the premises used in dialectical and rhetorical syllogisms (respectively). Halevi admits that Aristotle is to be excused for lacking these kinds of premises, as he says in *Kuzari* 1,63, and in *Kuzari* 5,14 (twice).

41 An idea which was already expressed by Plato in the beginning of *Timaeus*, specifically regarding the issue of creation: see Plato, *Timaeus*, 22b.

42 *Kuzari* 1, 66: "קאל אלכ'זרי: והל פי אלברהאן תרגיח?"

43 *Kuzari* 1, 67, emphasis added: "קאל אלחבר, ומן לנא פי אלמסאלה באלברההאן אעוד' באללה אן יאתי אלשרע במא ידפע עיאנא או ברההאנא [...] ומסאלה' אלקדם ואלחדת' ג'אמצ'ה ואלחגתין מתכאפיה, ת'ם ירגח אלחדת' אלנקל ען אדם ונוח ומוסי ע'ה' באלנבוה אלתי הי אצדק מן אלקיאס".

Now we can see the development of Halevi's argument. A demonstrative undoubted proof (burhān) can overcome any religion or tradition. Therefore, it is not possible that religion or tradition will contradict a demonstrative proof. In this sense, it can be said that reason overcomes the literal apprehension of revelation. In fact, this is the case for the abovementioned example of God's corporeality. Halevi, like many of his contemporaries, seems to accept that reason had reached demonstration regarding the question of God's corporeality, and, therefore, the prophetic text cannot contradict the philosophical demonstrative conclusion that God has no corporeal attributes. On the other hand, regarding creation, there is no such proof and we cannot achieve certainty (yaqīn) through reason.[44] The important argument is that this fact does not give us an excuse to turn directly to mere speculation, for according to the principles of logic that Aristotle himself developed, we can still use mashhūrāt or maqbūlāt as premises that can give us persuasive conclusions. This is where the Jewish tradition of arguing for creation becomes important, for it is logically possible[45] as well as widely accepted, trustworthily transmitted, etc., as Halevi develops throughout his book.

The outcome is that, according to Halevi, if one is a true disciple of Aristotle the logician,[46] one will, at times, have to reject Aristotle the metaphysician. In other words, according to Aristotle's logic, one must be sceptical about any argument that is not demonstratively proven in the strict way approved by Aristotelian logic. Where we have no demonstrative proof, we argue in favour of the traditional Jewish premises, which are logically possible, over the speculative philosophical premises, which are also logically possible in just the same manner. In this way, according to Aristotelian logical principles, we will have persuasive and satisfactory conclusions rather than merely speculative ones. That is exactly how the king concludes this discussion: "Thus far I find these arguments quite satisfactory. Should we continue our conversation, I will trouble thee to adduce more decisive proofs."[47] One might add that "more decisive proofs" were not requested or given later on, so it is clear that Halevi's argument for creation is not positioned as certain like Aristotle's is, although it is positioned as more persuasive.[48]

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44 This is exactly what Maimonides argues in a telling and concise manner, see Moses Maimonides, *The Guide of the Perplexed*, trans. Shlomo Pines (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), II:25, 328: "That the deity is not a body has been demonstrated; from this it follows that everything that in its external meaning disagrees with this demonstration must be interpreted figuratively [...] However, the eternity of the world has not been demonstrated. Consequently [...] the texts ought not to be rejected and figuratively interpreted in order to make prevail an opinion whose contrary can be made to prevail by means of various sorts of arguments."

45 They cannot be rejected, meaning reason cannot offer certain proof against their possibility.

46 At least in the manner in which Jewish and Islamic thinkers perceived Aristotle's logic.

47 Kuzari 1, 68: ‏"קאל אלכ'וזרי, תכפיני הד'ה אלחגג אלמקנעה פי אלבאב. ואן טאלת צחבתי לך סאכלפך אן תערץ' עלי אלחגג אלקאטעה".‏

48 Another part of Halevi's discussion of creation also supports this conclusion. At the end of his discussion, before the king concludes as mentioned, Halevi says (1, 67): "But even if an adherent of

From these discussions of creation vs. eternity and God's corporeal attributes, we can see how reason and revelation are synthesised in a manner grounded in epistemology and logic and based on the same sceptical strategies. We can see that reason serves revelation in the sense that reason serves as a criterion for the proper understanding of revelation, just as revelation serves reason where reason alone cannot reach demonstrative conclusions.

Yet there is one additional point: for the leading logicians amongst the *falāsifa*, such as Al-Fārābī, the fact that dialectical and rhetorical arguments are inferior to demonstration, does not mean that they are not helpful. Such arguments are focused on convincing the masses, but the learned must always strive for demonstration.[49] How does this relate to what we have described as Halevi's attitude? Does it mean that his dialectical and rhetorical basis for the defence of Judaism is intended for the masses? Does it mean that Halevi's argumentation carries no real value for the learned reader? I would suggest that the answer to the second question is yes, while the answer to the third is no. In other words, Halevi's argumentation is indeed at most dialectical, and in this manner – as Al-Fārābī stated – it is for the masses, but that does not mean that the learned reader has nothing to gain from it.

I do not think it is in doubt that the *Kuzari* was written for non-philosophers. In this sense, the rhetorical and dialectical establishment of Judaism would suffice for Halevi's purposes just as for Al-Fārābī's. However, Halevi's introduction to the *Kuzari* implies that he also intended it for learned readers, especially when he states "and the intelligent will understand" in the concluding words of his introduction.[50]

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the [revealed] Law is forced to concede and acknowledge the existence of eternal matter and many worlds prior to this world, there is nothing in this that refutes his belief that this world came into existence completely new at a specific time in the past and that its first human inhabitants were *Adam* and *Eve*." (ובעד אן ילגא אלמתשרע אלי אלתסלים ואלאקרראר בהיולי קדימה, ועואלם כת'ירה קבל הד'א אלעאלם, ליס) (פי ד'לך מטען פי אעתקאדה אן הד'א אלעאלם חאדת' מנד' מדה מחצלה ואול נאסה אדם וחוה). If Halevi thought his argument for creation was indeed certain, how may one concede something that is certainly not true? Some translators read the beginning of this passage differently, but their translations also do not exclude the mere possibility of some eternal matter or worlds. See *The Book of Kuzari*, trans. Michael Schwarz (Beer-Sheba: Beer-Sheba University Press, 2017), 31 n. 239 (Hebrew).

49 For example, see Al-Fārābī, *The Political Writings: Selected Aphorisms and Other Texts*, Book of Religion, trans. Charles E. Butterworth (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 98.

50 This is Halevi's Hebrew quote from Daniel 12, 10: "והמשכילים יבינו". This quotation provides evidence that Halevi's book was aimed, at least partly, at intelligent readers. Indeed, a minimal reading of this passage might suggest that these words refer only to Halevi's statement that he will write down the dialogue as it actually occurred "and the intelligent will understand" that he is really inventing the whole thing. In "The Law of Reason in the Kuzari," *Persecution and the Art of Writing* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 101, n. 17, Leo Strauss criticised this minimal reading as follows: "This remark cannot possibly refer to the fact that the conversations are fictitious; for this is evident even to those who do not understand." I will add that this minimal reading does not consider the context of the verse within the Book of Daniel, and the way this quotation and similar expressions

Such readers will understand that Halevi has not demonstratively proven Judaism. Therefore, one might argue that the Aristotelian logic Halevi used is as destructive to non-demonstrative Judaism as it is to non-demonstrative philosophy. If so, how could the contemporary learned reader value Halevi's non-demonstrative defence of Judaism?

I think the answer lies in the contemporary development of the perception of logic. Using the examples of Al-Ghazālī and Abū'l-Barakāt al-Baghdādī, both writing in the first half of the twelfth century – as did Halevi himself – Frank Griffel showed how Arab philosophers realised, in a very sceptical manner, that demonstrative conclusions are not always attainable. Therefore, when that was the case, they turned to lower levels of proof instead, such as dialectic, when possible. Their attitude did not devalue demonstration,[51] but only stated that it cannot always be attained. Therefore, even for the learned reader, lower levels of proof, those attaining satisfaction (iqnā), should suffice when necessary. Halevi, their contemporary, stood in the forefront of the philosophical developments of his time and used those developments to defend Judaism in a manner that would suit even learned readers through the same logical-epistemological attitude they cherished.[52]

One can say that the "case study" of the examples offered from the *Kuzari* points out Halevi's criticism of philosophy on the one hand and the defence of Judaism on the other, using the same logical and epistemological principles employed by the *falāsifa* in accordance with their understanding of Aristotelian logic. In this context, I argue that, even though Halevi rejected philosophical premises and, as a result, philosophical conclusions, he did not reject the philosophical method itself, i.e. the contemporary principles of logic and epistemology. In this sense, I think it is clear how Halevi offered the learned reader a rational and coherent attitude towards the relations between revelation and philosophy, an attitude that is based on these logical principles. It is also clear that Halevi used philosophy to serve his purposes in quite a philosophical way. Halevi's criticism of philosophy

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were used by Halevi's contemporaries, such as, for example, Abraham Ibn Ezra in his *Yesod Mora* as well as in his commentaries on the Bible. It might be interesting to mention that (late) medieval Jewish thinkers were already stretching themselves with this question. For example, Yehuda ben Shemuel of Lunel mentions both the minimal and the non-minimal reading of the text. Azariah Di Rossi explicitly mentions the minimal reading of this text, though does not explicitly exclude the non-minimal reading of it. See Dov Swartz, ed., *Commentary on the Kuzari: Heshek Shelomoh by R. Shelomoh Ben Yehuda of Lunel* (Ramat-Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 2007), 48 (Hebrew); Azaria De' Rossi, *The Light of the Eyes*, trans. Jianna Weinberg (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 527–528.

51 It must be mentioned that Al-Ghazali attacked the mere notion of certainty of *burhān* in his *Deliverance from Error*; see Al-Ghazali, *The Faith and Practice of Al Ghazali*, trans. W. Montgomery Watt (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1963), 8–11.

52 Halevi's familiarity with Islamic philosophy, including contemporaries such as Ibn-Bajja, is demonstrated by Ehud Krinis, "The Arabic Background of the Kuzari," *The Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy,* 21 (2013): 1–56.

represents a sceptical attitude (even if partial and not total) in which one must question everything that cannot be positioned as certain, according to the logical and epistemological principles of Aristotelian logic and its sceptical aspects. For Halevi, the outcome was scepticism towards much of philosophy, which he based on a careful analysis of the philosophical arguments that showed them to be questionable and dubitable according to the logical and epistemological principles of Aristotelian logic itself.

However, I also think that Halevi realised that, for the intelligent reader, this did not result in the obvious triumph of revelation, since revelation suffers from the same logical-epistemological deficiencies and is affected by that same sceptical analysis.[53] That is why, alongside the sceptical aspects of his criticism, Halevi developed his dialectical arguments using Aristotelian logical principles in order to establish dialectically through persuasion that which could not be proven demonstratively. This way, the same sceptical aspects can elevate revelation over other philosophical possibilities; that is, they can propose revelation not only as a legitimate option philosophically, but as more persuasive than and preferable to the other alternatives.

Conclusion

Existing studies tend to ignore logic when they come to discuss the relationship between philosophy and religion in the *Kuzari*. Indeed, until the twelfth century, we have almost no logical writings by Jewish thinkers. However, one cannot ignore the influence of the logical treatises by Muslim thinkers, nor that of their philosophical and theological writings. In this preliminary paper, I argue that logical and epistemological distinctions between what is demonstrative and therefore accepted as certain and what is not demonstrative and therefore doubtful were used not only to criticise philosophy, but also to establish (Jewish) revelation. Paying attention to the logical terminology in the *Kuzari* enables us to read the book from a new perspective, one I believe Halevi addressed to the twelfth-century Jewish intellectual audience, which was already engaged with philosophy, at least to a certain extent. Such a logical perspective was indeed stressed by Halevi in the introductory passage of the *Kuzari*, when he himself described the following arguments in the book as persuasive, and nothing more: "Some of the arguments of the sage seemed persuasive to me and in agreement with my own belief. Accordingly, I thought that I should

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53 We were not present for the miracles described in the Bible, for the exodus from Egypt, or for the revelation on Mount Sinai: we have only traditions about them that, according to Aristotelian logic, are doubtful and not certain. However, as Halevi develops in the *Kuzari*, they can be persuasive.

record this argumentation just as it took place, *and the intelligent will understand.*"[54] The examples of creation and God's corporeal attributes illustrate how a reading that takes logical and epistemological terminology and principles of Aristotelian logic into account can be meaningful and useful. In this paper, I have described only some of the implications of this perspective. Such a reading may very well reorient our understanding of Halevi's project, particularly in regard to two of the main tasks of his *Kuzari*, namely the attitude towards philosophy and the establishment of Jewish revelation.

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54 Kuzari 1,1: ‏"וכאן מן חגג אלחבר מא אקנעני וטאבק אעתקאדי פראית אן את'בת ד'לך אלאחתגאג כמא וקע‏ ‏*והמשכילים יבינו*‏". See note 50 above.

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